M.A. IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION – MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Master's Thesis

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF A DANISH – GERMAN COLLABORATION – A CASE STUDY

Date of submission: 15th of May, 2017

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Pages: 71

Total number of characters: 178.288

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Abstract

The study of cross-cultural encounters in business has become a popular and crucial matter, due to globalization and an increasing level of international business activity across borders. An understanding of the fact that differences in norms, habits and traditions exist is essential to success in international business, which means that cultural differences is an unavoidable aspect for businesses seeking to expand to consider, and a field of research that must be ascribed a great focus from scholars. Culture come in many forms, and is embedded in every part of life as underlying assumptions that direct actions and thoughts. To grasp the concept and analyze it, one must have areas of focus, which in this case is cross-cultural business behavior and the differences that exist between two sets of behavior.

This thesis therefore seeks to gain insight into the aspects of business behavior that differ between Danish and German business culture. Additionally, it aims to uncover which implications these differences in business behavior may have for the Danish company Cotes that plan to re-enter the German market, and to offer a series of recommendations for the company to apply when employees find themselves in Danish-German encounters. In developing its approach to cross-cultural business behavior, the thesis take point of departure in a social constructionist point of view, which emphasizes the construction of reality as a social phenomenon and allows for multiple interpretations of reality. Through this scientific approach the thesis analyzes and interprets a set of interviews and questionnaire responses, in order to reveal the perceived differences in business behavior as seen from a Danish and theoretical point of view.

In the first chapters, the methodological considerations and the research design are explained, along with descriptions of the case company and the case itself. The thesis adopts a qualitative methodological approach and conducts a thematic analysis and discussion of the primary data set based on cultural and communication theory. The empirical data was gathered to gain an insight into the differences found in German business behavior, compared to Danish norms, from the perspective of Cotes' employees and an external consultant. In addition, the perceived differences uncovered in the interviews and questionnaire responses is contrasted to the differences presented in theory. Moreover, the concept of cultural intelligence is applied in an attempt to disclose the dimensions

necessary to the achievement of a successful cross-cultural encounter, and the extent to which the employees of Cotes hold potential to be culturally intelligent.

The findings of the study reveal that despite the minor geographical distance between the two countries, dissimilarities that are crucial to acknowledge exist between Danish and German business behavior. Different degrees of differences are found in terms of formality, dress code, language, business meetings and functions and communication. Stereotypical theory and perceptions take Danish and German business culture to be very similar, however, this believe is dangerous to apply for Cotes, since the minor differences in the above mentioned aspects can lead to a failed partnership, if they are not respected and taken into consideration. Nevertheless, the analysis uncovered that the knowledge on German business behavior with the sales team at Cotes is great and that they are well on their way in the process of developing their cultural intelligence. The recommendations for Cotes are characterized by an application of overall guidelines in terms of appropriate German business behavior, however, they do highlight the need for Cotes to apply a contingency approach, in that local and industry dependent differences exist in Germany in terms of formality, dress code, language preference and business culture in general. Future research must focus on examining the level of formality in German organizations, and whether this differs depending on organizational size, the industry or other organizational characteristics. Moreover, practitioners could gain valuable knowledge from studies looking into the use of English in German organizations and the development in attitude toward this. Finally, studies that take a German perspective in terms of cultural differences must be conducted to supplement this research.

Contents

1 Introduction

Culture has been a phenomenon of study for a long time by researchers of many fields. Today, this shows in the number of definitions of culture that exist, and the variety of focus that they hold, as some take it from a micro perspective, while others approach the concept from a macro perspective. In spite of the endless list of definitions, Schein (2010) describes the main point to be that "*culture covers pretty much everything that a group has learned as it has evolved"* (p. 5). Importantly, one must remember when researching the cultural phenomenon that every one of those groups, which have their own unique culture, are different. Different groups have their own dynamic processes that contribute the development of the specific group's culture, thus Schein (2010) notes the importance of understanding each group's patterns on their own terms, as the meaning of a process is likely to be different across cultures. Furthermore, Schein (2010) offers a definition of culture, which he claims covers any kind of culture, whether it is a national, an organizational or a team culture:

"The culture of a group can be defined as the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems.

This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness."

(Schein, 2010, p. 6).

This definition is broad, however widely acknowledged, since it brings attention to the many aspects that shape a culture and the complexity that the concept holds. Schein (2010) explains how the key element of the definition is that culture is a *shared* product of *shared* meanings. Understanding this feature of culture leads to an understanding of the corollaries that adds to the complexity of cultures. In the end, the shared learning comes to define the purpose of the group and becomes the patterns of beliefs and values that subscribe meaning to the activities of the groups in everyday life. According to Schein (2010) the behavioral aspect, time and shared learning leads to shared perceptions of how to talk, and what makes a group feel good and bad, that is, the emotions and thoughts of the group. Finally, one must note that Schein's (2010) definition of culture is concerned with the deeper explanation of overt behavior, and not the behavior itself, though some such behavior reflects the cultural assumptions. He states, *"this definition emphasizes that the shared assumptions deal with how we perceive, think about and feel about things"* (Schein, 2010, p. 13).

Another researcher, who is in fact an experienced practitioner, looked closer at the different business cultures and manners of behaving that exist in the world. Gesteland (2012) experienced on his own, during his 26 years as an expatriate manager how one cannot behave in the same manner all over the world and achieve a positive result. In his book, he has gathered his presentations of numerous business cultures that exist in this world, as he seeks to help readers understand their own expectations and assumptions, as well as those of their international customers, suppliers and contacts (Gesteland, 2012). Underlining how no two cultures are the same, Gesteland (2012) presents two central rules. He label them the *two iron rules of international business* (p. 22).

Rule no. I: *In international business, the visitor is expected to understand the local (host) culture*

This universal does not ask one to adopt the local culture and copy the behavior of the hosts; however, it asks you to be yourself, while honoring local customs and traditions. The rule is very basic, and most international marketers are aware of it. Nonetheless, this awareness of behavior seem to fade in terms of,

Rule no. II: *In international business, the seller is expected to adapt to the buyer.*

To succeed in collaborations across cultures, both of these rules are essential. As Gesteland (2012) states himself, *"...because all over the world today the customer is king"* (p. 22). Following these rules does not lead to success, however; it is the first step in the right direction. The further adaption, which is necessary, must be specific to the culture you are visiting, and one that builds on an understanding of the differences that exist, and the skills to act according to them.

The quantity of research and papers that has been conducted on culture and cultural differences indicate how this concept has become a crucial part of business today. Schein (2010) and Gesteland (2012) are just two of many, who have presented valuable knowledge for businesses seeking to expand across borders and do so successfully. Due to globalization, the need to succeed in collaborations with foreign cultures is continuing to increase. Borders might be easy for organizations to cross physically, however, without considering behavioral aspects and dissimilarities in terms of norms and traditions, businesses are likely to fail at some point during the negotiation process with a foreign culture. The frustrating part is that they might not know why, and that is why businesses are now forced to consider other cultures as part of their operations as well.

Given increased attention that the concept of culture has received in literature, it is interesting to investigate the impact it has on international business, and how this is reflected in communication and behavior. Reviewing the literature on culture and cultural differences in business discloses numerous studies, which juxtapose cultural opposites and explain how the underlying values and societal norms have shaped different societies. However, researching business culture revealed a gap in cultural studies in terms business cultures that share traits, as only few juxtapositions of cultures that are close in terms of geography exist. It seems as if the focus of previous research has been to demonstrate the greatest divides between citizens of the world, and not the minor ones that are present between neighboring countries. Nevertheless, studies that look into cultures, which share characteristics will provide practitioners with detailed knowledge that can mean the differences between success and failure, since they will gain valuable insights that are applicable in their business ventures. Accordingly, this thesis takes on the task of investigating what happens when two similar cultural DNAs meet and the consequences hereof. Moreover, it contributes to a specific type of cultural research that has suffered from a lack of attention by uncovering the impact of differences between seemingly uniform societies and cultures, through the examination of a case revolving around two geographically close cultures. The case study applies a mix of methods belonging and qualitative and quantitative methodology in the form of interviews and a questionnaire, while it employs existing theory to uncover the degree to which the cultures in question resemble each other, and the extent to which theory matches the experience of practitioners. The study seeks to inspire scholars within the field of cross-cultural business communication and other fields within cultural research, to examine similar cases.

1.1 Problem statement

Following the reasoning above, this thesis aims to uncover the differences between the business behavior of Denmark and Germany. It will analyze and discuss primary empirical data to uncover similarities and dissimilarities between the two sets of business behavior. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the central aspects at play, a two-fold problem statement guides the research, *What are the differences existing between the business behavior of the Danish company Cotes and German business behavior?*

And,

What implications could these differences have on the cross-cultural business encounter between Danes and Germans, and what aspects should Cotes consider when approaching German business partners?

1.2 Structure

The structure of the paper resembles a classic academic study. Following this introduction, the thesis will commence its methodology chapter, which describes the underlying assumptions and reasoning for the research design. Moreover, it outlines the research design and describes how this research has been assembled. Next, a brief section incorporated before the theoretical framework, introduces the case company, Cotes and the case itself, to set the context of the thesis. The theoretical framework presents the theoretical aspects and models that lay the grounds for the later analysis and discussion. A selected range of theorists is presented among many, to direct the focus of the study. Due to the format of the research, the analysis and discussion have been integrated and written in one chapter, as opposed to two. When studying the differences between Danish and German business behavior through an analysis and discussion of real life practitioner knowledge, this integration maintains focus on the outcome of the paper and prevent reiterations. Lastly, the concluding remarks will entail the specific recommendations for Cotes in terms of their communication and behavioral practices in meetings with their future German business partners. Additionally, it outlines the suggestions for further research within this specific area of cross-cultural communication studies.

2 Methodology

The research design of this study relies on several methodological considerations. Due to the nature of the study, the choice of scientific approach and philosophical stands of what constitutes reality and knowledge came naturally. These dimensions are implemented throughout the study, and are explained in this chapter. Furthermore, I provide the reasoning behind the choice of methods utilized in gathering the empirical data.

To start, the choice of scientific approach is explained followed by the research design. Then, the key features of a classic case study are outlined before I move on to the specific data collection methods; semi-structured in-depth interviews and questionnaires. A section on data analysis seeks to describe the manner in which the empirical data has been studied and why a thematic analysis is the right method of choice for this case study. Finally, I share my considerations concerning the reliability and validity of the study, followed by a delimitation that explains the area of focus in this study, while it excludes potential aspects that could have been a part of the research.

2.1 Scientific approach

The approach taken to study the problem statement of this report is social constructionism, as the aim is to unfold the values, perceptions and characteristics of a cross-cultural encounter between Danish and German business people. Furthermore, it aims to understand how these are socially reconstructed among the Danish and German business partners, through the specific case in focus. For this purpose, the subjective ontology of social constructionism is appropriate, since it is based upon perceptions and experiences, which differ over time and in context (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Perceptions and experiences are the exact entities under study in the Cotes case. Notably, at the very center of social constructionism is the notion that *"reality does not exist outside individuals; 'reality' is always about individuals' and groups' interpretations"* (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, p. 14).

In general, a relationship between two people is a process of continues development, which is perceived differently by the individuals involved, as it is constructed based on each individual's view of the world (Belk, 1988). Therefore, it is crucial to explore the culturally determined rules of behavior and underlying values of the two worldviews in question that influence the relationships between individuals, in order to gain a thorough understanding of the underlying reality and comprehend the challenges and differences in play when Danes and German meet (Saunders et al., 2012).

Correspondingly, the 'truth' is constructed from social processes and interactions, and by interconnected patterns of communication (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). This evinces that a relationship with another person is created through formation, negotiation and amendment, as well as sustaining. The three steps are all based on communication between the parties, proving the importance of a focus on communication. This, however, challenges the notion that knowledge is based on objective and thus unbiased observations of the world as social constructionism follows a subjective epistemology where access to the external world takes place through own observations and interpretations (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

A focal point of analysis in this case study is human interaction, understanding and interpretation, which can only be gathered through a constructionist research design that focuses on this content and allow for multiple meaningful interpretations of the same data (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

2.2 Research design

Being a case study, the research in this paper is inductive in character, as its outset lies in my interest in themes, activities and patterns that are extracted from empirical data. The extractions from the empirical data have been analyzed through a range of theoretical concepts to offer a general sense of reference in the analysis and discussion (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). The research design is one of mixed methods, as both a quantitative and a qualitative data collection methods has been applied (Saunders et al., 2012).

The nature of the study is explanatory in that it investigates a situation with an aim of explaining the relationship between variables (Saunders et al., 2012). Due to the qualitative features of the study, it has not followed a tightly woven plan. From the beginning, it was clear that room for changes and deviations in the research design was necessary to keep the interests of Cotes in focus and adapt to the stage of their strategy process they are at. The original plan of conducting interviews with all employees involved in the process of developing a new strategy for the German market was not possible due to time constraints and counteracting calendars. Thus, the majority of the interviews were replaced by a short online survey. Responses from the survey and the empirical data gathered from two telephone interviews, one with an external consultant and one with the area sales manager of Cotes, comprise the final primary empirical data set. The following sections highlight the different considerations taken when configuring the research design.

2.2.1 A classic case study

To enhance the understanding of the overall research design and the study conducted in this thesis, the following section presents main features of a classic case study.

Intensive case study research aims at understanding a unique case. Such a case study draws on a variety of methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to interpret and understand cultural meanings and the sense-making processes in the specific case (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). The understanding developed bases itself on the people involved in the case, as their statements and perspectives typically constitute the majority of the empirical material. From this, one could be drawn to believe that this type of case study does not contribute to theory, however, Dyer and Wilkins (as cited in Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008) state that a study of this character is informed by theory and indeed capable of elaborating theory, nevertheless, it is not the focus of the study. Humphrey and Scapens (as cited in Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008), suggest that case studies are valuable in that they drive the research of a field on problems and issues faced by practitioners, rather than the ideas of theorists.

The results of a case study are not directly applicable to any case with a similar context. Nonetheless, it will provide the researcher with a specialized knowledge on a specific topic, that can work to assist and inspire other organizations or managers that find themselves in a similar situation in the future (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). From a methodological point of view, intensive, or classic case studies have a tradition to follow the qualitative spirit to construct. As in many other aspects in life, there are of course exceptions to the norm, while some case studies are purely qualitative in nature, while others are seasoned with a touch of quantitative methods as well. It all depends on the purpose and objectives of the study (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). A combination of methods is specifically useful when the researcher emphasizes *thick description,* which means to aim for to an interpretation that offers a clear meaning and presents the reasoning behind events in the case (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Characteristically, the collection of empirical primary data is completed through interviews that are semi-structured and entail a range of open-ended questions allowing the interview to take on many directions. In addition, small surveys can assist in gathering more focused data. A combination of more methods enhance the trustworthiness of the case study, as they appear more convincing, diverse and rich (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Either the combination of methods act as a tool to crosscheck findings, or they are utilized side by side to enrich the case.

Case study research is known to have room for diversity and complexity when exploring cases, thus, one will seldom come across an intensive case study that applies a simplistic research design (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Overall, the role of the researcher in an intensive case study is that of an interpreter. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) describes the role of the researcher as, *"an interpreter who both constructs the case and analyses it, focusing on the perspectives, conceptions, experiences, interactions and sense-making processes of the people involved in the study"* (p. 120).

To conclude, the focus of a case study is to work on the case in question and draw conclusions that may inspire other researchers of the same field and assist them in solving other cases and real life challenges.

The reasoning for the methodological choices applied in this case is provided in the section *data collection* below.

2.3 Data collection

This study relies, as mentioned, on both qualitative and quantitative sources of data. The first part of the qualitative data is a semi-structured telephone interview conducted with an external consultant, T. E. Bach, hired by Cotes to analyze the market opportunities in Germany. The second part of the qualitative data set is a semi-structured telephone interview with the area sales manager of Cotes, P. C. Lange. Quantitative data was gathered through a survey with open-ended questions, distributed internally in the company to the four employees involved in the process of choosing a strategy for the German market. Early research revealed that literature and studies on the interaction between Danish and German business culture is highly limited, why the primary data is the driver of the case study. The next sections outlines the considerations that lay the grounds for the interviews, and the interview guides utilized in the two interviews, as well as the questionnaire. Despite the size of Cotes, the number of questionnaires was limited due to the size of the sales team. Including further employees would not have contributed with relevant empirical data to the study. Moreover, the stage of the strategy formation process that Cotes is in means that no German parties were available for me to interview.

2.3.1 Semi-structured interviews and questioning technique

Interviews in research projects can take many forms, as different types of interviews serve different purposes (Kvale and Brinkmannn, 2015). The two interviews undertaken here take a semi-structured format to allow the professional conversation to adjust to the answers of the interviewees (Saunders et al., 2012). In line with this study being explanatory, it was important that the questions asked in the interviews were open-ended and allowed the interviewees to share their thoughts and experiences, as this is indeed necessary to uncover the challenges in communication and behavior between Danish and German business culture. Kvale and Brinkmannn (2015) describe how the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the interview subjects' point of view and unfold meaning of their experiences. Simply, he states that, *"we talk to people because we want to know how they describe their experiences"* (p.3).

To elaborate, an explanatory study goes hand in hand with in-depth and semi-structured interviews, as it allows causal relationships between variables to be inferred (Saunders et al. 2012). This interview format supports the need to understand what causes the differences in behavior between the two cultures, as the interview participants have the freedom to elaborate their answers and I, as the interviewer have the opportunity to 'probe' answers, that is, to have them further explained or build on and add substance to the data obtained. Consequently, this manner of interviewing open the doors for new and up until now hidden areas of interest. Probing questions formulated in an open-ended manner request a particular focus or direction (Saunders et al., 2012).

Open-ended questions encourage interview participants to develop extensive answers and serve both to reveal facts and attitudes. The interview conducted with the external consultant T. E. Bach had the purpose of collecting his unique experience and knowledge on collaboration between Danish and German organizations in general, to compare theory and practice. T. E. Bach is a native German, living and working in Denmark as a consultant for both German and Danish organizations. His experience and extensive knowledge on both cultures delivered valuable insights to the data set.

The interview with P. C. Lange, the areas sales manager of Cotes, aimed to uncover the general opinions of Cotes, along with the personal perceptions of Peter, in terms of collaborating with German partners. It focused on thoughts and considerations that P. C. Lange has in terms of communication and German business behavior, both verbal and non-verbal, along with his experience with Germans. The majority of the questions asked in both interviews were phrased to include the words 'what', 'how' or 'why' in order for the respondents to reply as they desired. My intention was to encourage without indicating my personal view or coming off in a judgmental manner (Saunders et al., 2012). In his interview, P.C. Lange draws parallels between German and Japanese business behavior, however, to maintain focus on the juxtaposition of Danish and German business behavior, these parallels are merely included briefly in quotes and will not be commented further upon.

The interviews were conducted in Danish, as this is the native language of the P. C. Lange and as T. E. Bach is a fluent Danish speaker. Speaking Danish allowed for a complete understanding of the questions with the two and thus a greater quality of answers, while it endorsed a higher level of complexity in their answers, as insecurity in wording and ability to express oneself was eliminated. In addition, the interviews were recorded, however not transcribed, to ensure the accuracy of the material, since it makes the basis for the later analysis and discussion.

2.3.1.1 Interview guides

For the two interviews, two very similar interview guides were compiled, which allowed for a juxtaposition of the two sets of answers. The questions were based on the theories presented in the theoretical framework, with input from discussions with fellow students and researchers in order to test the theory in a real life case (Saunders et al., 2012). The questions represent the research gap identified during the review of literature and the research process, however, with a specific focus on what is relevant for Cotes. Having one interview guide for both interviews enabled a comparison of the knowledge of two practitioners with different experience, and contrasting it to theory.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that the questions were adapted and extended along the way, based on the answers of the respondents. It appeared during the interviews that some of the questions led to more extensive answers than planned, why following questions were either skipped, answered shortly, or rephrased to maintain a natural flow of conversation. Despite the minor alterations of the interview guide and questions, all themes and subjects were covered.

2.3.1.2 Ethical concerns

According to psychologist Jette Fog (as cited in Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015, p. 84), the fundamental ethical for dilemma for qualitative interviewers is that "*the researcher wants the interview to be as deep and probing as possible, with the risk of trespassing on the person, and on the other hand to be as respectful to the interview person as possible, with the risk of getting empirical evidence that only scratches the surface".* Indeed this is correct and applicable to the majority of qualitative interview studies, nevertheless, the interviews conducted here focused on personal opinions and experience, not the personal lives of the participants, why I as the interviewer was not concerned to trespass either P. C. Lange or T. E. Bach. However, the informed consent of the interviewees was obtained before the interviews started, in that both interviewees were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). Further, information on the purpose of the interview, the role of the empirical data in the study and the level of confidentiality was put forward to ensure that they are aware in regard to what extend their thoughts will be shared with others (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

Both T. E. Bach and P. C. Lange allowed their names to be included in the report along with their statements, based on the information they have in terms of the readers of the thesis.

When I quote, my focus is to stay true to the actual statements recorded from the two interviews. That is, to quote in an ethical manner. Moreover, the quotes accentuated in the analysis and discussion are utilized in a manner that places them in a context true to their origin. In other words, the quotes are not put in a context different from the one it originated in, though they are objects of interpretation.

2.3.1.3 Limitations and data quality issues

One point of criticism in terms of quantitative interviewing is the reliability of the data. Because of the individual focus in this type of interview, the chances that an alternative researcher can reach similar conclusions are low (Saunders et al., 2012). This limitation is relevant to all studies that rely on empirical data from qualitative interviews. Nevertheless, this study and the fact that is focuses on a specific case, eliminates this limitation to a certain extent, as the conclusions reached are not intended to be applied to all other Danish companies operating in Germany. It is merely intended to advice Cotes in their future interactions with Germans and highlight the differences that exist in business behavior. Generalizability of interview studies in general is limited due to the nature of a qualitative interview research.

Another point of criticism in terms of qualitative methods is the sample size. Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative samples are most often smaller. However, since case studies examines several individuals and aspects, this simplistic comparison is not as acute as it might appear at a first glance. In addition, establishing a relationship to existing theory, allows a study to test the applicability of the theory to specific circumstances and thus a study like e.g. this thesis can demonstrate the broader significance of its findings. (Saunders et al., 2012).

As a researcher conducts an interview, it is likely that an interview bias arise. The comments and reactions that the interviewer respond with, along with non-verbal body language and tone of voice all affect the interviewee. Such cues may impose the opinion of the interviewer onto the questions and lower the level of objectivity in the interview. In addition, inexpedient interpretation of answers is also a source of interviewer bias (Saunders et al. 2012). When conducting the telephone interviews with P. C. Lange and T. E. Bach, I was aware of how I reacted and took the part of an active listener to avoid my reactions influencing their responds. Additionally, the role of body language eliminated itself, since the interview was conducted via telephone.

Another bias that may occur is the one of the interviewee. The circumstances of the semi-structured in-depth interviews, does not ensure that the interviewee shares all relevant information on the topic in question, be it intentionally or not. Numerous reasons can lead to an interviewee giving a partial picture, in order to cast oneself or the organization in a positive fashion (Saunders et al., 2012). One such bias that is possible to occur is the social desirability bias. In this, respondents phrase their answers in a way they think will lead to them being accepted (Sarniak, 2015). Such bias can have affected both T. E. Bach and P. C. Lange's answers in that they are offering their help for this thesis and want to do well, while giving the best answers possible. The second possible bias is that of habituation. In this, respondents provide the same answers to questions with similar wording. The brain saves energy by going on autopilot and giving similar responses (Sarniak, 2015). In my attempt to avoid the habituation bias, I kept the interviews as close to a conversation format as possible, and asked the questions in an interested manner, as opposed to a strict and structured manner.

2.3.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire can be numerous things. One way of narrowing it down, is by defining questionnaires "*to include all methods of data collection in which each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order"* (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 416). This generic definition suits the application of a questionnaire in this research well, as the format does not resemble many other questionnaires, due to the range of open-ended questions. However, because each respondent is asked to respond to the same series of questions, the method provides an efficient way of collecting data (Saunders et al., 2012).

The original research design did not entail a questionnaire. Originally, I planned to conduct interviews with all the employees of Cotes, who are a part of the sales team and the process of designing the new strategy for their activities in Germany, for them to share their thoughts and prospective experiences with Danish – German interactions. Due to time constraints with all parties, it was not possible to arrange these face-to-face interviews with the four employees, which is why Cotes and I agreed that the best solution would be to send them my questions in an online survey that the employees could access anytime and anywhere.

Owing to the circumstances, the questions in the questionnaire are open-ended, to replace the semi-structured in-depth interviews planned, and in order to gather the same type of answers in spite of the lack of opportunity to probe questions. The open-ended questions allow the respondents to answer in their own way (Saunders et al., 2012), which is important, since it concerns their personal thoughts and opinions. Often times the majority of the questions in a questionnaire are closed-ended to make the data easier to analyze and categorize (Saunders et al., 2012). Nonetheless, the small amount of respondents in this study makes it possible to look into each response and analyze it. Furthermore, these questions are useful when I as a researcher do not know the employees well enough to predict responses and provide categories, and as answer had to be as detailed as possible. The wording of the questions aims to come near the wording that would have been used in an interview, why the amount of space provided to answer was unlimited (Saunders et al., 2012). Saunders et al. (2012) supports the above reflections, when they underline that *"the design of each question should be determined by the data you need to collect"* (p. 431).

The questionnaire was set up in google formula and distributed through an internal contact person in Cotes. It took the format of a self-completed web-based questionnaire, which brings a range of advantages. First, a link was shared with the employees through their personal emails, which heightens the reliability, since most people read and respond to their own inboxes. Second, a web-based questionnaire ensures that the employees have responded individually with little or no interference from others. The fact that it is a self-completed questionnaire brings along a third advantage ascribable to that fact that respondents are relatively unlikely to answer to please, or to appear socially desirable when it is online and not face-to-face (Saunders et al., 2012).

The order of the questions was intended to slowly warm up the respondents and become more reflecting along the way, while the wording was carefully chosen to avoid misunderstandings. In terms of layout, the simple design aimed to avoid any distractions and keep focus on the questions themselves. Additionally, my goal was to keep the questionnaire as short as possible, as I sensed the lack of time available for the employees to answer it. Finally, at the start of the questionnaire, introductory remarks express my gratefulness for their participation and explains the importance of their answers, as my contact person in Cotes introduced the survey and its purpose, as he sent the link to the employees.

2.3.2.1 Limitations and data quality issues

This method of gathering data holds a range of advantages. Yet, a few circumstances need to be considered when looking at the data. First, since the questionnaire was sent to people who work in the same company the risk of them talking to each other is present. They may have discussed their answers and inspired each other in terms of what to answer. Second, the initial idea of interviewing would have allowed for probing of questions to go deeper into their answers and gather knowledge with a greater level of detail. This is not an option when applying this method, why my only choice is to analyze the answers as they have given. Third and in line with limitation two, the lack of a present interviewer to encourage further explanation of answers may have led to short answers, as respondents might not know how to contribute or understand the importance of detailed answers, which leads to short answers that risk being less useful in this specific research context.

2.4 Data analysis

Based on the data that I collected, I found a thematic analysis to be the most appropriate. Douglas, Hamilton and Grubs (2008) present the thematic analysis as a tool for identifying, describing, analyzing and reporting themes and patterns within data. An applied thematic analysis requires a great deal of involvement and interpretation from the researcher, as the focus is not on counting specific words, but identifying and describing both the implicit and explicit themes that the data presents. Thus, one must be able to read between the lines and see what is not necessarily being said aloud. Furthermore, Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2011) believe that a thematic analysis is the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning and that it is the most commonly used to analyze qualitative data. The text to be analyzed in such an analysis can range from a single word answer to a text taking up hundreds of pages.

Applied thematic analysis is made out of several other approaches such as grounded theory, positivism, phenomenology and interpretivism (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2011). Due to the unique combination of features, an applied thematic analysis can be used to build theoretical models or solve real-life challenges. It leans toward a positivist epistemology in that claims must be supported with evidence, which in this case is text from the interviews and questionnaire responses. In line with the positivist epistemology, the thematic analysis also allows for quantification if the data is suitable. Proving that applied thematic analysis is indeed a combination of several approaches, the methods and processes that are not qualitative in nature, can also be utilized in an interpretive analysis. A great strength of this data analysis method is that the interpretation done is greatly supported in data (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2011).

As I began the thematic analysis, I listened to the two interviews again, and wrote down notes (Appendix E & F), which revealed several themes touched upon in both interviews. A theme is something that captures essential aspects of the data in relation to the problem statement (Douglas, Hamilton and Grubs, 2008). If a theme is found across the entire data set, it is indeed the ideal. Nevertheless, it is not a necessity and due to the semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in this research, I was not able to guarantee that the same topics would be in both interviews, nor in the questionnaire responses as the questions are open-ended.

Before conducting interviews and sending out the questionnaire, I had an initial idea of themes I expected to come across in the data set. These were confirmed as I was studied the theory on cross-cultural communication and looked into the Danish and German norms and behaviors, as well as in the interviews, since P. C. Lange and T. E. Bach have substantial experience with Danish-German collaborations. The themes I found most relevant for the analysis and useful to base guidelines upon are mapped out below.

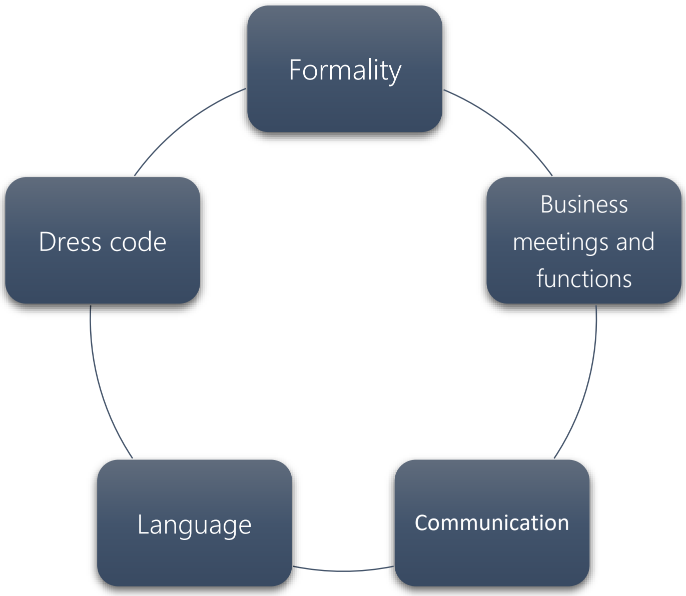

Figure 1. *Themes of analysis*. Created by the author of this paper.

The theme of formality examines how the level of formality is different in the two cultures, when juxtaposing the two sets business behavior, while the language theme looks into the importance of language choice in the cross-cultural encounter. The section concerning business meetings and functions explores the differences in behavior and organizational structure that exist between Denmark and Germany, while it seeks to uncover how meetings take place in the two cultures. Lastly, the communication theme takes a closer look into communication practices and strategy, to learn how to approach German buyers.

2.5 Reliability and validity

Reliability is understood as *"the extent to which data collection techniques will yield consistent findings … reached by other researchers"* (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 680). This is indeed interesting; however, qualitative data rarely intended to be repeatable, as the context in which it is collected is both dynamic and complex, as the data reflect the reality at the time of the study (Saunders et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, looking at the consistency of the research procedures in this study, they are undoubtedly affected by my interpretations at the different stages, including defining a research gap, designing interview guides and listening and analyzing interviews.

Validity is the credibility of the study. It means to disclose whether the study measures what it sets out to measure (Saunders et al., 2012). One way to enhance the credibility of the study is to restate the primary data as accurately as possible. Another concern is the external validity of a case study like this, as generalizing the findings of one case study onto a different case is highly problematic, since the context is different from case to case, why a direct application of previous findings is not possible. My thoughts concerning the generalization of this study are explained below.

2.6 Delimitation

The aim of this study is to uncover the cultural differences, and possible communication challenges that exist between Danes and Germans in a business context, in order to present a range of theoretically founded guidelines for Cotes to apply in their German venture. Subsequently, it aims to investigate and evaluate the present stance and attitudes towards communicating and behaving appropriately in a cross-cultural context that exist in Cotes. This thesis does not seek to identify the ideal communication campaign of a product in Germany, nor does it attempt to lay out a complete stakeholder communication strategy for Cotes to apply. The concluding remarks will not offer generalizations for other companies to apply, when entering the German market; however, they will serve as an indication and inspiration for researchers and practitioners dealing with similar cases. In spite of a limited amount of time at my disposal, I wish to contribute to an area of research within cross-cultural communication, which suffers from a lack of attention. Thus, this thesis acts as the first step that lays the ground for further research on culturally determined differences in behavior and communication between Danes and Germans and other rather closely related cultures.

3 Cotes

3.1 Company description

Søren Olesen founded Cotes 31 years ago, in 1986. In the preceding years, Søren worked with other corporations as a mechanical engineer specializing in air technology and gained substantial and valuable knowledge on a special type of dehumidifiers. Having this knowledge while stemming from a family of entrepreneurs tricked Søren into starting on his own, as he felt that it would be a waste of knowledge if he did not do so. The opportunity to found Cotes did not occur until a few years after the idea first came to him, why 1986 was the year it all started. He started from scratch, as he designed, produced and sold the machines from a rental building along with one other employee. Getting a hold of the capital needed to keep the business going, turned out to be the hardest task and a yearlong process. The following years were spend on developing new technology that Søren found to be future-orientated, while the export started slowly in 1993. In 1994, a partner came in, which supplied the resources needed to continue the development. The company grew and more employees joined in both production and at the office. However, in 2011 the partner was replaced with an investor. Since a new CEO commenced in 2010, Cotes has launched new products, opened a subsidiary in Poland, an office in Slagelse and production in Viby J. Today, Cotes employ almost 70 individuals located in several location in Denmark and Poland, with a sales team consisting of four people, who are in charge of sales all over the world.

The dehumidifiers that Cotes produce are solely for industry purposes, as it works to protect windmills from corrosion, protect cargo from moisture during shipping transport, ensures dry air for susceptible processes in the pharmaceutical industry and many other versatile purposes. They brand themselves on their ability to introduce profit-generating solutions through the application of the law of physics in their technical solutions. Lastly, Cotes strive to deliver solutions that fulfill the exact need of the customers by customizing it for each and every one and to provide the best technology to ensure effective and energy efficient solutions at good prices.

3.2 Case description

Cotes has been present in Germany since the early 1990's, with the first dehumidifier sold in the country in 1991. To sell the products, Cotes had a dealer called Alfred Kaut (Kaut). On paper, Kaut appears to be the right distributer of Cotes' products, as it has subsidiaries located across the entire Germany. Nevertheless, Kaut also represents and sell various other products similar to the ones of Cotes, which has two consequences. First, as Kaut distributes a range of other products, the time spend on Cotes' products decreases, which in the end is a decrease in sales. Second, some of the products that Kaut distributes are substitutes, which adds yet another factor that decreases the sales of Cotes' products. In addition, fact is that from 1991 up until now Cotes has not had a sales strategy for the German market. As a results, sales has been slow and with disappointing figures. Throughout the 26 years of collaboration with Kaut, Cotes has considered ending the partnership several times due to the disappointing sales figures, however, occasionally a large order stopped them and it was decided to carry on each time.

During the summer of 2016, two employees were hired. One of them being P. C. Lange, the area sales manager. P. C. Lange quickly started to reconsider the options for distribution in Germany, while M. N. Christensen the second new employees started researching market segments. Around the commencement of 2017, the German market had been analyzed with the purpose of uncovering new opportunities for generating capital. From this, Cotes discovered that there is a market for dehumidifiers in the brewery and the butchery industries. In fact, the fall of 2016 and start of 2017, was spent researching possible ways of re-entering the German market. In this process, Cotes hired an external consultant, T. E. Bach, to assist with the arrangement of meetings and the initial contact with German organizations. P. C. Lange and M. N. Christensen travelled with T. E. Bach to Germany and met with three representatives from differing professions. These three meetings made it clear to Cotes that a great market potential exists in a range of industries. However, the sales potential with microbreweries in the southern Germany has made the brewery industry place they choose to start their German venture.

Today, Cotes is preparing to enter Germany. Marketing material is being developed alongside the conduction of extensive market analysis. Consequently, a package of marketing materials, analysis findings and detailed plans is in production and will be ready to present to the new distribution channel when it is established. This means that when Cotes makes the decision of how to re-enter the German market, this package of research and communication materials will be ready to kick-start the strategy from day one. The strategy development process works as a pilot project for Cotes. Through this, the company can determine how far it is possible to go with a specific segment if they combine extensive research with comprehensive marketing material, and make sure to work with the distributor instead of letting them lead the sales. Importantly, Cotes is in midst of a process of both internal and external development, which means that the organization is working toward finding itself, in terms of internal structure and external strategy. They must establish the manner in which they wish to handle a potential dealer or subsidiary, and disclose what it takes to succeed with the two options. By talking to P. C. Lange, M. N. Christensen and rather new colleague, A. Kjeldgaard, who constitute the majority of the sales team, it is evident that they believe in opening a Cotes subsidiary in Germany. Nevertheless, the board of directors will make the final decision in terms of the strategy for Cotes in Germany, during the summer of 2017.

4 Theoretical Framework

In order to analyze the cultural determined differences in business behavior between Denmark and Germany, it is necessary to uncover what is encapsulated in the concept of business culture and how it may be analyzed. Thus, the theoretical framework is divided into two sections. The first section presents theory regarding cultural patterns from the perspective of Gesteland (2012) along with his presentations of Danish and German business culture. Søderberg and Holden (2002) contribute to the collection of theory with the alternative view they offer on cross-cultural management, while the theory of cultural intelligence by Plum et al. (2008) brings in a perspective on how to cope with cultural differences.

Section two, examines literature presented by Cornelissen (2014) regarding communication strategy and the concept of strategic messaging, while Shannon and Weaver's model of communication is presented to illustrate which step in the communication process this study is taking place in.

4.1 Cultural differences and their impact on international business

4.1.1 Cultural patterns

Researchers of the field have proposed many definitions of what a culture is over the years and even what a business culture entails, depends on who you consult. The working definition of this paper is adopted from Gesteland (2012) and simply states that a business culture is *"a unique set of expectations and assumptions about how to do business"* (p. 21). The definition is appropriate for a thesis study as this, since it is open and including and since working with a foreign culture requires your attention to be directed towards these exact expectations and assumptions, and keep in mind that no two people of any culture are alike on an individual, a professional or a generational level.

A way to break down the concept of culture for one to analyze and act upon it, is to divide it into dimensions as done by Hofstede in his studies that has become a cornerstone in cultural research. Geert Hofstede derived four cultural variable dimensions from his study of a U.S. multinational business corporation in the 1960's and 70's (Ting-Toomey, 1999). He originally presented the four dimensions individualism – collectivism, power distance, masculinity – femininity and uncertainty avoidance. Through the years, Hofstede and the Hofstede Centre has developed new dimensions within both organizational culture and national culture and continues to do research within the field. When presenting his study, Hofstede argued that ethnic and religious groups, generation, gender, social class and social structure all influence the value pattern in the different cultures. In addition, the value dimensions were thought of as a tool, for the first step in systematically comparing cultures on an aggregate level (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Nonetheless, inspired by Søderberg and Holden's (2002) critique of Hofstede, presented later in this chapter, and the underlying assumptions of his study, Hofstede's work is not included further in this paper. Instead, this thesis embraces another cultural researcher and practitioner who systemized culture, Richard Gesteland.

Gesteland (2012) presents a division of culture into patterns. When looking at behavioral patterns, he divides the cultures of the world in two groups, the deal-focused (DF) and the relationship-focused (RF). In contrast to RF cultures where relationships need to be cultivated before business can be made, DF cultures put less emphasis on relationships, instead they but put 'the deal', i.e. the business dimension, first. DF cultures, like the two present in this case study, Denmark and Germany, have a mindset that prioritizes the task at hand, while cultures with a focus on relationships care more about the people involved in solving the task (Gesteland, 2012). When applying this pattern of culture, however, it is crucial to remember that it is not an either or situation, but a tendency of a culture, "*it is a question of degree"* (Gesteland, 2012, p. 23). This applies to all patterns of culture.

DF cultures generally communicate in a direct manner, also known as low-context communication. In contrast, RF cultures communicate in an indirect or high-context manner. This is the second cultural pattern presented by Gesteland (2012). Low-context communication is explicit and the meaning of it is clear, whereas meaning in high-context cultures is often found in the context surrounding the communication situation, not in the words themselves.

Gesteland's (2012) third cultural pattern concerns egalitarian versus hierarchical business structure and behavior. Egalitarian business people, like Danes (Gesteland, 2012), often find themselves facing challenges that they did not expect when crossing paths with more formal and hierarchical counterparts, as for example Germans (Gesteland, 2012). The egalitarian custom of addressing business associates on a first name basis will certainly offend hierarchical counterparts and be perceived as disrespectful behavior. To egalitarian business executives, who wish to be equals with their business partners, a high level of formality creates an unnecessary distance between the parties.

Gesteland (2012) explains how cultures perceive time differently. The cultures that belong the to the RF group often hold a polychronic time perception. Polychronic cultures are fond of multiple activities at the same time. As managers in polychronic cultures are accustomed to managing several activities at once, they handle interruptions well and do not find change of plans to be a great issue. DF cultures, in contrast, have a hard time accepting deviation from schedules and agendas. Monochronic cultures do one thing at a time. Order and the idea that there is an appropriate time and place for everything is characteristic to these cultures. Moreover, monochronic individuals follow rules of privacy and adhere strictly to plans (Gesteland, 2012).

The final cultural pattern presented by Gesteland (2012) highlights the differences that cultures hold in terms of expressing emotions in business, which are expressed through verbal and non-verbal communication. The use of body language, tone and volume of voice and choice of words are all factors that influence and even spoil business people's chances of succeeding in cross-cultural sales and negotiations if they do not manage to adapt to local customs.

This theory on cultural patterns will assist in investigating the culturally founded differences that exist between Denmark and Germany and enhance the overall understanding of how challenges arise in cross-cultural communication and the implications that they may cause.

4.1.2 A different conceptualization of cross cultural management

Anne-Marie Søderberg and Nigel Holden question some of the basic assumptions that exist with researchers in the field of cross-cultural management, and express a concern that the traditional way of looking at cross-cultural management does not suit the global business world with its transnational companies, multicultural relationship management and 'global connectivity' (Søderberg and Holden, 2002).

In their paper, they state, *"it is … striking how author after author within the field of cross cultural management treats culture as a barrier to interaction and an all-pervading source of confusion* (Søderberg and Holden, 2002, p. 105). By holding this view, they challenge theorists such as Gesteland, who have based much of his work on this exact assumption of culture being a source of misunderstandings and a barrier to reaching common grounds. Additionally, they criticize the application of Hofstede's dimensions, claiming that it has been applied in an uncritical manner as a paradigm, where the assumptions that lay the ground of the dimensions are taken-for-granted (Søderberg and Holden, 2002).

The two scholars believe that more authors should regard culture as a source of competitive advantage and mention Schneider and Barsoux (1997) as an example. According to them treating culture as a tool for competitive advantage will emphasize the importance of cultural synergies when cultures meet to exchange knowledge, values and experiences. In a world driven by the demands of a global market economy, one needs to treat diversity as a resource, instead of a threat, that is essential to succeed (Søderberg and Holden, 2002).

Søderberg and Holden (2002) present their suggestion to a working definition of cross-cultural management, which bases itself on the above view upon culture as a source of competitive advantage.

"The core task of cross cultural management in a globalizing business world is to facilitate and direct synergistic interaction and learning at interfaces, where knowledge, values and experience are transferred into multicultural domains of implementation" (p.113)

Along with their definition, they present the expression of 'managing multiple cultures', a concept that embodies organizational culture, professional culture and regional culture, underlining that culture is more than merely national culture.

Søderberg and Holden's definition of cross-cultural management is an inspiration when working with the case of Cotes, since it focus explicitly on firms interactions with people who identify with different cultural meanings and actions. Overall, Søderberg and Holden (2002) contribute with an alternative view on cross-cultural management that oppose several other theorists and work as an inspiration in terms of the assumptions behind the role of culture in international business.

4.1.3 Cultural intelligence, mindful communication and cross-cultural business behavior

When businesses seek to expand across borders, cross-cultural encounters are inevitable. However, as the amount of studies examining cross-cultural interactions indicate, the meeting between cultures is not straightforward. Often unexpected responses and uncertainty about the other party's intentions put the chance of reaching a successful agreement at risk. Plum et al. (2008) states, "*doubts and misunderstandings arise because the two parties have different views of the situation and different expectations of what should happen*" (p. 18). One might believe that countries, which are geographically placed close to each other are the same, and that people there act and think the same way as back home. Nonetheless, this is not the case. Richard R. Gesteland (2012) has travelled the world and reached the conclusion that, "*no two people of any culture are exactly alike: there are regional, generational and individual differences*" (p. 21). Further, businesses that choose to take the big step of crossing borders to collaborate with foreign partners, suppliers and customers, must "*avoid stereotypes, which are lazy ways of describing people and behavior"* (Gesteland, 2012, p. 21).

Plum et al. (2008) introduces their theory of cultural intelligence (CI). CI is the ability to act appropriately in situations where cultural differences are central, the ability to make yourself understood and to establish a constructive partnership across cultural differences (Plum et al., 2008). Then, how do you judge if one is culturally intelligent, or not? The answer is simple – on the result of the encounter. An intelligent outcome is one that have created a shared understanding across the participating cultures.

Ting-Toomey (1999) presents a similar concept, transcultural communication competence. According to her, transcultural communication competence entails three criteria, which act as a guideline for competent transcultural communicators. Perceived appropriateness, effectiveness and satisfaction are the result of a competent exchange of messages between individuals from different cultures. When both communicators and interested parties experience that the communication lives up to the three yardsticks, the outcome of the communication can be deemed successful. The first criteria, appropriateness *"refers to the degree to which the exchanged behaviors are regarded as proper and match the expectations generated by the insiders of the culture"* (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 262). The second criteria, effectiveness, concerns the degree to which the communicators achieve mutual shared meaning, and desired goal-related outcomes. It takes effective encoding and decoding to develop shared meanings, which leads to a perceived intercultural understanding and the achievement of desired goals (Ting-Toomey, 1999). With an underlying assumption that human beings in all cultures desire positive affirmation from others, the third criterion, satisfaction, asserts that individuals feel more satisfied in an interaction in which they feel validated (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Thus, *"to the extent that important identities (e.g. cultural or gender) of the intercultural communicators have been positively addressed and sensitively dealt with, they will experience an interaction satisfaction"* (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 264). In other words, achieving interaction satisfaction takes an understanding of cultural premises and assumptions that act as the framework for the verbal and non-verbal messages in the communication. Knowing how Ting-Toomey (1999) has compounded a framework of criteria for successful cross-cultural communications, the following paragraphs look closer at cultural intelligence, which is the concept that will be applied in the later analysis.

CI is a framework for understanding. It works as a set of strategies and methods for handling all types of cross-cultural encounters (Plum et al., 2008). It is crucial when meeting new partners for the first time and while establishing the conditions of the collaboration. Even when it seems as if you have found each other and feel that you know one another, CI is required for managing those unexpected situations, where differences that you did not expect, occur.

Plum et al. (2008) explain the reasoning for the need for the concept of CI through a comparison to American psychologist David Goleman's concepts of emotional (EQ) and social intelligence (SQ). All three concepts belong to the same tradition, one that is different from the school of thought that reserves the concept intelligence to 'the ability to learn'. Plum et al.'s (2008) purpose is to pin down that intelligent practice is part of everyday life, where culture comes into play, and that it includes knowledge and skills, as well as the ability to learn. Compared to classical intelligence theories, which link intelligence to the individual (IQ) and partially to genetics, this view on intelligence revolves around a practice and the potential development of a person, a group or even a company. EQ is an intrapersonal intelligence, while SQ is an interpersonal form of intelligence. Plum et al. (2008) is of the opinion that CI entails both forms. Nevertheless, it is more than that. CI extends beyond both EQ and SQ, as "*both emotional reactions and human relations are culturally determined*" (p.47). The art of behaving appropriately is a part of social intelligence, since it entails, among other things, the reading of non-verbal signals. When two people with differing norms on how and when emotions should be expressed experience the same non-verbal signals in public, it will lead to two diverse experiences. With other words, "*non-verbal emotional signals will, for example, change character when observed across cultures, with different norms…"* (Plum et al. 2008, p. 47). Lastly, CI is a necessary skill for international businesses, as this specific concept compared to EQ and SQ, comprises new elements. CI also includes cultural translation of the reactions of self and others, a learning attitude towards cultural differences, cultural self-awareness and a knowledge of culture and its role in communication (Plum et al., 2008).

CI is a combination of intercultural engagement, cultural understanding and intercultural communication (Plum et al., 2008). Importantly, none of the dimensions will yield a high level of CI on its own, as "*cultural intelligence is the synthesis of all three"* (Plum et al., 2008, p. 21). One might wonder why the concept needs to be divided into parts; however, doing so, Plum et al. (2008) explains, enables individuals to identify the specific dimensions that are in need of development.

Intercultural engagement is *"about the emotional aspect of the situation … [it] constitutes the fuel in a cross-cultural encounter"* (Plum et al., 2008, p. 23). Intercultural engagement entails the motivation, the attitude toward cultures that are different and the courage to change aspects of oneself when needed. It concerns the manner in which we are present, when meeting people who think and act differently from what is natural to ourselves. To have intercultural engagement, means having a desire to achieve results with others who are different. It is to think of diversity as a strength and be willing to take on the challenges that may occur. Plum et al. (2008) describes this as the fuel of the encounter, as a lack of motivation is a lack of drive to continue when things are difficult. Besides having to manage emotional reactions of oneself and others, realizing that these reactions are culturally bound and likely to have a different meaning attached to them, is crucial (Plum et al., 2008). When it is appropriate to express emotions, how you do it and to whom you do so is culturally determined. A simple conversation intended to create small talk to boost the energy level of a meeting can end up being fatal to the closure of a business deal, though the intentions were opposite. Lacking awareness of how the other party regard certain types of behavior and communicative expressions will in some cultures lead to the end of a deal, as the types of behaviors that make us feel hurt or angry, is a result of our cultural coding (Plum et al., 2008). Cultural intelligence is a conscious interpretation of reactions and behavior through the knowledge we possess of foreign cultures and the ability to pause ones immediate, and culturally bound, own reaction. To develop an intercultural engagement, the key is adopt a questioning attitude for the case of cross-cultural encounters and an openness to do things differently (Plum et al., 2008).

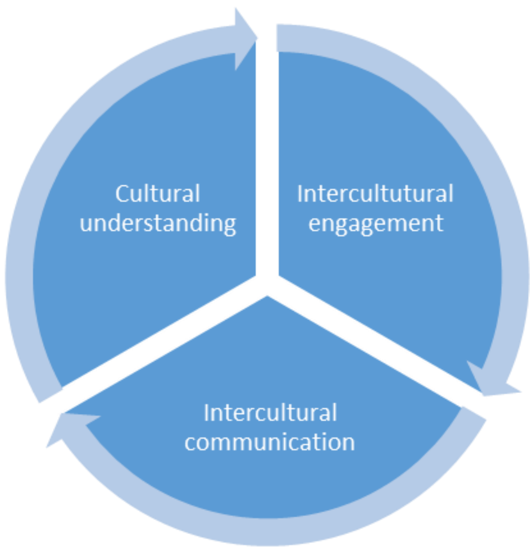

Figure 2. *The dimensions of cultural intelligence.* Created by the author of this paper based on Plum et al. (2008).

Moving on, **cultural understanding** deals with knowledge. Knowledge of one's own culture and knowledge to create the ability to understand people with a dissimilar cultural coding. To do this, takes knowledge on what culture is and what it means to a cross-cultural encounter. In this lies a recognition that one's own behavior is culturally bound and not the right or only possible way to behave (Plum et al., 2008). The general knowledge needed here could be whether the culture you are facing communicate in a high- or low-context manner and if the culture is emotionally expressive or reserved in business situations. Factors like these demand an adaption of communication and behavior, if you are representing the opposites.

"*Cultural understanding implies an understanding of the situation, that is, the ability to sense and discover that cultural differences are at play, and to find out how best to manoeuvre in the situation"* (Plum et al., 2008, p. 27). By doing this we uncover the details and the significance attached to rituals and jargon.

Intercultural communication is the dimension that holds action. All means of expression are involved, be it intended or unintended or in the form of verbal or non-verbal communication (Plum et al. 2008). This is the aspect that takes the other two dimensions of CI into the actual cross-cultural encounter and facilitates the contact between the parties. Without the communication, one cannot be culturally intelligent. It is not sufficient to be present with a friendly and open attitude. The cultural understanding is the background knowledge that must be applied, when formulating the culturally intelligent questions and answers. Routine and habitual expressions have to be on standby, to make room for both parties to find ways to make themselves understood by each other (Plum et al., 2008).

Plum et al.'s concept of cultural intelligence contributes with specific points of focus for people in international business to direct their attention to in learning to navigate the maze of cross-cultural communication. Its threefold division holds a simplicity that ensures understanding of the entire concept as a whole and makes it highly applicable in the analysis of cross-cultural encounters.

Additional studies of Ting-Toomey (1999) shows that her concept of *mindful listening* relates strongly to the dimensions of CI. It holds several similar assumptions and promotes the necessity of holding the ability to be able to understand that communication is cultural-laden. Much in line with intercultural understanding and intercultural communication, mindful listening allows communicators to minimize misunderstandings and thereby maximize mutual understanding. Additionally, mastering the art of mindful listening *"helps us to uncover our own perceptual biases"* (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 112). Her argument for becoming a mindful listener stems from the fact that many intercultural misunderstandings often occur as individuals apply own cultural-laden habits and assumptions, as they interpret other's messages and style of communication. Individuals attach meaning to incoming stimuli or behaviors based on own expectations and preconceptions, and use this personal cultural-laden knowledge to interpret cultural strangers' behavior and their reactions to own behavior (Ting-Toomey, 1999). In other words, one of the great reasons that misunderstandings occur in intercultural communication, according to Ting-Toomey (1999) is that people assume that they perceive and interpret other people's behavior in an unbiased manner, though the opposite is the reality. Ting-Toomey's (1999) concept inspires to explore cross-cultural communication and look into the reasons that miscommunication occurs.

4.1.4 Danish and German business behavior

To the untrained eye, it could could seem as if there are not many cultural differences present in the case at hand. However, Gesteland (2012) presents an outline of both Danish and German business behavior, and from this, it becomes clear that small, yet important differences do in fact exist. Below is a table that provides a general overview of the cultural patterns in Denmark and Germany.

	Denmark	Germany
Deal-focused vs. Relationship-focused behavior	Deal-focused	Deal-focused
Low-context vs. high-context communication	Low-context	Low-context
Egalitarian vs. hierarchical business behavior	Egalitarian	Hierarchical
Monochronic vs. polychronic culture	Monochronic	Monochronic
Emotionally expressive vs. emotionally reserved business behavior	Emotionally reserved	Emotionally reserved

Table 1. *The cultural patterns of Denmark and Germany.* Created by the author of this paper based on Gesteland (2012).

Danish business culture is one of a kind. All business cultures are. Nonetheless, Gesteland (2012) claims that the Danes have managed to create a combination of traits that only about 10 of the world's 6900 or so business cultures share. The result is a business culture that is characterized by a deal-focused mindset, low-context communication, a highly egalitarian business behavior and a monochronic perception of time (Gesteland, 2012). Compared to the Scandinavian neighbors, Denmark have been reported to be *"the Latins of the north"* (Gesteland, 2012, p. 323), as Danes supposedly are more open to changed circumstances. Conducting business in English is no hurdle to Danes, while speaking German not an issue to many.

In his description, Gesteland (2012, p. 324) notes that getting down to business quickly is a core feature of the Danish business behavior. The deal-focused mindset fosters a direct manner of communication and contact when meeting business partners and an in-depth relationship is not necessary to do business, or to be able to trust each other when doing so. Consequently, a sharp division between private and business life exist in Danish business culture, according to Gesteland (2012). An expectation of Danes is that most of the communication, negotiation and business can be conducted over e-mail, video conferencing and phone. Face-to-face meetings are not out of the question, however, not a priority to Danes due to the deal-focused mindset (Gesteland, 2012).

A natural frankness and direct language is the way to communicate in Danish businesses. The verbal directness works with them when cooperating with other cultures alike, and against in meetings with indirect, high-context cultures (Gesteland, 2012).

So how is it to be around a Dane? According to Gesteland (2012), it is a rather casual affaire, and business is conducted in an informal setting. What the rank of a business associate is and the age of the partners is generally not taken into consideration. Why? Because *the law of Jante,* says not to consider oneself of higher status or better than others (Gesteland, 2012). *The law of Jante* is an unwritten rule in Danish society that prescribes equality, why no one should consider himself or herself to be better than others. As a result, Danes generally do not share accomplishments as this disturbs the equality. Addressing others is mostly on a first name basis and in a casual manner, also when meeting for the first time. Nevertheless, the egalitarian business behavior does not come with a casual relationship to deadlines and meeting appointments, why Gesteland (2012) underlines that tardiness is considered impolite. Finally, Gesteland (2012) notes in his description of Danes that the negotiating behavior is one that appreciates well-documented and straightforward communication, not characterized by over exaggerated statements, and one in which realistic offers are necessary.

From looking at Gesteland's (2012) portrayal of German business behavior, it becomes clear that the two cultures share a series of traits, however, as mentioned; no two cultures are the same.

Juxtaposed to Denmark, Germany covers a much larger geographical area. This might not seem as something an international businessperson should be aware of, nevertheless, he or she should. The country is great enough for differences to exist within borders, depending on whether you are in the southern, northern, eastern or western part of the country (Gesteland, 2012). With this in mind, the following presents general tendencies in German business behavior.

To Danes, speaking English is much less of a challenge than it is to Germans. It has become more common for German business representatives to master the foreign language, yet, Gesteland (2012) notes that it is far from everyone in all companies that can and will converse in any other language than German. He offers a critical advice to anyone wishing to conduct business in Germany - to have one on the team who is a fluent speaker of German.

One similarity between the two cultures is how they feel about punctuality. Germans also find that tardiness is disrespectful, and from a German perspective being an hour late for a meeting indicates that you can easily be several weeks late with a potential delivery. The key rules to adhere to in Germany is to be there on time, stick to the agenda and do not interrupt or let yourself be interrupted during a business meeting (Gesteland, 2012).

The greatest difference between the two cultures is the level of social formality. In Germany, one does not simply call another person by his or hers first name as, such practice is considered highly disrespectful behavior. A key lesson to learn before encountering a German is the importance of using titles with persons of executive ranks and higher academic qualifications. Furthermore, foreigners should not expect them to smile at you from the first meeting. Thus, instead of a smile, prepare a firm handshake for when entering a meeting and leaving again (Gesteland, 2012). Germans save their smiles for friends and family, and smiling at strangers is kept to a minimum. Communication in general is not served with great portion of emotions on the side, unless you are in the southern parts of Germany, where Gesteland's (2012) personal experiences has taught him that gestures and facial expression will occur more often than anywhere else within German borders.

Germans agree with Danes that direct, frank and even blunt communication is the way forward, which reflects in their negotiation style, as reaching an agreement takes an opening offer should be realistic, with a small margin, to ensure that the initial offer is not over-inflated. In addition, thorough preparation and sticking to their position is a key characteristic of German negotiators, along with the need to take time before making an important decision (Gesteland, 2012).

These general characteristics, along with the ones included on the two business cultures, offer a point of departure for the analysis of a specific meeting, however, they do not hold all answers.

All of the above knowledge presented in the first part of the theoretical framework contributes to the study of Cotes in Germany as it assembles decades of valuable knowledge on cross-cultural encounters and behavior. Applying this knowledge to a practical case, will enlighten readers and educate them on the meeting between Denmark and Germany. Likewise, it uncovers to what extent the knowledge is applicable to the real world, and through the application to the case at hand.

What is important to remember is that the characteristics of the cultures reviewed above are not applicable to every Dane or German. A Dane might be more flexible in nature than a Swede or German; however, the opposite may happen as it highly depends on the situation and the individual context of the person. It all rest on the experience, which the person possesses along with the background of the individual and additional factors that have shaped this person and made him or her who they are at the given time a situation of analysis occurs.

By presenting the Danish and German cultural features in a simple and hands-on manner, Gesteland (2012) contributes by providing advice and knowledge that is straight forward and applicable in the real world.

4.2 Communication strategy

"Corporate communication is in fact an important 'boundary-spanning' function between the organization and the environment" (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 92). In other words, communication is the key to success. Having communication practitioners create bridges between an organization and its environment ensures that the message and intentions of the senior management team is translated, and worded in a manner that will promote understanding and affiliation with stakeholders. Adopting this view on communication and the importance of it, entails that communication strategies are not mere sets of tactics and goals to achieve. It must become a matter of the central and most senior level of the organization. However, this is the ideal way of incorporating communication into the business when consulting Cornelissen (2014) and not necessarily the reality.

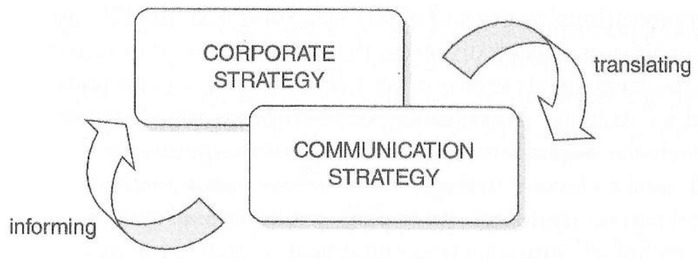

Figure 3. *The link between corporate strategy and communication strategy.* Cornelissen (2014) p. 93

Cornelissen (2014), states that having this dynamic link between the corporate and the communication strategy, as shown in figure 3, assists companies in maintaining the relationships with the stakeholders, as they become capable of asserting their power, and influence the organizations realization of the its goals. Behind a communication strategy is a long process of reputation research and reflection. The process involves phrasing the desired perception that the organization wishes the stakeholder groups to hold. Moreover, an assessment of the current position and the desired position, allows a communication strategy to specify a strategic intent that acts as a general guideline for the communication. Thereby, the juxtaposition of reputation and vision will lead to the formulation of communicative courses of action (Cornelissen, 2014).

4.2.1 Strategy formation

Strategies form in many ways. Several paradigms have over the years prescribed the ideal strategy formation process and offered different ways of thinking. However, Cornelissen (2014) simplifies this by introducing three common features of all strategies. First, strategies arise from both emergent and planned processes. Strategy formation generally starts out with rational and logical processes in which the vision and the goals are laid out, and from there concrete goals and objectives are decided upon. Along this rational logic process, behaviors and actions emerge, and though they are not deliberately planned as part of the strategy, they belong to the strategic scope of an organization. Looking at communication, this means that a company typically has an overall direction for their communication and a range of pre-planned actions and, in addition, emergent ad hoc responses to stakeholder concerns arise. Second, a strategy is a general guideline. It is not a set of specific maneuvers ready to implement. All paradigms agree that, *"strategy concerns the organization's direction and positioning in relation to stakeholders in its environment for a longer period of time"* (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 91).

Third and last, an organization's strategy concerns itself and its environment. Leaning toward the second common feature of strategies, this emphasizes the long-term aspect and choices that are realistic in the different environments surrounding the organization. To succeed, this takes managers that include the mission and vision of the organization and keep in mind what the organization is now, what it wants to be in the future and what it wants to do, along with the limits of the environment. From this, one can draw that strategies are adaptive in that they must be responsive to sudden changes, positive and negative (Cornelissen, 2014).

4.2.2 Designing strategic messages

The content of the communication reflects the process of forming the communication strategy and the individuals who took part in it (Cornelissen, 2014). In addition, the content of a message and the medium through which it is communicated depends on the receiver.

Ideally, the content of a communication strategy is based on an organization-wide assessment of how the organization is currently perceived by stakeholders compared to the vision, how the organization wants to be seen. The gap between the two functions as the basis for the formulation the strategic intent. In other words, it reveals the changes that are needed in the company reputation to reach accordance between reputation and vision (Cornelissen, 2014). From this, the first step is to draw up themed messages that *"are designed to change or reinforce perceptions in line with the vision of how the organization wants to be known"* (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 96).

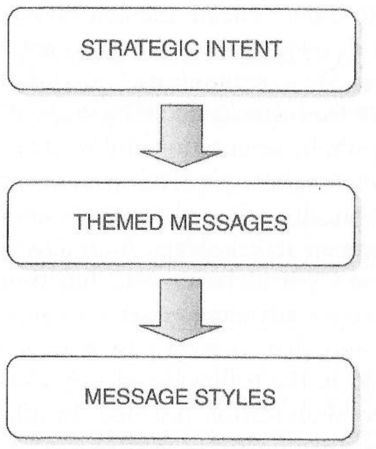

Figure 4. *Stages in formulating the content of a communication strategy.* Cornelissen (2014) p. 97

Cornelissen (2014) continues, as he explains that a themed message brings attention to the unique capabilities, strengths and values of an organization. A message may involve how the products of the company has features that make them capable of solving tasks like no other product on the market, or they can be used as a tool to demonstrate achievements and internal strengths. As a direct translation of the strategic intent, a themed message brings focus to an element of the organization that it aims to be associated with, in the mind of important stakeholders. The messages are communicated continuously and consistently to the specific stakeholder group to achieve a consolidation of the company's reputation (Cornelissen 2014). Lastly, as seen in figure 5, the themed messages are translated into different message styles to convincingly communicate the claims concerning the company's products, values or strengths.

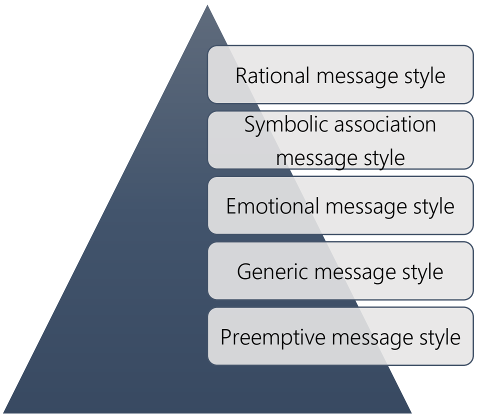

Figure 5. *Strategic message styles*. Created by the author of this paper based on Cornelissen (2014)

The above figure serves to provide an overview of the message styles presented by Cornelissen (2014). The variety of message styles is intended to act as a useful aid to understand the many options companies have available to choose from when communicating. An organization must not choose merely one message style, since different styles suit different stakeholders and messages (Cornelissen, 2014).

The *rational message style* claims a superiority based on previous accomplishments and benefits caused by the organization and its work. The key in this message style is a distinctive advantage in product design and innovation, as this is where the major difference compared to competitors exist (Cornelissen, 2014). No emotions or symbolism is included, only basic functionality of products and knowledge.

The *preemptive message style* takes an orientation toward the industry in which the company is competing. It holds a generic claim that any company in the industry could set forward, however, it has an element of superiority. A preemptive style is strategic, as it impedes competitors from stating the same (Cornelissen, 2014). This specific message style may claim an industry-wide leadership on a relevant issue or a capability.

Cornelissen (2014) breaks down the many parts of creating a communication strategy to bits and pieces, while presenting relevant background knowledge and theoretical aspects necessary to understand communication practices. However, as he goes through the theory of communication, it is rare to meet a citation of another author or researcher, neither ones that hold similar or opposing opinions with. Though some might regard this as a limitation of the book, the work of Cornelissen is still found to be useful to apply in this thesis.

4.3 A basic communication model

Shannon and Weaver's *mathematical theory of communication* was created back in 1948. The theory proposes a model of communication, which is rather technological in juxtaposition to other linear models (Mishra, 2017). Since it is a model created for telephone communication, the explanation below is an adapted version based on Shannon and Weaver's (1998) original version. The presentation of the concepts is put into perspective of generic communication in order to comply with the purpose of the model in this thesis.

The **information source** or sender, is the one to select a message, which consists of either written or spoken words, pictures or music. This is the person who creates the message, chooses the channel for transmission and sends the message. The **transmitter** or encoder, changes the chosen message into the signal, which is sent over the communication channel. The **channel** is the medium utilized to communicate the message. The **decoder,** also called the receiver, represents the person or place, who has received the message and translates it. The **receiver** or destination is the final receiver of the message, who sends feedback to the sender. Lastly, **noise** is everything that surrounds the original message as it was sent from the sender and come in the form of physical disturbances.

Mishra (2017) points out the element of noise to be the key feature of this model, as it is a crucial aid in making communication effective. Considering noise as an element in the communication process allows communicators to consider the various possible disturbances before sending the message instead of having to correct misunderstandings with the receiver later on in the process. The concept of noise is dealt with in the analysis and discussion of the case.

In addition, the feedback loop shows understanding for communication as a two-way process. However, due to the simplicity of the model it does not take into account all aspects of interpersonal communication. Moreover, looking at the model it appears that the sender receives greater attention compared to the receiver and the feedback, in that the sender plays the primary role (Mishra, 2017). Nevertheless, for illustrating the process of communication the model is sufficient.

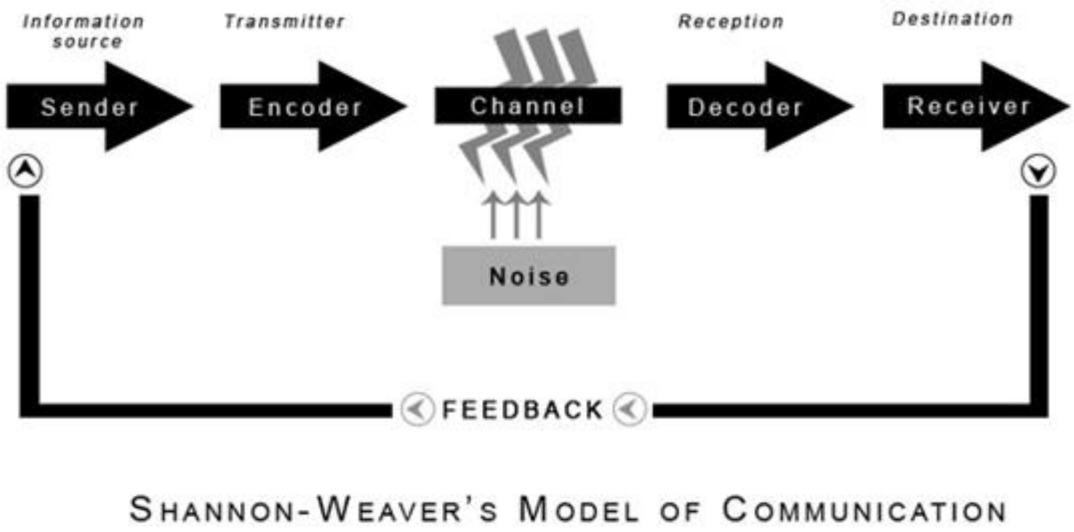

Figure 6. *Shannon and Weaver's model of communication*. Retrieved from: http://communicationtheory.org/shannon-and-weaver-model-of-communication/

5 Analysis and discussion

Building on the primary data set from interviews with the external consultant, T. E. Bach from Consulting Markets and the area sales manager of Cotes, P. C. Lange and the questionnaire responses, the analysis has a series of objectives. First, it aims to uncover to what degree the knowledge of an experienced consultant and a practitioner aligns with theory, such as Gesteland's (2012) cultural patterns and description of Danish and German business culture. Second, the division into themes intends to highlight, which aspects of the intercultural interaction require particular attention, when Danes and Germans meet in business, to ensure that Cotes is well prepared when meeting potential German business partners. In line with this, the analysis also intends to disclose the current knowledge of Cotes' employees in regard to communication and interaction with Germans. Following the analysis of each theme, is a discussion of the relevant points.

It is time to look into the two specific business cultures in detail, in other words, to investigate the *"unique set of expectations and assumptions about how to do business"* (Gesteland, 2012, p. 21) in both cultures.

5.1 Formality

According to Gesteland (2012), Germans retain a level of social formality in society and in business, as formal behavior is a sign of respect. If one comes across an executive, who has a title such as Dr., it is important to address this person with the title and last name. T. E. Bach confirms this, when asked if titles are as important as the theory states, *"yes, functions and titles … if you are a CEO, you need to communicate it, as this will give you access to other types of meetings"* (09:24). He continues, *"you should not forget to mention the Dr. title every time you say their name … you should expect that they will appreciate it"* (09:30). From this, it becomes clear that Germans attach great importance to the use of titles and functions, and how it perceived to be basic respect to mention these. Gesteland (2012) mentions in his chapter on German business culture that more German managers have doctorates compared to other cultures, which reflects the importance they find in having a title and being recognized for it. T. E. Bach's experience highlights how the use of titles is key in German business culture, when he explains how he has met both people that hold on the use of titles, *"I have been in contact with people for several years, who still appreciate that I address them Dr. … I never stopped saying Dr. Nelle for example, and Dr. Nelle never told me to stop saying Dr."* (10:05).

Using this example as a starting point, T. E. Bach emphasizes the need for formality that exceeds the use of titles and makes it clear that this is crucial in addressing Germans, *"this is really a strict, however simple rule, as long as you are not told anything else from a German, then say 'de', 'dem' and last name"* (10:30). This rule however, is flexible to the degree that the German party of the interaction allows it to be. T. E. Bach explains, *"if they say that you can be on a first name basis, however, this is not synonymous with being on a 'du' basis"* (10:45). This quote is particularly interesting as it reveals yet another dimension of the formality aspect. Germans differ between being on 'du' or 'de' basis, on a first or last name basis and with or without the use of titles. Having agreed to turn down formality in one aspect does not equal taking a step down in terms of another. Consequently, It is entirely up to the German individual with whom one is communicating. As an experienced consultant, T. E. Bach often experiences that Danes have a hard time adapting and accepting these terms, *"I experience a lot of Danes who suggest being on a 'du' basis, because to them it is awkward to say 'de'"* (11:05). This example highlights a great difference between the Danish and German culture business cultures. If Danes try to implement their egalitarian business culture in Germany, they will without a doubt run into some sort of challenges. As T. E. Bach and Gesteland (2012) agree, the proper addressing is a matter of appropriate behavior and respect.

In his interview, T. E. Bach declares how perceived appropriate behavior in Denmark might lead to the end of a partnership or a negotiation process with Germans (14:00). He adds that other factors will have a say in such case, however, proper behavior is very important in German business settings. Consequently, the Danes are well advised to follow what T. E. Bach calls a codex*, "there is a codex that states that … as a starting point it is the one with the higher position in the hierarchy who suggest 'du' or being on a first name basis, or the buyer suggest the seller, or the older suggest it to the younger"* (11:16). Moreover, non-native Germans must understand that this formal communication is not an indication of dislike. T. E. Bach explains how he knows of people who have worked together several years that are still not on a 'du' basis with each other (12:05), however, they do so to act professional and keep work and family life separated. This description aligns with Gesteland's (2012) comment on the act of smiling, when he notes that Germans save their smile for friends and family, while limiting it in professional circumstances. Nonetheless, T. E. Bach underlines that this these scenarios and behavioral patterns are caricatures, and how it differs from industry to industry, company to company, individual to individual and in the northern, eastern, southern and western parts of the country. One will meet Germans who suggest a less formal approach early on, while others never do so. He ends by telling how *"the smartest thing to do is to follow the German counterpart and not expect ever to get on a 'du' basis with them"* (12:07).

The interview with P. C. Lange revealed points that affiliate with both those of T. E. Bach and Gesteland (2012). Nevertheless, a juxtaposition of the two interviews also unveil discrepancies between theory and practice. In terms formality, P. C. Lange shares some interesting observations, when he talks of his experience from the past 35 years of collaborating with Germans, *"what I learned from the German market is that it is divided into levels in the way you communicate … the SME's in Germany are easy to have a dialogue with … also as a Dane. If you move up to the larger companies then it's about communication on another level"* (06:15). He continues: *"the way you dress and the way you speak is very different in larger companies"* (06:51). The distinction between the level of formality and differences in communication as depending on the size of the organization is something that has not been pointed out previously by the theorists in this paper or practitioners. Based on his interactions with both subsidiaries and individual clients, P. C. Lange believes that SMEs in general are different and that communication and formality is similar to the Danish egalitarian manner. He finds that *"Germany is moving towards a more relaxed communication practice, if you compare to when I started working with Germans 35 years ago … I don't see that up tight Dr. Schmidt stuff with SMEs."* (07:00). Consequently, he concludes based on his experience that SMEs should be straightforward for Danes to collaborate with (23:10). Interestingly, this leaves us with a theorist and two practitioners, who do not have the same perception of the reality concerning formality in German organizations.

That P. C. Lange is an experienced practitioner is however not difficult to comprehend. While talking of how the SMEs are less formal compared to large organizations, he adds: *"when communicating with these people, then it is of course also about reading their business card … then you know who to talk to … this is also a way I figure out how my attitude should be"* (26:12). He simply reads the business card when meeting German business associates and adjust his behavior and attitude towards them according to their function and title. Utilizing business cards in determining appropriate behavior in a situation is a clever tool in adapting himself to the foreign culture in which he is.

The opinions that P. C. Lange and T. E. Bach share on the topic of formality in German business culture are interesting to analyze, since they embrace the idea of Plum et al.'s (2008) concept of cultural intelligence, in that they concern appropriate behavior and the ability to establish a constructive collaboration while spanning cultural borders. T. E. Bach's German origin ensures a natural cultural intelligence, why it is more interesting to analyze that of P.C. Lange. According to himself, his experience has enabled him to adapt to his settings and learn from them. Additionally, the reflections that he shares in his interview indicates that intercultural engagement is not a strange concept to him, as he shows motivation to continue even though things might be difficult at times. The awareness he illustrates in his interview, is a sign that he realizes how reactions are culturally bound and that this may cause opinions to differ. This same acknowledgement of cultural differences demonstrates his potential to hold cultural understanding. His 35 years of working with Germans has left him with a general knowledge that cultures do not communicate in a similar manner, which he proves when he draws parallels between the Japanese and German communication practices (22:10). Mastering intercultural communication is the one of the next steps for P. C. Lange and Cotes, as they adapt to their German partners in future business meetings.

From looking at the questionnaire responses, it is evident that the employees at Cotes who are involved in this process have heard that differences exist between Danes and Germans. To what extent they know of these differences is hard to determine from their answers. Nevertheless, one employee explains more in depth what the difference is between the two cultures in terms of formality, *"we Danes feel most comfortable, if things are not too formal. We try to decode how relaxed we can be at a meeting rather early. However, I feel that we do well in terms of adapting to other cultures' business norms when necessary"* (Appendix G). One cannot conclude from this statement whether the employee is partially or fully cultural intelligent. Yet, the awareness of this individual indicates a great potential, while it confirms T. E. Bach's statement concerning Danes' urge to lower the level of formality in an encounter. The same employee explains how his experience with Germans have taught him that they address others with Mr. and Mrs., which confirms the statements of T. E. Bach , P. C. Lange and Gesteland (2012). It shows that the Danes in this case, are aware that this is a feature of the German business culture and that it differs from their practice, why they need to take it into account in their meeting with Germans.

A different employee addresses how the geography has a say and confirms T. E. Bach's and Gesteland's (2012) claims in terms of domestic differences, however, he underlines the general formality as he says, *"it depends where in Germany you are. North: more like Danes. South: more* *formal. Generally, you say 'De', 'Dem' and 'Deres'".* Finally, an employee responds that the informality that Danes have a tendency to practice can be interpreted as unprofessional, why it is important to be aware of (Appendix G). Based on the answers given in the questionnaire, these employees generally show a basic cultural understanding for both the Danish and the German culture and, importantly, an awareness of differences that may affect the cross-cultural encounter.

The analysis of formality finds that to a certain extent theory and practice are in accordance. Both Gesteland (2012) and T. E. Bach agree that a high level of formality exist and the importance of adhering to it. P. C. Lange on the other hand finds that it differs based on the size of the organization in question. In line with Peter's distinction, T. E. Bach and Gesteland (2012) mention the danger of caricatures and stereotypes. Perhaps this incongruence in the perception of formality indicates a need for researchers and theorists to make distinctions based on the size of companies, when studying business communication in Germany. A new focus when studying communication would diminish the use of stereotypes or to the least create a couple of new and more accurate descriptions of formality and communication in Germany. In addition, if evidence is found that organizations of a certain size are less formal, and moving towards the egalitarian and Danish end of the continuum, it could become a tool for Danish companies entering the German market in terms of targeting organizations with similar approaches to business behavior. Meanwhile, a higher level of cultural intelligence with Danes, including an awareness of their egalitarian business culture will bring parties closer together. On the other hand, chances are that Peter's perceptions of the disparity in formality is not a generalizable tendency. It is possible that the SMEs he has been cooperating with have shared a range of characteristics, which result in less formal business communication and behavior. The SMEs, may also all be part of an industry with a different and less formal business culture compared to other industries. Therefore, it cannot be a working assumption when meeting a German SME that they are less formal in nature. Additionally, the analysis reveals how the geographical placement has saying according to T. E. Bach, Gesteland (2012), the employees of Cotes and P.C. Lange himself, in terms of business behavior. This means that the geographical placement of the SMEs being compared will need to be similar, if this assumption is to be tested.

In line with the question of geography, T. E. Bach states how, *"German culture cannot be put into a single box. It differs from north to south, east, and west. Germany is big. It is almost impossible to achieve perfect behavior, if you are not born with it. Stick to the general guidelines that will ensure* *that you don't mess up in any parts of the countries. Cultural intelligence aside from this will be too much for the single worker"* (22:57). This quote makes one wonder which tactic is the best when working in Germany. One the one hand, one option to do as T. E. Bach says and simply have an idea of the general guidelines and expect a high level of formality in business behavior, to avoid the confusion of the many varieties in business culture claimed to exist. From the quote, one is left with the impression that this is the safe and easiest way to address Germans. This strategy demands little of the single employee, in that one is only to know of a general set of rules before heading into business ventures with Germans. However, if the differences in business behavior within the country are as great as claimed, the question is, if it safe to go with a set of generic guidelines. T. E. Bach mentions how it is almost impossible to achieve perfect behavior, if you are not born in Germany. Yet, even though the goal is to behave as correct as possible, no one can expect a Dane to act like a native German. The ever-increasing amount of collaborations across borders in the global world takes a certain level of cultural intelligence, and complying with general guidelines does create CI. Companies should not anticipate that it is too much for their employees to build extensive knowledge of the German culture and a certain level of cultural intelligence.

Summing up, the analysis and discussion on the topic of formality has revealed that the difference in formality between Danish and German business culture, is one aspect in business behavior that demands attention. T. E. Bach underlines that a high level of formality exist all over Germany and respecting this is crucial to success, while P. C. Lange suggests that the level of formality differs depending on the size of an organization. The employees at Cotes seem to have an idea that formality in Germany is vital, compared to the business culture they stem from. Whether one should follow general guidelines in terms of appropriate behavior, or aim to achieve greater cultural intelligence is discussed along with other relevant considerations for Danish company entering the German market.

5.2 Dress code

German dress code in business is formal compared to Danish standards in that a suit and tie is expected for men, at least at the initial meeting (Gesteland, 2012). T. E. Bach confirms this when stating that *"Danes and Scandinavians have a much more relaxed dress code than Germans"* (06:39). During the interview he thoroughly explains the importance of dressing nice and formal, and emphasizes that it is not just a question of common decency and respect, it may affect the Germans' attitude toward you, *"I experience a lot of Danish companies who show up at meetings dressed very relaxed … and say, 'I have heard that you need to wear formal clothing, but now I have been to several meetings where people I met did not dress formal'".* He continues, "*that is wrong to conclude, because, even though you meet one who dress casually, it is likely that there is an expectation with the Germans that the guests who wish to sell them something show them respect, and a way to do that toward a German is to dress formal"* (06:50). From this quotation, it is evident that dress code in Germany is not merely a minor part of a meeting; it signifies respect and communicate your level of seriousness. Since Danes do not hold the same attitude toward formal attire, dress code practices will require attention, as Cotes enter Germany to avoid sending misleading signals and risk being perceived as unprofessional when it is not the case. Aside from being a sign of respect, T- E. Bach highlights that dress has an additional function in German business culture, *"it is also about demonstrating power … when participating in a German meeting you wear the right clothes"* (06:24). This is interesting, as it shows how non-verbal communication forms can send important signals in a culture and how the same aspect have differing meaning and importance attached to it across cultures. As opposed to Danish business culture, it is difficult to be over-dressed in Germany, generally, T. E. Bach says, you cannot do wrong by showing up in a suit and tie (07:22). Since the topic of dress is closely related to that of formality, P. C. Lange's argumentation follows the same reasoning. He argues that the dress code depends on the size of the company, *"it totally depends what kind of organization it is"* (10:48). Clearly, he holds on to his distinction between formality levels in SMEs compared to larger organizations and does not seem to consider T. E. Bach 's advice of showing up formally dressed for initial meetings at any company, whether he believes it to be formal or not. As he explains further, he relates it to the development that he believes Germans are going through, moving toward *"a more Danish inspired style"* , and explains how, *"I only see the most formal dress in large organizations when you attending meetings with technical executives or marketing executives"* (11:05). However, P. C. Lange stresses that Germany is not becoming Danish in terms of dress code and formality, why he clarifies that it is still necessary to be dressed properly and acknowledge the formality they expect, though you do not wear a suit and tie (11:31).

Cotes' employees show a basic understanding of the dress code that is expected in German organizations. One mentions the use of tie as a difference compared to the Danish dress code. Another one agrees, as he believes that Germans always wear a tie as a minimum at business meetings

(Appendix G). The final question of the questionnaire allows the employees to share further interesting experiences or thoughts that they may hold. One took the opportunity and described how he attended three meetings in Germany. These three meetings left him with three different experiences and impressions in terms of German dress code. In two of three meetings, the perception that Germans always dress formal did not prove correct. Instead, the German representatives wore jeans and a t-shirt. However, the employee himself adds what might be the explanation of this low level of formality, which is that the informal Germans represented the brewery and engineering industries. Therefore, this specific occurrence is a minor part of the evidence that proves how differentiating business cultures exist in terms of dress code depending on the industry. Furthermore, it confirms T. E. Bach's statements concerning caricatures and the likelihood of coming across situations that diverge from the stereotypes.

Cotes new strategy is to do business with microbreweries in the southern region of Germany, and according to the story of informal representatives from the brewery and engineering professions, the buyers that they will come across are likely to be rather informal in dress. In addition, a statement from P. C. Lange confirms how Cotes are not dealing with larger formal companies. In an indirect manner, he confirms how the adaptive approach that he has utilized so far, is the right strategy, *"this is a completely different set up … there you meet a head brewer wearing a white coat and then it doesn't really matter if you wear nice jeans and a jacket, this will not make you stand out at all"* (24:04).

Gesteland's (2012) cultural pattern concerning hierarchical vs. egalitarian business structure and behavior is clearly reflected in both the current topic of dress and the former one of formality. Danes belong to the informal and egalitarian end of the continuum, while Germans have a tradition to work in strict hierarchies. The different perceptions of what defines appropriate attire, becomes evident simply by juxtaposing the statements of T. E. Bach and Peter. Though T. E. Bach has been working in Denmark for several years, he holds on to his native values and the appreciation of formality and a dress code that reflects this, while P. C. Lange evidently represents the Danish values that appreciates informality and a higher level of flexibility and adaption.

Determining which of the two strategies is the most appropriate is difficult. One the one hand, it makes sense to play safe and go with T. E. Bach 's advice on dressing formal, at least in the beginning. This ensures a good first impression and allows one to establish the basis for a respectful relationship with the German counterpart. Moreover, T. E. Bach mentions how Germans expect that the seller in a partnership make an effort by dressing to show respect and how this expectation is likely to be present, though the German buyer is dressed in a rather casual manner. On the other hand, P. C. Lange's strategy to adapt depending on organizational features might be the key to appropriate German dress code. Perhaps, adaption based on certain organizational characteristics is a proof of P.C. Lange's cultural intelligence. It is possible that he has solved the puzzle and uncovered the level of formality and dress code of his industry, or a specific type of companies. Plum et al.'s (2008) description of cultural intelligence entails the ability to act appropriately in situations with cultural differences, while making oneself understood and creating a constructive partnership. According to P.C. Lange, he has achieved overall success in these aspects over the years, why there is a reason to believe that he has a valid point, or at least, research the idea of differentiating practices in terms of formality and dress determined by the size of an organization. This would be an additional parameter to include in addition to industry and geographical determinants, when defining appropriate business culture and behavior.

Søderberg and Holden (2002) believe that one needs to treat diversity as a resource, instead of a threat to succeed in international business, while Gesteland (2012) belong to the group of researchers who deal with cultural differences as a threat in terms of success cross-cultural business. T. E. Bach appears to adopt the assumptions of Gesteland (2012), however, it seems that Søderberg and Holden's (2002) position inspires Peter. Juxtaposing the two sets of approaches to the attitudes of the P. C. Lange and T. E. Bach, leaves one with the impression that T. E. Bach 's tactics serve to break down the barriers, as he focuses on avoiding misunderstandings, while P. C. Lange comes off as an opportunist, since his focus is not the sources of misunderstandings, instead, he thinks of how he can make the best of the collaboration and reach the organizational goals.

Nonetheless, the two practitioners' choice of paradigm is without doubt not an intentional decision in terms of their approach to the meeting between the Danish and German business culture.

To sum up, this section of the analysis and discussion finds that T. E. Bach holds on to behavior based on overall guidelines, while P. C. Lange sticks to his strategy of adaption depending on several factors. Again, the employees of Cotes signal through their questionnaire responses that they have a basic understanding of the differences that exist between Danes and Germans. T. E. Bach and Gesteland

(2012) agree on the guidelines to follow in terms of dress code in order to avoid being perceived at disrespectful, while P. C. Lange does not mention dress as a means of showing respect. The questions of P.C. Lange's idea of adaption as sign of cultural intelligence is discussed, along with the question of which approach to apply in a Danish-German encounter.

5.3 Language

Gesteland (2012) begins his section on language of business, when describing Danish business behavior by stating that, "*most Danish business people speak English well"* (p. 323). In contrast, he portrays Germans as being merely comfortable with the English language. Moreover, he also notes, how it is mainly larger companies in Germany, who have competent English speakers on staff and, thus, advice all professional sales teams to hold at least one team member who is fluent in German (Gesteland, 2012). Having a German speaker on the sales team is vital for Cotes' success, which is also something that both T. E. Bach and P. C. Lange agree to. P. C. Lange shares how he intends to communicate in English, as he has always done, though it stands in contrast to the advice given by both Gesteland (2012) and T. E. Bach, "*funnily I have always done well in English, when I have been in Germany … I never had any significant issues with that"* (15:37). Nevertheless, his experience has taught him to always bring one who speaks German, "*of course I always brought someone with me who speak German, so that you avoid misunderstandings"* (15:46). The experience that P.C. Lange has from working with different types of German organizations and individuals has given him knowledge on a critical aspect of business in Germany, which is valuable to Cotes.

P. C. Lange talks of the plans that Cotes has in terms of strategy, and mentions how it is likely that they will decide to hire one or more German employees as a part of their presence in the country (14:56). By doing so, they ensure that a great part of the communication they have with German buyers, will be performed in German, thus they exclude miscommunication caused by a language barrier. Yet another safety measure in terms of communication that Cotes plan to have, P. C. Lange explains, is that A. Kjeldgaard, who worked in Germany for three years will be his primary colleague in this process and during meetings with Germans. In addition to being the German speaker on the sales team, A. Kjeldgaard will be the one in charge of the communication with the German Cotes employees and customers, *"if we decide to have German sales representatives, then it is probably going to be the German sales reps and Anders who will handle the German customers"* (13:42). This set-up strongly aligns with theory, as it ensures clear communication and that the Germans are comfortable in negotiations. Furthermore, A. Kjeldgaard works as a role model to the other Cotes employees in terms of proper business behavior in meetings, which is something P. C. Lange feels good about, *"... so therefore Anders is well prepared to, what can you say 'teach' us"* (12:25).

As T. E. Bach answered the question of appropriate language, he made it clear that speaking German is necessary, *"you have to speak German ... and it is completely unconditional. You do not get far in Germany if you have to open doors"* (29:25). With T. E. Bach, the argument is different from that of P. C. Lange. Simply, speaking German is key to be able to get access to potential partners, customers or buyers. As Cotes has already made sure to have the necessary skills on the sales team, this has been eliminated as a possible reason to failure. However, as an experienced consultant T. E. Bach explains further consequences of not speaking German, *"additionally, you are closing doors in advance, as there are still many Germans who do not speak English compared to Denmark ... everyone speaks English in Denmark, but that is not the case in Germany ... many did not learn English in school, for example the entire eastern Germany was taught Russian instead"* (29:50). Nonetheless, despite the fact that speaking English in Germany may not seem to be an option, according to T. E. Bach, he adds to his answer that *"it is getting better and people are getting better, though Germans are nowhere near as good as Danes"* (30:09). All of the above confirms both Gesteland's (2012) point concerning the need for German language skills when in Germany, and supports Cotes' plan to bring A. Kjeldgaard, who is fluent in German to meetings. Interestingly, T. E. Bach shortly comments on a situation, where English is not necessarily excluded as an option, "*it is a different thing if you have a collaboration with a partner for example, then you can agree that the correspondence will be in English"* (29:36). Hence, at certain times and situations, English is an option in doing business with Germans. However, the emphasis that Gesteland (2012), T. E. Bach and P. C. Lange put on the need for German indicates that English should only be an option, if a German speaker cannot be brought along, it is not a long-term solution for succeeding on the German market.

Regarding language use, all respondents of the questionnaire recognize the need for German skills. One state, *"I speak German and this is a significant advantage when communicating with Germans and German organizations"* (Appendix G). Whether this statement stems from personal experience, google or a story he once heard, no one knows for sure. However, the statement radiates seriousness and sends the message of an employee who knows what he is dealing with, why he is likely to be one with experience. This experience can be utilized now and in the future and, while it adds to the existing knowledge bank of the company.

When asked what language they intend to use when meeting Germans, and whether or not they believe that the choice of language affects the result of an encounter, another employee answers, *"German, yes"* (Appendix G). It is hard to say much concerning the deeper thoughts and speculations behind this answer, as the employee have chosen not to share more than these two words, nevertheless, in spite of its simplicity and to some extent, lack of substance, the two words communicate quite a bit. The message is still to speak German, otherwise you risk having a poor negotiation process and to fail at forming partnerships. The third respondent does not speak German, and since Germans are not likely to speak Spanish, he is left with English as his language of business. However, this individual appears to hold fundamental knowledge on the German culture, as he recognizes how, *"I know that Germans are not glad to speak English…"* (Appendix G). By comparing his statement to Gesteland's (2012) and T. E. Bach's descriptions of Germans and their lack of English skills, it becomes clear that these specific employees, to some extent know how to associate with Germans. Yet, this is merely in terms of language. From the answer one cannot tell, whether they are able to behave in a proper manner and develop cultural intelligence in general. The fourth employee honestly replies that he will communicate in English, with the addition that in some cases, it might be a disadvantage (Appendix G). He recognizes that German is a necessity occasionally, however, not every time. This is interesting, since the preceding three employees seem to attach greater importance to the choice of language in Germany. However, whether the reason is little understanding of the importance of language, or actual experience that has taught him when English is acceptable and when it is not, is not known.

Analyzing the matter of language rises a variety of questions. First, what is the truth? Does one need to speak German in order to succeed on the German market, or is it possible to do so in English? Second, does it depend on the industry, which language is accepted? Alternatively, is it a matter of geography? Moreover, how do Germans really feel about English? Are the younger generations more open to speaking English, and is this due to skills or other factors?

To believe that one description can be applied to a culture as the truth is dangerous. Culture is embossed with contingency. It all depends. It depends on the individual you are asking, where the person comes from and what life experience that has shaped the individual. The jobs and the industry in which one works also adds to the complex background that shapes an individual to be whom they are and to believe what they do. Thus, a foreign businessman in Germany will meet differing attitudes toward the English language, depending on when and where they ask. Perhaps, a finance executive will talk highly of English due to his profession and job level, while a local factory worker will explain how he does not understand a single word. T. E. Bach states during his interview how, *"you risk getting in contact with a buyer, who does not understand what you say at all"* (30:22), which highlights that many still do not speak English in Germany and that it highly depends. In addition, he explains that business opportunities may be lost, if one approaches a German company in English, as rejection may happen if Germans are afraid that their language competencies will be insufficient and lead to a loss of power compared to the fluent English speaker (30:35). On the other side, P. C. Lange states that he has had meetings with large organizations, where speaking English has not been a problem (24:30). It is likely that he has met with a company that practice English as their corporate language; however, there is also a chance that German organizations are adapting to the globalizing world. An adaption to the globalizing world and the international marketplace does necessarily entail that all organizations in Germany will have staff fluent in English. It is a process, which takes many years. Nevertheless, P. C. Lange believes that Germans are becoming less formal in communication and that it is rather simple for Danes to collaborate with most Germans (10:59), which indicates that Germans are able to adapt. Perhaps a greater part of German organizations is starting to incorporate English into their business practices. If so, it will be a slow process, as it takes a great focus from an early age and throughout the education system to increase the level of English skills in the country. Additionally, the adoption of English could also be industry or geography dependent. Geography can mean whether a company is situated in the north, south, east or western part of Germany, or whether it is placed in a bigger or smaller city. Gesteland (2012) mentions how it is mainly the larger companies that have English-speaking staff; however, perhaps this is the start to the application of English in business. Whether an organization adopts a new language is likely to be caused by both the industry and the size of the company including the extent to which foreign markets and customers demand the product or service. Having a company placed in the bigger cities along with other companies and even competitors could speed up the realization that English is necessary to be an international player. When P. C. Lange mentions meetings in Hamburg as a place positive of English, it supports the idea that bigger cities promote English. Brewery masters of the small breweries in south Germany will most likely not be the greatest English speakers, since the amount of international buyers, customers and business partners are limited, as they live, produce and sell locally. Studies and field research is necessary to get answers and uncover whether the adaption is going on and if so, to what extent and where, in order to answer the questions raised in beginning of the discussion.

Investigating the theme of language found that the employees of Cotes involved in the strategy process are aware of the present language barrier. Along with T. E. Bach, P. C. Lange and Gesteland (2012) convey a knowledge of Germans' lower level of English skills and the necessity to have a fluent German speaker on the sales team. The discussion debates how the role of the English language in Germany may be changing and some of the factors that could influence that process.

5.4 Business meetings and functions

As previously mentioned, Gesteland (2012) explains in his description of Danes, how the Danish business culture is one of a kind and that the unique composition of traits is shared by few cultures in the world. Lucky to Danes, some of the characteristics are part of the German culture as well; however, a business meeting in Denmark does not resemble the typical German meeting. To cope with these differences takes cultural understanding and the ability to act according to these differences (Plum et al., 2008). P. C. Lange's experience has taught him, that before a meeting with Germans, one sends an agenda, *"in Germany it is expected that one shows up with, or sends an agenda"* (08:20). Though this is not common practice in Denmark, he accepts this German norm, as he finds that it eases communication, *"I think that is a good practice, as it gives the customer, or company you wish to communicate with a chance to prepare what you wish to discuss* (08:28). He compares this structured approach to business meetings to a meeting in December at Cotes, where less controlled discussions went in many directions, as the meeting went along (08:43). T. E. Bach, who attended the same meeting, recognizes this classic Danish business meeting and underlines how it is very different from typical German meetings in terms of structure and participants (15:38). From these statements, it becomes clear that even though Denmark and Germany are neighbors, one of the greatest differences between the two, is the manner in which meetings are conducted. This is key to Cotes, as preparation for a meeting in Germany is more comprehensive and since their behavior must be adapted to German standards.

P. C. Lange shares an additional characteristic of the meetings he has attended, *"typically, when I have attended meetings in Germany, we have been two people, both a technical and a commercial to ensure that the debates won't die away … due to technical questions that the company would like to ask, or some commercial. And, that is why it is typically necessary to be a couple of people for these meetings. This has been a success, however also a necessity"* (09:48). This is where the experience of P. C. Lange demonstrates its value. The fact that he knows the necessity of bringing at least one commercial and one technical representative will set Cotes off to a good start. It has allowed them to plan the set-up with A. Kjeldgaard, who holds the technical knowledge, and P. C. Lange as the commercial sales representative. Knowing this from the beginning is likely to save Cotes time and increase efficiency of negotiations, as they will not have to postpone meetings in order to obtain answers for the German buyers and customers. This specific aspect of attending meetings in Germany is one that Gesteland (2012) does not come across, which demonstrates that real cultural intelligence is learned by doing.

When describing Germans, P. C. Lange lists a couple of traits one should be aware of in business settings, one being that *"Germans are very demanding in that they make great demands to their contractors"* (19:55). He even mentions, how he finds that similar traits to exist between Japanese business behavior and German, *"I spent a lot of time in Japan, and it is the same situation … and therefore it is important that you consider all scenarios already at the first meeting. They need to know who we are, where we are heading and what we can do, the way we communicate and the services we provide. So, one needs to be very well prepared when starting business in Germany"* (20:10). Later he says, *"I actually think that these two countries are similar in the manner in which you communicate with them and talk to them and prepare to meet them … be prepared, bring the right people"* (22: 11). Aside from this being an interesting parallel, it accentuates key differences between Denmark and Germany. Juxtaposing this description of Germans to the Danish meeting commented on by both T. E. Bach and P. C. Lange, the crucial difference regarding preparation stands out. P. C. Lange's comparison, which he bases on his experience, is a sign that his cultural understanding is great, as he is able sense that different cultural differences are at play and act accordingly (Plum et al., 2008). He has knowledge of several cultures and understands the importance of paying attention to the communication and behavioral aspects that represent the culturally bounded differences.

Two additional traits of German business culture are clear from the interviews and Gesteland's (2012) descriptions. First, Gesteland (2012) and P. C. Lange share ideas of the main characteristics that business presentations should hold. Gesteland (2012) reports how, *"Germans respond to very detailed presentations supported by copious facts"* (p. 359), while P. C. Lange says *"you need to make good presentations, they do not have to be impressive, they can be technical"* (21:00). Consequently, theory and practice are in accordance in terms of the standards for business presentations, as both recognizes how Germans look for documentation and professional appearance, while not being impressed by visuals. Though it means that Cotes in all probability will have to adjust their presentations and the focus of them, it gives them the opportunity to prepare well from home and to eliminate the risk that a German company rejects them based on their presentation or a lack of information and documentation. Second, tardiness proves to be a minor aspect that takes major attention. Doing business in Germany and tardiness are two things, which both practitioners and theorist agree do not harmonize. Gesteland (2012) comments how it can make or break a deal, since Germans link being late for at meeting to a late delivery of goods or services. T. E. Bach reflects his German origin, when he starts his explanation of Germans in general explaining how, *"there are obvious things such as punctuality, which is very important"* (06:20), as what this a matter of course to everyone. P. C. Lange's familiarity with the rule of tardiness will benefit Cotes' when attending meetings with Germans. Nevertheless, Danes belong to the same group as Germans in terms of view on tardiness, why it does not appear to become the greatest challenge in the meetings between Cotes and German partners. A questionnaire respondent adds a point that regard meetings and the norms to follow in Germany, which was not mentioned by either T. E. Bach or P. C. Lange, *"you have respect your appointments, and let them know if you cannot make it"* (Appendix G), which is an additional rule to follow in collaborating with Germans. However, comparing Gesteland's (2012) descriptions of time behavior and attitude toward tardiness, the similarity is absolute, since both Danes and Germans expect time to be respected, and agreements and deadlines likewise. An additional interesting comment from the questionnaire illustrates an awareness of the professionalism Germans appreciate and expect, as one explains that when communicating with Germans, he limits the amount of jokes, as he is afraid to be misunderstood or come off as unserious (Appendix G).

"It is important to use titles with persons of executive rank and those with higher academic qualifications" (Gesteland, 2012, p. 358) in Germany and this is a major dissimilarity compared to

Danish culture and business behavior. German utilize functions to address people, which relates to the level of social formality that characterizes their national and business culture. However, functions are important in another aspect of German business as well, which T. E. Bach explains, *"they care a great deal about functions. For example, a CEO expects to have a meeting at the CEO level ... a CEO simply does not believe that he can get the same from a meeting with a chief of sales or a sales rep, which in their view makes it a waste of time"* (08:40). He continues, *"which is wrong to conclude if you know Danes. A Danish chief of sales has more responsibility and authority and can to things that perhaps a Germans chief of sales cannot do"*. This report illuminates an aspect that can challenge Danes. The amount of responsibility and authority that the workers possess in a German company is restricted compared to Danish conditions, as organizations in Germany are hierarchical in nature (Gesteland, 2012), which result in a clear-cut distribution of authority among employees. Danish organizational structure, on the other hand, is often flat with few management layers, and allows for the CEO to call any employee and ask a question, while employees at all levels can contact the CEO if they deem necessary (Gesteland, 2012). To Cotes, this means that they must understand that German companies are organized in a different manner and that one must work with the hierarchy to succeed. In German organizations, T. E. Bach says, you can easily give an employee a great amount of responsibility, however, if they do not have the authority to live up to the responsibility, they are unable to solve the given task (04:24). In Danish organizations, the egalitarian business behavior and structure results in the opposite organizational environment, as workers are expected to solve tasks without close supervision. Overall, Gesteland (2012) describes Danes as a type of people who do business in an informal setting and a group to which status, age or titles are not something that is taken into consideration at all times. Thus, it shows that Denmark and Germany are two countries close to each other geographically, however far from each other in terms of business structure and behavior. Yet, the explanation of the differences between Danes and Germans does not merely lay in the hierarchical vs. egalitarian organizational structure. It appears that two different views upon status and the importance of it exist. In Denmark, the unwritten *law of Jante* prescribes how no one should consider him- or herself to be of higher status or better than others. Danes in general do not to share their individual performances and achievements, unless they are specifically asked to. T. E. Bach explains how German culture has an opposite set of values that result in quite a different behavior, illustrating that this is yet another aspect, which holds great differences between the two cultures, *"a* *very great part of it is fundamental values. An example is the law of Jante which restrains Danes in terms of bragging or showing off one's success and Germany lives on bragging and showing off success … in Germany you talk about your car, status symbols, and how successful you are …"* (16:03). He adds, *"you obtain recognition for these things".* Therefore, Danes in Germany have to overcome the habitual behavior caused by *the law of Jante* and accept that brag is a part of German business behavior. However, the same accept of highly different behavior applies for Germans in Denmark.

Despite the great differences that have been outlined, Danes and Germans largely agree to a few more aspects of business behavior.

Emotional expression in Danish business is limited. Interestingly, Gesteland (2012) proclaims Danes to be 'the Latins of the North', though Danes prefer to keep a decent distance between people and speak in a soft voice. The only physical contact is the handshake, as in Germany. Gestures in Denmark are limited to the extent that Gesteland (2012) *"wouldn't rate a short paragraph"* on it (p. 328), since expression mainly takes place using verbal language instead of body language. Lastly, one does not interrupt a Dane, while speaking, which is great for Cotes, as Germans do not do so either (Gesteland, 2012). Germans do not have a need to build a relationship to do business, as in Southern Europe, which is fortunate, as Danes feel the same way. In addition, none of the two cultures have a need to small talk more than just a few moments, before they start talking business and negotiate. Lastly, the negative attitude toward tardiness, which both cultures hold, is founded in the monochronic time behavior they share. Meetings must start on time, and one does not keep others waiting, nor talk on the phone during a meeting (Gesteland, 2012). These similarities give Cotes a head start in working with Germans that many other cultures would not have. Even so, it must be stressed that local, individual and industry dependent differences may occur. A local difference is already presented by Gesteland (2012) himself as he states that, *"Germans are relatively reserved, not given to enthusiastic public displays of emotion, although southern Germans tend to be somewhat more expressive"* (p. 358), which is interesting to Cotes in terms of the plan of working with breweries in this exact region of the country.

As with the other themes, this analysis of business meetings and functions has brought out a couple of interesting topics for discussion.

The question is whether the great difference in the use and importance of titles and functions will cause issues in a Danish – German collaboration. On one side, the use of titles and the divide according to functions that exist in Germany is a distant phenomenon to Danes. One risk that a Danish representative will be oblivious of either addressing by title, or forget who the appropriate person to turn to for a conversation is. Due to the sharp division of functions in German hierarchical organizations, one cannot merely address any individual at a business meeting, or at any other time, which is common practice in Danish egalitarian business behavior. T. E. Bach explains how it is common to have several contact persons in one company, depending on what it concerns, *"be aware of the functions that the contact persons have, what authority they have, when they have to talk to their superior … you should expect that as soon as a German organization reach a certain size to have several contact persons"* (01:55). Thus, it may be complicated for Danes, including Cotes' employees, to understand whom it is appropriate to address when and under what circumstances, to ensure that no German is offended, since Danish companies do not follow the same procedures. On the other side, it is a matter of cultural intelligence on the behalf of both parties. If Danish representatives in Germany focus their attention on following the general guidelines, such as those shared by T. E. Bach and Gesteland (2012) while adapting to the organization in question, they are well on their way to appropriate behavior. Adapting to cultural norms and behavior is part of doing business in a foreign culture, why a Dane in Germany or any other culture, must do their best to develop cultural intelligence and learn to adapt to the specific behavior of the foreign business partner in question. Nonetheless, Germans have a responsibility as well. It is fair for them to expect potential suppliers and the seller in a negotiation to adapt to their business behavior; however, they too must acknowledge that cultural intelligence does not merely apply to the visitor. Being culturally intelligent is also about hosting foreign cultures. The host culture can demonstrate cultural intelligence by recognizing that one mistake in behavior does not need to be intentional and that such a mistake is likely to be rooted in the visitor's cultural norms. In the case of Germans, Cotes' future business partners must understand that if inappropriate behavior occurs that it is not a sign of disrespect, however, a part of developing cultural intelligence.

The second point of discussion is whether the great divide in terms of the need to brag in Germany and the Danish opposite, *law of Jante*, will become an issue. As T. E. Bach says, *"Danes are per definition restricted from bragging or showing off ones success, and the entire Germany lives off of* *brag and showing off success"* (16:05). If one's focus is differences between cultures and the tension and miscommunication it can cause, then this will be an issue. To expect executives with complete opposite views upon the need and reason for brag to work together smoothly, is rather precarious. Chances are that German organizations will not believe in the abilities of the Danish organization or employees and that they are capable of performing or achieving what they say they are, if they do not present their previous successes. At the extreme, it may result in a loss of partnership, without the Danish party knowing the reason for this. They would be unable to specify the cause of the failure, as it is a basic cultural value that no one talks off in public. From the opposite point of view, Danes may find that a German organization talk too much of their achievements and previous performances. Being raised to understate achievements, it can easily both distract you and become a source of irritation that will drive the Danish party to end the deal. However, if one chooses to open up to the differences, accept, and believe in them, the parties can learn from each other. It might lead to a partnership in which the individuals learn about cultural differences and see their own cultural norms in a different light. Danes could learn that it is not necessarily always the best idea to keep previous achievements in the dark. Perhaps, learning to brag, to a certain extent, will help one land more deals in both Denmark and other countries. In contrast, Germans need to accept that they cannot judge the performance of a Danish organization on the amount of success stories they share at a meeting, and realize that they should take a closer look at the experience of the organization before judging it. The two cultures will not necessarily experience a change of habits in the manner they communicate and promote themselves after meeting an opposite culture, nevertheless, it may inspire both parties to rethink the way they do things and add to their cultural intelligence, which can be utilized in future cultural meetings.

To sum up comprehensive preparation and agendas are crucial to remember when Cotes plan meetings with new German business partners. The experience that P. C. Lange possesses will be of great value to Cotes, as they are prepared for the strict demands that Germans hold. In addition, T. E. Bach and P. C. Lange share their awareness on the need for addressing by titles and respect of the functions in an organization. Interestingly, P. C. Lange mentions how it is necessary to show up two people at meetings in Germany, which is a practice that Gesteland (2012) does not address. T. E. Bach has a different and more general focus on functions and titles, while P. C. Lange's is on specifics, such as presentations and agendas.

5.5 Communication

Awareness of cross-cultural encounters is crucial for the success of Cotes in Germany. However, this awareness is not enough. The representatives of Cotes need to apply this critical knowledge in practice through intercultural communication (Plum et al., 2008), and have it in mind at all times in all communication situations that will arise during the process of establishing a business partnership and in the time after.

Until this point, the analysis has considered cultural factors and determinants. Nonetheless, entering the German market successfully calls for well-planned and targeted communication efforts. When asking T. E. Bach how to reach the German organizations, he makes it clear that the typical approach seen in Denmark, where one markets a company solely through online channels is not suitable for the German market as, *"it is not too common to seek information online as you know it from Scandinavia. It is still catalogues, physical catalogues. It is getting better in Germany, however, they will always be behind, they always have been in terms of technology"* (31:40). He adds, *"that being said, it is a great supplement to have a German web site and to be present on social media".* This comment on the general trends in Germany is highly useful to all organizations that plan to enter the German market, since it brings focus to the fact that this western country does not utilize online communication to the same extent as Scandinavia for example, though they have access and resources to do so. Having this knowledge is crucial, as not knowing of this difference in communication channels, will lead to unsuccessful communication efforts caused by a lack of attention paid to this cultures' specific habits. The awareness of communication practices in Germany allows Cotes to be prepared and develop brochures and catalogues from the beginning, and bring them to the initial meetings with buyers in Germany. Additionally, T. E. Bach argues that online communication is not the proper strategy in Germany, since the approach is too passive (32:17). As he elaborates, he explains that communicating in a passive manner as a new player on the market will not work as, *"you are waiting for people to find you or contact you … you have to go out actively and knock on doors"* (32:20). He highlights the need for a communication strategy that involves a great extent of physical presence to succeed in reaching potential customers. Furthermore, he confirms how it is risky to believe that applying the same communication strategy as elsewhere, or back home is feasible, *"numerous Danish organizations in their domestic market are used to being contacted by customers as one have built a reputation on the market, when they have been there for a long time and are recommended from* *the biggest clients. You are likely to drive a business; probably an okay business, however not optimal, but you can drive a business without direct sales efforts."* (32:39).

Thus, Danish organizations in Germany must plan an active and present communications strategy, in which they prioritize physical presence at industry exhibitions and visiting subsidiaries and buyers. The focus on communication is supported by Cornelissen (2014), who argues that a focus on communication can facilitate the implementation of a corporate strategy by assisting the communication to internal and external stakeholders, which decreases the amount of misunderstandings that otherwise could impede a smooth implementation of the strategy.

The next step for Cotes is to think of the types of messages they are to communicate and the content of them. Cotes must include themed messages in their marketing material that involves how the product features make them capable of solving the issues that the microbreweries have. By including cases that explain and prove how their dehumidifiers have solved the issue with other microbreweries, they demonstrate their achievements, which supports the German need for documentation. These cases should also be rich on technical knowledge to take the German need for technical information into account as well.

Due to the nature of Cotes and the industries in which it operates, the rational message style and messages with an industry orientation is the appropriate choice for the company to apply. The rational message style is right for Cotes, as the company has invented products that are highly competitive in several industries, and since they have cases to prove unique capabilities. In addition, the rational style fits the target group and their preferred style of argumentation. As in presentations, one should not over exaggerate any claims or rely on over the top visuals if they wish to attract German buyers, why this type of argumentation or message that excludes emotions and symbolism, while including basic functionality of products is suitable for reaching German buyers.

The second message style that is appropriate for a company such as Cotes, it he preemptive one, as they are superior in their solutions. Cotes is ahead of competitors, as they offer a product with a unique value proposition to a specific segment, who has been neglected previously. They are able to provide solutions for a new segment with which competitors cannot compete. In this type of message, Cotes must underline how their dehumidifiers hold features that none of the other substitutes on the market do, and how their solutions are unique and highly valuable to the microbreweries.

The communication that Cotes is doing now and in the future, is vastly affected by what Shannon and Weaver call *noise* in their model of communication. *Noise* is a crucial element to consider if the message is to reach the receiver, and be perceived the way it was intended to. The term *noise* covers possible disturbances that may affect communication as it moves from sender to receiver. In this case, *noise* covers the differences in cultural norms, perception and in behavioral patterns, the analysis has revealed. If these differences are not taken into account, that is, if Cotes choose to communicate in a Danish manner both orally and through their marketing material, their message will not get through due to the lack of attention to *noise* i.e. cultural dissimilarities. *Noise* is the reason communication needs to be adapted to target groups and cultures. It represents the differences that exist due to the numerous factors that influence who we are as individuals, nationalities and organizations. If not provided for, *noise* may lead to miscommunication that will only be discovered due to the feedback loop, which means that the chance to make a good first impression is lost and the work taken to recover from the communication mistakes will be highly challenging. In short, Cotes must put their knowledge of the two cultures into action by viewing their communication material from a German perspective in order for the marketing campaign to successfully attract buyers.

The element of *noise* is related to the dimension of intercultural communication in Plum et al.'s (2008) concept of cultural intelligence. To become culturally intelligent in terms of German culture, Cotes must master this dimension as well. They do so by accepting the *noise* and applying the cultural understanding when constructing their communication materials and adapting their behavior in meetings. In reality, this requires Cotes and their partners to take the time to talk about what they believe is appropriate behavior and communication in the presence of each other. Developing these skills calls for a continuous test of actions and questions, to discover what works when and where. Lastly, the space of the meeting must match the intention of the cultural encounter, as physical surroundings are a source of *noise* as well and just as important as other types of *noise*.

In line with the above focus on communicating with cultural differences in mind, is an example of such a difference mentioned by both T. E. Bach and a questionnaire respondent. It revolves around cars. Evidently, the label of the car and the power is possesses can mean a difference to the outcome of a business negotiation. T. E. Bach explains, *"... he arrives in a polo. If he cannot afford a better car, then maybe his business is not doing well"* (17:50). He continues, *"together with Danish companies I have visited German organizations in our network ... asked them which cultural differences they see. How* *do you see Danes and what challenges do you see? We had some very honest conversations … a German CEO sad 'you should not arrive in a Polo. You will not get any further if you drive a Polo"*. This is a simple example of how Cotes, and other Danish organizations, can adapt their non-verbal communication to the German receiver and avoid unintentional communication that will work against them. In addition, the example proves that communication exceeds conversations and expression through body language, and how it entails the expression of personality and achievements through material artefacts. Clearly, the importance of this form of communication is greater in Germany than in Denmark. The explanation is the former mentioned German need to brag and the Danish *law of Jante.* The same principles apply to both communication in the form of conversations and non-verbal communication in terms of objects and the message they send. One questionnaire respondent agrees to T. E. Bach's claim that the type of car you drive sends a key signal to potential German partners and comments, *"one's personal appearance (for example the car you drive) is important to a German"* (Appendix G). In brief, it means that Cotes should consider as basic a thing as their choice of car and ensure that it aligns with the message they wish to communicate to potential buyers.

Based on the above analysis, an interesting aspect that has not yet been investigated, the one of high-context vs. low-context, will be discussed below.

On the one hand, Denmark and Germany are two low-context cultures that communicate in the same manner. As mentioned previously and described earlier by Gesteland (2012), the two cultures value direct communication and to keep the focus on the deal, instead of relationships and private matters. Verbal directness and clear communication are two things that both Danes and Germans value, reflecting that the cultures are low context communicators (Gesteland, 2012). To Cotes, this is ideal, as they are not forced to adapt to an opposite manner of communication and behavior in their meetings with Germans. Sharing these traits places them in the same group and in the same end of the high-context – low-context continuum and due to the geographically close placement of the countries; they are likely to hold similar communication practices. Adopting this view holds that the differences that may exist are insignificant, why they will not pose a threat to the final outcome of the cross-cultural encounter. Simply, both cultures *"say what they mean and mean what they say"* (Gesteland, 2012, p. 41).

On the other hand, a study of North European business cultures conducted by Professor Malene Djursaa (1994) revealed fine graduations between Danish, German and British business behavior, though the countries are all placed at the low-context and deal-focused end of the continuum (Djursaa, 1994). The results of the study supports the notion of cultural tendencies and how these are a question of degree. Interestingly, it uncovered that the Danes get down to business less quickly than their German colleagues do (Gesteland, 2012), which is a central point to this case, as Cotes prepares to negotiate with German counterparts. In terms of communication, an additional interesting finding derived from the study, is the degree to which Denmark and Germany are low-context. The difference is not great compared to Asian cultures, however, Djursaa (1994) concludes that Denmark is somewhat more high-context than Germany. This comparison of low-context cultures poses interesting questions that are relevant for Cotes to consider when entering Germany, as it appears that Denmark and Germany are not as similar as suggested by Gesteland (2012). The fact that the Danes interviewed in the study by Djursaa (1994) report how they find Germans to get down to business faster than they do, should make practitioners questions the above similarity claimed to exist between Denmark and Germany. The reports need to overrule generic descriptions as they illuminate minor differences in communication practices, which one does not know the effect of, if they are ignored. Gesteland (2012) supports this notion, as he describes how, *"differences in cross-cultural communication create invisible barriers to international trade"* (p. 46).

Summing up, communication between Danes and Germans should be rather straightforward. However, when talking of communication strategy Cotes must be aware that entering the German market takes an effort that prioritizes a larger degree of physical presence at exhibitions and one that goes beyond having a German web site. The cultural intelligence of the company relies on its ability to incorporate the cultural understanding and knowledge they possess on Germany into action through proper intercultural communication. A simple advice from T. E. Bach is to make sure to drive a car that represents what they wish to communicate, when they meet Germans in person. Lastly, Denmark and Germany are both categorized as low-context communicators, however, Djursaa's (1994) study questions this and highlights that the similarities in terms of communication practices may not be taken for granted.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to gain insight into the differences existing between Danish business behavior and German business behavior, and the implications that these differences have on the cross-cultural encounter between the Danish company Cotes and German business partners. The thesis sought to obtain a practitioner's perspective to enable a juxtaposition to theory, and thus developed a case study of Cotes, which is currently in the process of developing a strategy for entering the German market. Through analysis of a primary data set consisting of in-depth interviews and a questionnaire, the thesis has uncovered the exact aspects of business culture that differ between the two cultures along with their impact on cross-cultural encounters. In addition, it has uncovered to which degree theory aligns with practice and the current knowledge held by relevant Cotes' employees in terms of cultural norms and behavior in Germany.

The findings show that significant differences exist between Danish and German business culture, despite the fact that they are neighbors. The degree to which the business behaviors differ varies according to the aspect in question. Comparing the cultural descriptions of Gesteland (2012) to the statements of the experienced consultant T. E. Bach, displayed overall accordance, since both operate based on general guidelines and rules of behavior. Interestingly, the area sales manager of Cotes, P. C. Lange, broke away from the stereotypical manner of portraying Germans and presented his personal idea of how one can divide German organizations and businesspeople into subcategories, instead of seeing all German businesses as belonging to one generic category. P. C. Lange believes, based on his 35 years of experience with Danish – German business collaborations that German SMEs have a lower level of formality and that the dress code in such organizations is less formal compared to the one in large organizations. He questions the idea that all German companies expect one to be dressed in a suit and tie when visiting, and suggest that the dress code and overall formality at business meetings depends on the size of the business and the attendees. To him, one cannot determine how to dress and behave, before having looked into who the buyer is and the characteristics of the organization.

Moreover, the interviews revealed a discrepancy between the conviction of the external consultant and the one of the experienced area sales manager with regard to attitudes on different aspects. However, the two interview participants' attitudes differed most in terms of the theme concerning dress code. As T. E. Bach believes in general guidelines, he is convinced that to be correct and show respect, the appropriate attire for the first meeting with any buyer is suit and tie. Peter, on the other hand, stands his ground, as he believes that it depends on several factors, and that real life is not that black and white.

The thesis has found that formality is an aspect in which the countries differ greatly and thus a theme that demands great attention from Cotes' employees in Germany. A high level of social formality in German society is reflected in the business culture. Complying with this cultural norm is considered a matter of respect. That is, if foreign business representatives do not adopt the formality it equals disrespect. Thus, Danes must address Germans by *de* and *dem*, along with last names, even though it is in conflict with Danish business culture. Furthermore, it is common for German managers to hold higher academic titles, which is yet another difference from Danish business, and one that should be addressed. Consequently, it is crucial to know whether the German party holds a title before addressing him or her. Moreover, Germans are generally reserved in business, which means that smiles are limited and not something that is practiced in business, which is important to remember for a Dane, in order not to feel disliked and misinterpret non-verbal signals. Lastly, the level of formality in Germany differs according to geography, why Danish businesses cannot expect to meet the same type of German culture in the north as in the south or to the east and west.

Language is a crucial aspect to take into account in a meeting with German business partners, and the aspect in which Gesteland (2012), T. E. Bach and P. C. Lange all agree. The great difference in terms of language between the cultures is that English is not a matter of course in Germany. Danes are comfortable with English, Germans are not, and so one needs German language skills to do business in Germany. Since A. Kjeldgaard and P. C. Lange are part of the representative sales team, Cotes is well prepared in terms of this cultural difference. The employee who responded to the questionnaire showed an overall understanding for the fact that speaking German is a necessity.

This thesis also found that business meetings and functions are aspects to be aware of as a Dane in Germany, thus one Cotes must pay attention to. P. C. Lange and Gesteland (2012) agree that presentations in Germany must entail technical information and documentation, while agendas and preparation is key to a successful meeting. Accordingly, the analysis of the business meeting aspect did not reveal major discrepancies, aside from the level of formality and the structure, in that the two cultures are both deal-focused and hold a monochronic time perception.

In contrast, the use of functions in Germany is critical to define responsibility and authority, while the egalitarian manner of conducting business in Denmark has removed focus from a sharp division of employees. Consequently, Danes in general and Cotes must remember that communication with German businesses is according to function, which means that a different person must be contacted depending on the question or situation at hand.

The final aspect, or theme, that this thesis has found differences to exist in, is that of communication. A communications strategy that has potential to succeed in Denmark is not likely to do so in Germany. The popularity of online advertising and marketing, as known from Denmark, is not a common phenomenon in Germany. In general, Germans seek information elsewhere compared to Danes. Therefore, Cotes must plan their communication efforts with this in mind and attend industry exhibitions to represent their products. Due to the German requirements for technical information and documentation in general, the message styles in the marketing material and on the German web site must acknowledge this and present a logical and rational line of argumentation. Finally, communication differs in an everyday aspect as rudimentary as the choice of car one drives. In Germany, the choice of car communicates an important message and affects the eyes with which one is seen.

In terms of the cultural intelligence that the employees at Cotes hold, it has been found that the knowledge they possess on German business culture is substantial. Several employees have personal experience with Danish-German collaborations, why their cultural understanding is well developed and ready to be put to use as Cotes re-enters the German market, when the new strategy is settled. Holding an extensive cultural understanding from the beginning allows the employees, to apply this as they engage with the German culture and, importantly, as they practice intercultural communication. The dimension of intercultural communication will be challenging for the employees as this is where they must prove in practice that they are able to set habits on stand by and adapt to German cultural norms.

In an overall perspective, this thesis has found that the employees at Cotes are well prepared for their future collaborations with Germans. They are entering a market that hold great potential, and the investments made to enter will pay of, if they manage to develop their cultural intelligence and manage the cultural differences that has been found to exist between Danish and German business behavior in the analysis and discussion. One cannot present a final list of the dissimilarities that exist between the two business cultures, as culture is founded in the size of the company, the industry, the department and the individual. It is always a caricature, why one should remember that there will always be the companies that act opposite of the general guidelines. However, as Cotes plan to collaborate with microbreweries in the south of Germany, they are likely to come across a business behavior that is low key and less formal than guidelines suggest, since the businesses will be small and represents a segment that is less formal in nature.

6.1 Recommendations for Cotes

The results of the analysis reveal that Cotes' employees are well prepared to enter Germany and meet German business partners. Nevertheless, the analysis and discussion lay the grounds for a range of recommendations that are wise to adopt. First, Cotes must remember to adapt to the business partner in question since culture highly contingent. The level of formality, the specific dress code, the manner of communication and preferences in terms of language all depends on the individual, the profession, geography, demographics and many other individual factors, why no behavioral pattern or set of cultural norm will fit all Germans. Second, in line with recommendation one, Cotes must observe and listen to the people they meet. This will teach them the appropriate behavior for the time and place they are in, and allow their cultural intelligence to be both challenged and developed. Third, the employees who are to meet German partners in person need to consider whether it is wise to ensure a good and respectful first impression and wear a formal attire, though they do not believe it to be necessary. Doing so, communicates respect toward the German counterpart and avoids any unintentional non-verbal signals to be send. Fourth, and in line with the first recommendations regarding formality and adaption to the individual buyer, is the importance that must be remembered in terms of addressing by title and directing questions according to function. Likely, Cotes will meet a rather informal business behavior with the microbreweries; nevertheless, they need to be aware of the underlying expectation in terms of formality, even if the dress code has been downplayed. Therefore, no matter the level of formality that the sales team may come across, they must follow the unwritten rules that exist concerning the use of 'du', 'de' and 'dem', and being on a first name basis and last name basis. In short, follow the German counterpart and do not ever expect to get on a 'du' basis with them. Fifth, simple norms such as sending an agenda in advance and providing sufficient information at meetings must be taken seriously, in order to come off as professional and act as a company that the Germans trust enough to collaborate with. Sixth and last, the communication strategy that Cotes apply should hold a great amount of physical presence at relevant events, as this is where German buyers seek information and are prepared to gain knowledge on new products. The marketing material that is publish must be adapted to German standards, in terms of content, thus the most effective message styles are rational and position the organization as superior in terms of solutions.

6.2 Future research

In the process of uncovering the aspects of business behavior in which the Danish and German cultures differ, this thesis has prepared the grounds for future research. Several aspects are interesting for scholars and practitioners to examine, as it will lead to a more detailed and well-documented approach to conducting business in Germany. First, the difference in level of formality that P. C. Lange from Cotes claims exist calls for further studies. Uncovering whether the levels of formality differ depending on size of organization, or industry is highly relevant for all businesses that plan to enter the German market in the future. Such studies will assist in answering the question regarding business culture in Germany, and whether an increasing number of German organizations are moving away from the hierarchical business structure and culture continuum. Second, the discussion on language opens up for an investigation of the use of English in German business. For practitioners, it is relevant to disclose how English is viewed upon in different industries, age groups and types of organizations, as it will guide them to appropriate behavior in their meetings with German organizations. Third, the differences perceived to exist between the two business cultures must be examined from a German perspective to uncover whether the same perception is held on both sides, or not.

6.3 Limitations

Although this study provides an insight into the differences that exist between Danish and German business behavior and the implications that these may hold for Cotes, it merely illustrate these from a Danish perspective and a limited German perspective. Despite the valuable insights that T. E. Bach offers as a native German, his attitudes and perceptions are not representative for all German organizational members. The German insight was not included due to the stage of the process that

Cotes is in, however, a German perspective could have been incorporated by reaching out to the German chamber of commerce, or by looking into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' guidelines concerning business in Germany. In addition, an option was to look into different reports online concerning business in Germany and apply these as secondary data. Additionally, the scope of the data collected is too narrow to be generalizable in terms of other cases. The size of the organization limited the number of respondents and therefore, the perspective given is narrow. Similarly, the change of in-depth interviews into a questionnaire impeded the chances to gain detailed knowledge and attitudes from the majority of the employees that were a part of the research. Consequently, the scope of the study and the limitations it hold means that the extent of the impact that cultural differences in business behavior will have on business cannot be fully determined.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview guide

Til brug for interview af T. E. Bach, ekstern konsulent.

1. Hvad forudser du som de væsentligste udfordringer i mødet mellem Cotes og den tyske forretningspartner? (Opførsel, forventninger osv.)

2. Hvad er dit indtryk af tyskere i et forretnings øjemed? Hvordan ville du beskrive deres opførsel?

3. Er de nemme at samarbejde med for danskere, eller har du mødt nogle udfordringer, som har gjort det sværere? Hvad tror du at de udfordringer bunder i?

4. Hvordan forestiller du dig at en dansker kan tilpasse sig den tyske forretningskultur? Og mener du at det vil højne muligheden for succes (aftaler der kommer på plads, antal af aftaler osv.)

5. Hvad har din erfaring lært dig om møder mellem danskere og tyskere?

6. Hvilket sprog vil du anbefale at bruge, og hvorfor?

7. Har du andre tanker omkring dette kulturmøde, som du har lyst til at dele?

Appendix B

Interview guide

Til brug for interview med Peter, Area Sales manager.

1. Hvad er din stilling og dit ansvarsområde i Cotes?

2. Hvad er din rolle i etableringen af strategien for Tyskland? Og i fremtiden

3. Har i gjort Jer nogle overvejelser omkring Jeres kommunikation med tyskerne? Har du?

4. Hvad forudser du som de væsentligste udfordringer i mødet mellem Cotes og den tyske forretningspartner? (Opførsel, forventninger osv.)

5. Hvilket sprog har du tænkt dig at bruge, og hvorfor?

6. Hvad er dit indtryk af tyskere i et forretnings øjemed?

7. Er de (tyskere) nemme at samarbejde med for danskere, eller har du mødt nogle udfordringer, som har gjort det sværere? Hvad tror du at de udfordringer bunder i (værdier, normer osv.)?

8. Hvordan forestiller du dig at en dansker kan tilpasse sig den tyske forretningskultur? Og mener du at det vil højne muligheden for succes? (Aftaler der lukkes og lign.)

9. Hvad har din erfaring lært dig om møder mellem danskere og tyskere?

10. Har du andre tanker omkring dette kulturmøde, som du har lyst til at dele?

Appendix C

Recording of the interview conducted with T. E. Bach, external consultant, Connecting Markets Gmbh.

To be found on USB

Appendix D

Recording of the interview conducted with P. C. Lange, Area Sales manager at Cotes.

To be found on USB

Appendix E

Interview notes – P. C. Lange

- Cotes has recently hired a COO, who is responsible for the deals until the warranty expires.
- P. C. Lange is a part of the sales department (Areas sales manager). He is responsible for all dealers and agents around the world.
- Today they have a dealer in Germany – Kaut, which is not satisfactory.
- Cotes in 75% on their way in the right direction.
- The future:
  - A set up with Anders from Aarhus and Peter from Slagelse, who will be in charge of the commercial and technical meetings.
- His experience includes both collaborations with individual clients and subsidiaries
  - He has an idea of how things work in Germany.
  - He finds that communication in Germany has more levels.
  - In SMEs the dialogue is easy, like in Denmark.
  - In larger companies, speaking German is a requirement.
  - Germany has over the past 35 years moved slowly toward a more relaxed manner of communication. It is mostly only formal when in larger companies.
  - One must bring an agenda.
- Cotes as an organization has a lot to learn. Going from being a hands on organization to being a commercial organization.
- You must have two people at a meeting, one with technical knowledge and one sales rep.
- Dress depends on the company. Suit is mostly with larger companies.
- Anders worked in Germany
  - He is able to prepare us.
  - He knows how many industrial companies act.
- One way that they might do it is by having a German commercial sales rep and Anders to handle the technical parts.
- Under all circumstances, they will hire one or more Germans.
- He expects to speak English, as he has never had issues with it. However, he has always brought a German speaker with him.

- Cotes has been doing well and reached several goals earlier than planned. The money should be invested in Germany and they should go all in.
- The Germans
  - Have high demands. Communication is important.
  - Similar to Japan, as they have high demands for the suppliers and contractors.
  - They need many answers already at the first meeting.
  - One must be well prepared.
  - Good presentation → makes one appear professional.
  - Compared to Japan they two countries are alike in terms of demands, communication and preparation.
- Germany should be straightforward for Danes and their informal business culture when it comes to SMEs.
- They are going to collaborate with microbreweries in Southern Germany – they culture will be very informal.
- When having a meeting in Hamburg it is no problem to speak English – no requirements.
- Read a business card – it gives you an indication of how you should behave.
- Always bring one who speaks German to make sure that everyone is included.

Appendix F

Interview notes - T. E. Bach

- Cotes must understand that German companies are organized in a different manner. That hierarchy is key.
- They must be aware of the titles and the level of authority of the people that they are working with, as it is possible to have several contact persons in a German company compared to a Danish company.
- There are many cultural differences at play. For example, it often happens that Danes believe that an agreement has been made, while the German have a different perception. He often experience this.
- Sometimes we have been looking for an employee for a Danish company, an employee that is perceived to be independent in Danish terms, which is then something very different in German terms. The authority of the employee and the hierarchy of the company determine it all.
- The clear-cut hierarchy and authority ensures that German employees have a precise definition of their responsibility and in that stay out of problems. It is very narrow.
- Danish take responsibility in larger bites, while Germans are highly bounded.
- You can easily give a German employee a lot of responsibility; however, it will be hard for this person to carry it, as the authority is most likely to be limited. This person risk being criticized for not fulfilling a responsibility, while not having the option to act on it due to limited authority.
- In Germany, it is important to clearly define what one's job is and what it is not, why the Danish manner of holding responsibility and authority, may seem scary to them.
- Generally, Germans do not accept tardiness. In addition, power is demonstrated through dress. You often experience that Danes have a very relaxed dress code compared to Germans.
- He often experience that Danes come to meetings dressed casually, because they have met Germans who did the same previously. However, it is wrong to conclude that because Germans show up dressed casually that they can do so too. There is likely to be an expectation that the visitors, who are interested in selling something, will dress more formally.
- You almost cannot overdress in Germany. A suit is never too much. It is a sign of respect.

- Functions are very important. A CEO meets with a CEO, and a sales rep with a sales rep. A CEO finds it a waste of time to meet with a sales rep, as this will not produce the same knowledge/result. This is wrong to conclude, when knowing the Danish way of doing this. A Danish head of sales has more authority compared to a German colleague.
- Titles and functions are super important. Do not forget to mention the Dr. title. They will let you know if you should not use it. As long as you are not told to let go of the title, function or last name – hold on to it.
- Just because you are on a first name basis, it does not mean that you use personal pronouns such as 'du'. To Danes this is awkward. Either the one of higher rank suggests to say 'du' or the buyer suggests it to the seller or the older suggest it to the younger. Use 'de', last name and Dr. Stay strictly to what people say. Being on a 'du' basis, does not mean that you are on a first name basis.
- Many people work together for decades without being on a 'du' basis to keep it professional and separate work and family life. This is a caricature, as it differs from industry to industry. Some suggest it quickly, others never do so. The smartest thing to do is to follow the German counterpart and not expect anything.
- Do not believe that they do not like you though they are keeping a distance.
- It is probably harder to collaborate with cultures in Asia; however, I would still say that it is hard. He often experience that many Danes have a hard time understanding and sticking to the simple rules. I have many discussions with Danish clients who will not understand it. It might seem that they are doing okay, but, when they experience failed agreements, it is often hard to explain why – because they do not see it. The Germans will not say "you must say 'de' otherwise I won't do business with you". They will feel disrespected.
- The differences between Danes and Germans are founded in differing values. For example, 'Janteloven', which promotes the complete opposite behavior than is seen in Germany. Germany is based on bragging with one's success.
- In Germany, you promote yourself through mentioning achievements, successes and so on.
- In Denmark, recognition through the promotion of success is not a thing and just by showing up in an impressive car, one can scare of clients.

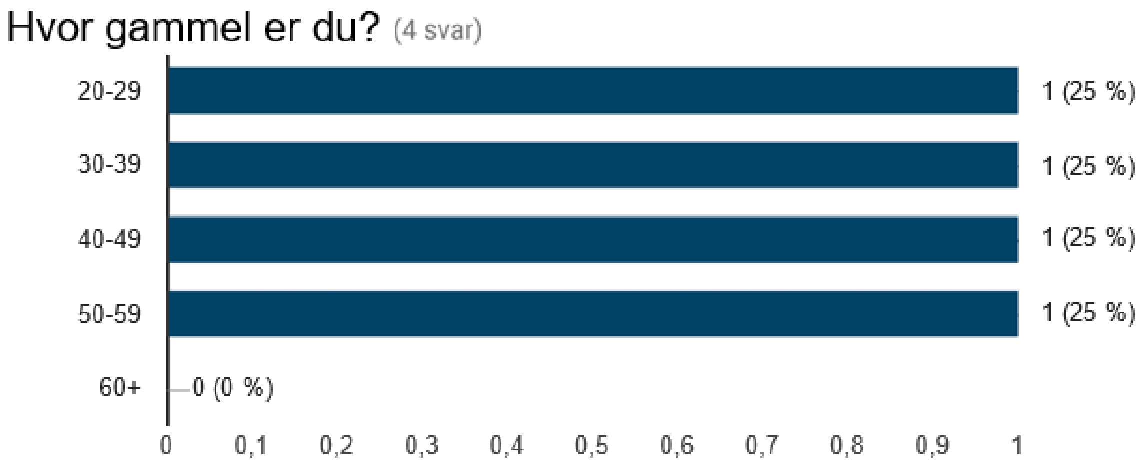
- In Germany, people needs to know that you are a Dr. and if you drive a Mercedes, they need to know that too. One needs to know that you might be judged based on material artefacts. It does not equal failure, but it could have a say.
- It is all about observing and listening to people who may teach you something. Achieving cultural intelligence is a learning by doing process.
- Often I tell Danes about the cultural differences, but they do not listen. Then, when they experience just a bit of it in practice, then they start to understand.
- Do not go for the larger clients first when you are still learning, unless you can afford it. Ask yourself questions every time. Why did I not land this deal, or partnership? The answer is not clear – it is caused by many things.
- When you are told to behave in a certain manner, then just do it. Do not try to understand they entire cultural background. The culture is found in the size of the company, the industry, they department and the individual. It is always a caricature. There will always be the companies that do the opposite.
- German culture cannot be put in a single box. It differs from north to south, east, and west. Germany is big. It is almost impossible to achieve perfect behavior, if you are not born with it. Stick to the general guidelines that will ensure that you do not mess up in any parts of the countries. Cultural intelligence aside from this will be too much for the single worker.
- Cotes must find their partners in Germany and adapt to their specific behavioral patterns.
- Germans are always expect the seller to align with the buyer. That is when Danes come to Germany and the other way around.
- Just as I tell Danes how to behave in Germany, I try to tell Germans how to behave in Denmark.
- It is crucial to the success of a partnership to what extent one adapts to the cultural norms and behavior. From the initial contact to the finished deal, knowledge of how to behave will lead you to make the right decisions and succeed. Otherwise, it is easy to fail during the process.
- By understanding the decision processes, you will be able to influence them. E.g. knowing that decisions must go through several functions, you can actively contact people and keep it going.

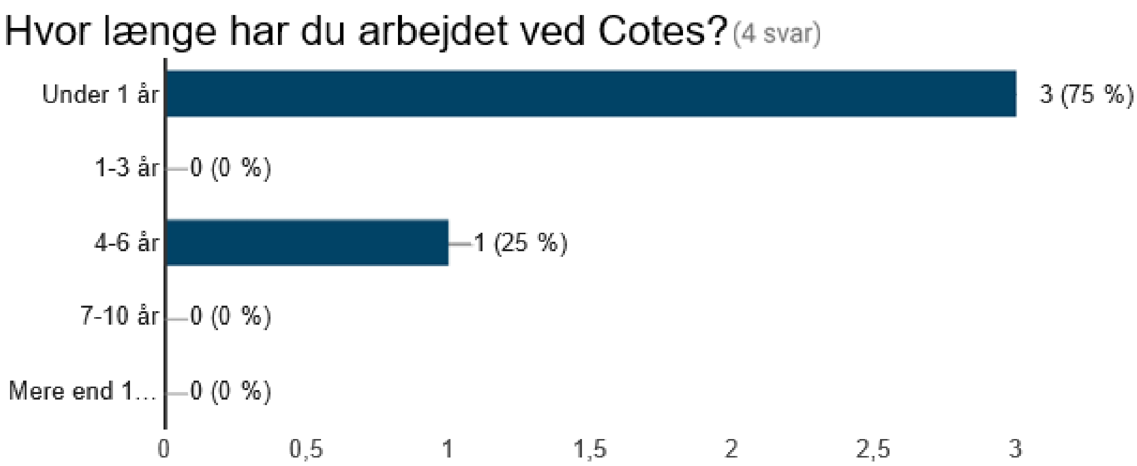
- Business as usual is to double-check the products, because of the limited amount of responsibility. It might not be the one who you are in contact with that is in charge of saying yes or no and making the final decision.
- You have to speak German. Not doing so will not get you far when opening doors and searching for opportunities. It is different, if you already have a partner, then you can agree that the correspondence will be in English. No new opportunities will come from speaking English, since many Germans are still not comfortable with the language, as in Denmark. The entire Eastern Germany were taught Russian in school.
- You risk getting in contact with a buyer that simply does not understand what you say if you speak English.
- Some might also reject you because they are afraid of their own competencies being insufficient to negotiate and they will lose power compared to you.
- Electronic and online communication is far behind in Germany compared to Denmark.
- It is not very common to search for information online. Catalogues are still the main communication channel for products etc. It is getting better. However, they will always be behind.
- It is a good supplement to have a German web site and be active on social media, but it will not lead to success alone. It is passive marketing and should never stand alone. Being new on a market takes you to be active. Knock on doors and go out there, people will not come to you. Be active.
- You have to call them and show up, or be present at conferences and network. Find the potential partners and contact them to set up meetings – an effective way.
- Often you will meet a personal secretary that selects calls, who might not let you through. The sales manager cannot waste time. It is old fashioned, but it is getting better. It is an art getting them to let you through. Nevertheless, giving up is not the solution. Persistency is key. It might take five times and six months, but it is the way to go.
- Overall, I would say that Danes should focus more on Germany and not go further when starting. It is a big country and an enormous industry with many opportunities and great potential.

- It pays off to go the extra mile and get into Germany. After a few years, it might even have built greater strategic significance than the Danish, as 1% market share is so much greater.

Appendix G

Cotes i Tyskland





Hvad er din stilling og ansvarsområde? Nævn 3 områder du har ansvar for.

(4 svar)

Salgsansvarlig indenfor vind. Sales manager for Schweiz, Norge, Danmark samt CondAir.

Tech sales manager, support af teknisk karakter til forhandlere, direkte salg

Marketing, Markedsanalyser,
Priser

Forhandler opbygning, alle export markeder, vækstfremmende tiltag.

Hvordan er du involveret i udviklingen af strategien for Tyskland?

(3 svar)

Begrænset involvering idet jeg ikke skal sidde med ansvaret.

Jeg laver desk-research, for at vurdere hvor potentialet er størst, og inden for hvilke segmenter. Efter strategien er udført, skal jeg stå for koordinering af marketingsmateriale til evt. forhandlere/sælgere

Sammen med Anders og Thomas

Hvilket sprog har du tænkt dig at bruge i dine møder med tyskerne og i din kommunikation til dem, og hvorfor? Kan du forestille dig, at der kunne være en forskel på udfaldet?

(4 svar)

Jeg taler tysk og det giver klart en fordel at kunne kommunikere på tysk med tyske firmaer.

Tysk, ja

Jeg taler kun engelsk og spansk, så det må blive på engelsk. Jeg ved at tyskere ikke er så glade for at snakke engelsk, men det er også begrænset, hvor meget direkte kontakt jeg vil få med nogen dernede.

Engelsk - Måske et minus i nogle tilfælde.

Hvordan forestiller du dig, at en tysker opfører sig i et forretningsmøde? (F.eks. formalitet, sprog, adressering og lign.)

(4 svar)

Mere formelt end i DK. Slips for mænd er mere almindeligt end i DK.

Afhænger af hvor i Tyskland, nord: mere som danskere. Syd: mere formel. Man bruger generelt "De, Dem og Deres"

Mine erfaringer fra andre møder i Tyskland er, at tyskere altid som minimum har skjorte og slips på til forretnings-møder, altid tiltaler modtager og andre i rummet med Hr. eller Fru., og at ens udstråling (f.eks. via den bil du kører i) er vigtig for en tysker.

Kommer helt an på hvilket niveau man forhandler. Lige fra jakke og slips til casual. Hr eller kun på efternavn

Tænker du, at der er væsentlige forskelle på, hvordan danskere opføre sig når de laver forretning sammenlignet med tyskere? Hvis ja, hvilke?

(4 svar)

Danskere er mere uformelle og joker mere end tyskere.

Ja, se ovenfor

Vi danskere har det bedst, hvis ikke det er alt for formelt. vi forsøger hurtigt at afkode, hvor afslappet vi kan tillade os at tage det til et møde. Dog mener jeg, at vi er gode til at tilpasse os andre kulturers forretnings-normer når det er nødvendigt (f.eks. tysk)

Føler tyskere, de seneste, år er blevet mere afslappede i mindre og mellemstore virksomheder.

Forestiller du dig, at I som danskere kunne møde kommunikative udfordringer i Jeres samarbejde med tyske forretningspartnere? Hvis ja, hvilke og hvorfor? Hvis nej, hvorfor?

(4 svar)

I og med at danskere kan være mere uformelle kan nogle tyskere godt tolke det som uprofessionelt, så det er vigtigt man er klar over det.

Ja, formelle former er vigtige i Tyskland. Man skal overholde sine aftaler, og give besked hvis man ikke kan.

Da 2 af vores sælgere har boet flere år i Tyskland, og derfor taler perfekt tysk, føler jeg ikke at der er de store sproglige udfordringer. Udfordringer kan dog opstå, i forbindelse med at dele målsætning med en tysk partner.

Ja hvis vi ikke har enten en forhandler eller et datterselskab

Har du gjort dig nogle overvejelser omkring din egen opførsel i de kommende møder (på mail, skype eller fysisk) med tyskere? Kunne du forestille dig, at der er parametre du skal ændre på eller være ekstra opmærksom på?

(4 svar)

Jeg joker generelt mindre når jeg kommunikerer med tyskere - Netop fordi jeg kan være nervøs for at blive misforstået eller tolket som useriøs.

Har boet i Tyskland, så det er der styr på.

Jeg har tænkt mig at møde op i skjorte og jakke til de møder, jeg måtte blive involveret I. min deltagelse vil være begrænset, men alt omkring mit område (marketing) vil komme til at foregå på engelsk.

Har igennem årene arbejdet en hel del i Tyskland så jeg føler jeg kender deres handelskultur rimeligt godt.

Har du andre erfaringer med møder mellem den danske og tyske kultur, som du har lyst til at dele? Skriv endelig dit navn og mail, hvis det skal uddybes.

(2 svar)

Jeg har boet i Østrig i 3½ år. Man bliver normalt tiltalt med efternavn i Østrig/Tyskland. Jakob Bebe - jbe@cotes.com Spørg endelig hvis der er noget du gerne vil have uddybet.

Jeg har været til 3 møder i Tyskland. 3 vidt forskellige personer, fra 3 vidt forskellige brancher. Ved 2 af møderne var den danske forestilling om overformelle tyskere i skjorte og slips, forkert. Her sad de i t-shirts og cowboybukser. De kom fra et bryggeri og fra et ingeniør-bureau. De var de eneste af de 3 der kunne/gad tale engelsk.