

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Kenyan business culture from the perspective of Finnish business representatives

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Tiivistelmä <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Referat – Abstract <p>Medan ekonomin i Finland stagnerar, skapar den växande ekonomin i Kenya exportmöjligheter för finländska företag. Trots detta har endast några företag känt till marknadsområdet. Denna pro gradu-avhandling undersöker detta ur en kulturell synpunkt – hur har finländska businessrepresentanter i Kenya upplevt affärskulturen, marknaden och dess framtid?</p> <p>Genom att fokusera på Kenya och Finland undersöks Geert Hofstedes utförliga kulturforskning, enligt vilken Östafrikas länder är kulturellt mycket närmare Finland än flera av Finlands viktigaste handelspartner så som Ryssland och Kina. Hofstedes forskning diskuteras med tanke på den teknologiska utvecklingen som skett i Kenya samt generationsförändringen som håller på att ske. I denna kvalitativa forskning förstärks förståelsen av hur finländare har upplevt Hofstedes kulturdimensioner, maktstånd och individualism i Kenya. Hurdana möjligheter företagen ser på marknaden och vilka utmaningar de har stött på?</p> <p>Forskningsresultaten visar att den höga maktståndsen och kollektivistiska affärskulturen i Kenya tydligt återstår, men utgör inga seriösa hot mot att göra affärer i Kenya. Erfarenheter samt åsikter om affärskulturen och marknaderna i Kenya är generellt mycket positiva. De utmaningar de intervjuade mött är vanligen praktiska till sin natur. De som intervjuats upplever Kenya som en lättare kultur att integreras i jämfört med andra länder. Dessutom upplevs marknaderna mer lovande i Kenya än i flera andra länder. De intervjuade ger råd till finländska företagare gällande internationalisering och hur man bäst kunde ta nytta av den växande afrikanska marknaden. Sättet som Afrika framställs i media samt hur regeringen och allmänna organisationer strävar efter att öka exporten kritiserar.</p>			
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1 Introduction

Growing middle-class and a young, more educated and connected population. These attributes can be used to describe the people living in many Sub-Saharan African (SSA) cities. Many businesses have made note of the potential of the growing consumer-base and businesses from Nordic countries like Sweden, Norway and Denmark are making strides to enter the markets. Why do Finnish people not conduct more business in Africa? Can perceived cultural differences be a reason for minimal interest and how is the business culture experienced by Finnish business representatives?

I plan to examine in my thesis the extent in which Sub-Saharan countries are culturally different from Finland– could they be culturally closer to Finland than for example Russia or China? I will inspect Geert Hofstede’s research and show that even if the differences between Finnish and African countries are in some aspects evident, the opportunities in Kenya outweigh the challenges. I will elaborate on the present business culture in Kenya from the point of view of the Finnish business representatives in order to find out how it is in fact experienced today.

The pioneer of cross-cultural research and organizational culture is the Dutch Geert Hofstede, whose work *Culture’s Consequences* was published in 1980 with a revised version published in 2001 (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede’s work is widely accredited and referenced in the field of human resource management and organization culture studies. One cannot discuss business culture without taking into account the groundbreaking study he did during the 1960s and 1970s, when he researched the values of the employees at the subsidiaries of the multinational corporation IBM. *Culture’s Consequences* showcases the findings of this extensive study of cultural differences which Hofstede brought to a wider audience - for “the intelligent layman”- when he published *Cultures and Organizations: software of the mind* in 1991 (Hofstede, 2005).

Hofstede identified four cultural dimensions which “affect human thinking, feeling, and acting, as well as organizations and institutions, in predictable ways.” (2001: xix). His survey was conducted in 72 countries in 1968 and again in 1972 with a total of 116,000 questionnaires. (Hofstede, 2001: xix.) While Hofstede’s extensive

research made an effort to avoid ethnocentricity, the lack of data from Africa is clear, and it gives cause to further inspection of the national culture, which affects the business culture strongly.

Globalization and the advancement of technology have been rapid in the 21st century especially in the developing world such as SSA countries, but Hofstede's research was conducted four decades ago, with an update of it 15 years ago. As I am putting a magnifying glass over the results from an overlooked part of the world like East and West Africa and comparing it to Finland, I will analyze the relevance of Hofstede's research in the 21st century by looking at the development happened in Kenya. By doing this, we gain more information about what role cultural differences truly play when conducting business today in this global market.

1.1 Is Africa still rising?

In 2011 The Economist proclaimed Africa to be “rising”, as six of the ten fastest growing countries in the world in 2000–2011 were in Africa, topping East Asian economies like Japan (The Economist, 2011). In 2013, the same news outlet wrote about a ‘hopeful continent’, displaying statistics of fast development like 48 % growth in secondary education enrolment in just eight years (2000–2008) and HIV infections declining by 74 %. Due to increased foreign direct investment (with China in the lead), Africa's GDP was expected to grow by six per cent each year for the following decade. (The Economist, 2013)

Two years later, in an article published by The Financial Times in December 2015, the rise of Africa was questioned. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had estimated the growth to slow down from five to less than four per cent, which The Financial Times called ‘weak’ (The Financial Times, 2015). The effects of the global economy crisis of 2008, the falling oil prices in 2015 and the slowing down of the Chinese economy in 2015 have taken its toll on the economy in Africa and it shows in weakened growth projections. By 2016, the number of African countries on the top ten fastest growing economies chart had dropped to three – Rwanda, Djibouti and the Ivory Coast, according to a GDP growth forecast published in January 2016 (The Economist, 2016).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) sheds light on current issues in Sub-Saharan African economies in its Regional Economic Outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa in 2015. IMF estimates the growth to slow down from previous years, but smartly points out the heterogeneity of the continent. For oil exporting countries, the fall of oil prices has been devastating to the growth forecasts in countries like Nigeria and Angola, but many countries have managed to keep up to forecasts thanks to infrastructure investments and stable private consumption. (International Monetary Fund, 2015.) The infrastructure investments have cut electricity costs and increased electricity capacity in countries like Kenya, where geothermal energy generation was doubled in 2014, and Ethiopia, where new hydropower plants are being built, but some countries like South Africa and Ghana are suffering from severe electricity shortages. (International Monetary Fund, 2015: 9.) The report also estimates that tax revenues will increase by 6-7 % in the following ten years, as more countries will become middle-income countries and therefore will be able to collect more taxes (International Monetary Fund, 2015: 15). During the years 2003–2014 credit to the private sector grew fivefold, increased mobile banking has led to more financial inclusiveness especially in East Africa and banking penetration has increased by 50 % since 2003 (2015: 21).

Therefore, it seems accurate to state that Africa is indeed still rising. Even if the level of growth has decreased in some countries during the past couple of years and the growth figures do not represent absolute numbers, the continent is still making its way to middle-income level and offers many opportunities for those daring to look South. Personal accounts from people working in various fields in Kenya will be outlined later on, supporting this hypothesis.

1.2 Opportunities for Finnish businesses in Africa

In a report released in 2014, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland estimated the main industries with opportunities for Finnish business in Africa to be energy, infrastructure, information technology, but also mining and the health sector. The local and regional markets in Africa are developing fast and this creates interesting opportunities for Finnish companies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). The exports from Finland to Africa have been around one billion euros yearly (roughly two per cent of total exports), of which 50 % constitutes exports to South Africa, where

Finnish companies already have a fairly good presence. The downside for Finnish companies in these markets is that in many fields competitors already have a better presence in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the competition is increasing fast. There are financing instruments supporting Finnish businesses to enter the markets in the developing markets, such as Finnpartnership, Finnvera, Finnfund, Tekes and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2014: 3) Despite these existing mechanisms, few have taken the leap to harness the potential in various industries in Africa and positive examples are scarce (Länsiväylä, 2015; Helsingin Sanomat, 2015).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Employment and Economy in Finland released a report in 2013 about internationalization of Finnish companies and its challenges with around 600 companies participating in the study. Finnish entrepreneurs are mostly interested in the more traditional destinations for business – Russia, Sweden, China, Germany, the United States, Norway, Great Britain, Japan and even Ukraine. The most interesting African markets for Finnish businesses were Egypt, South Africa and Tanzania, but Africa constitutes only 2 % of the international business conducted by Finnish companies. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2013.)

With EU still suffering in the grip of the euro crisis and Finnish companies taking a hit from the trade sanctions on Russia (Confederation of Finnish Industries, 2015), there is a need for Finland to increase international business, to strengthen the economy and look for other markets. Could the emerging markets in Africa be a part of the solution? How do those who have conducted business in Africa experience the business culture? What makes Finns disregard the opportunities in the African markets? Could it be lack of knowledge of the markets or even perceived cultural differences?

In this thesis' second chapter I will inspect the results of Hofstede's study of the cultural dimensions to see whether Finland really is culturally so different from the Sub-Saharan Africa. In order to see how these African countries and regions rank in comparison to Finland in a larger context, I will include three sample countries, which are all among the current top ten trading partners of Finland – Germany, Russia and China (Customs, 2015). I will show that African countries are, in fact, culturally closer to Finland than some of Finland's current main trade partners and

that cultural reasons cannot be claimed as a reason for lack of interest in this rising market.

Chapters 3-5 are dedicated to the qualitative research providing insight to the Kenyan business culture and market through the eyes of Finnish business representatives, interestingly comparing Kenya to other markets they have work experience from. The analysis provides meaningful advice on what the Finnish companies and the government should do in order to gain access to these markets. In addition it demonstrates how Kenya is perceived more positively than many other markets, despite various challenges that the interviewees might have experienced.

2 Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Hofstede defines culture by mirroring cultural anthropology's definition, according to which: “(---) culture is a catchword for all those patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting”, which Hofstede names *the mental software*. Culture is collective in nature and learned, as opposed to human nature, which is universal in nature and inherited, or an individual's personality, which is by definition individual and both inherited and learned. (2005: 2-4.) Therefore, according to Hofstede, culture is: “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (2005: 4).

When speaking of business culture, Hofstede describes it to be a part of the national culture, referring to anthropologists' view, where no aspect of human life can really be separated from the big picture as everything is interconnected (Hofstede, 2005).

Hofstede believes that understanding cultures is key in cooperation among people with varying backgrounds. He aims to bring structure to the chaos of different cultures in order to ease the way to a better understanding of both parties and, consequently, better solutions. (Hofstede, 2005: 2.) While looking at the differences between nations and political constructions made by men is not problem-free, examining those qualities is according to Hofstede what can “promote cooperation among nations” and therefore should be the purpose for using nations as a criterion (Hofstede, 2005: 19).

Hofstede's research resulted in a whopping 116,000 questionnaires in over 70 countries. By examining the local variations of the same multinational corporation's employees, those working for IBM in different countries, he was able to gain insight in the differences between the national cultures. (Hofstede, 2001: xix.) Between 1968 and 1973 Hofstede collected the questionnaires from 40 countries and completed the research later with an additional 50 countries and three regions. Other researches have been conducted that have supported the initial findings. He recognized four dimensions of national culture based on the findings of the research, relevant to the aspects of the business culture, them being the Power Distance Index, Uncertainty Avoidance Index, Individualism Index and Masculinity Index.

Hofstede's groundbreaking research has spawned other vast researches within the field. Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner approached the cultural differences in a similar way and conducted an extensive research about cultural differences with 30,000 participants in 50 countries. They identified seven cultural dimensions categorized into three thematic areas – those having to do with the relationship between people, those relating to time and the areas regarding the environment being the differentiating areas between cultures. The first thematic area includes elements such as, among others, emphasis on the group as opposed to the individual and how status is achieved (Trompenaars 1997) – very similar to the dimensions identified by Hofstede.

In 1991 Michael Harris Bond elaborated on Hofstede adding a fifth dimension called Long-term Orientation Index applied to 23 countries. Since 1991, the research made by Michael Minkov resulted in the addition of a sixth dimension, which is called Indulgence versus Restraint and is based on the analysis of World Values Survey data from up to 93 countries (Hofstede, 2001). Due to the fact that the data from both of these added dimensions does not include scores for all of the sample countries of interest in this thesis, and therefore it is not included here and I will only cover the first four dimensions by Hofstede.

I will now give a brief description of each of the four cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede and examine the scores especially for the countries and regions of interest in this paper. I will include scores for Finland, East Africa, West Africa, Germany, Russia and China in the comparisons of the dimensions. Sub-Saharan

African (SSA) countries are grouped together by Hofstede as the following: West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) and East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia). The scores for South Africa, where data was only available from whites, are in my opinion not relevant after 22 years of post-apartheid South Africa, so I have decided to exclude its scores in this thesis. The groupings made by Hofstede are quite problematic today due to the differences in development between the countries within a group, for example Kenya and Ethiopia. Kenya has been moving toward a liberal market by cutting red tape while Ethiopia has been government-centered and the socialist influences are still very visible in the business life. The accounts given by the interviewees in the research later will show how tremendous the differences between the cultures are, highlighting the importance of recognizing each national culture as its own entity.

2.1 Power Distance Index

Each of the participant countries in Hofstede's research are given a Power Distance Index (PDI) to show how the country handles human inequality, which in organizations like IBM can be seen as the relationship between the supervisor and the employee. Hofstede borrows the term Power Distance from social psychologist Mauk Mulder, whose definition of power is "the potential to determine or direct (to a certain extent) the behavior of another person or other persons more so than the other way round". Hofstede plays on Mulder's definition of power distance when he defines it as "The power distance between a boss B and a subordinate S in a hierarchy is the difference between the extent to which B can determine the behavior of S and the extent to which S can determine the behavior of B". How much a power distance is accepted in the society is, according to Hofstede, culturally determined. (Hofstede, 2001: 83)

The index on power distance was measured based on questions in regards to "perceptions of subordinates' fear of disagreeing with superiors and of superiors' actual decision-making styles, and with the decision-making style that subordinates preferred in their bosses" (Hofstede, 2001: 79). The most important questionnaire item was according to Hofstede a question directed to non-managers: "How frequently in your experience, does the following problem occur: Employees being afraid to express disagreement with their managers?" with the 5-point answer scale

going from very seldom to very frequently (2001: 85). Hofstede found a correlation between countries with paternalistic or autocratic style of bosses and employees being afraid of disagreeing with their supervisors. One might think that being afraid to disagree was a problem for the employees, but interestingly Hofstede's statistical analysis showed that countries with high instances of employees being afraid to disagree also actually preferred that same autocratic style of leadership. (2001: 85-85).

Countries with the highest scores, and therefore the highest power distances between bosses and employees are for example Malaysia, Mexico and Arab countries. Countries with typically lower Power Distance Index values are for example Austria, Denmark and Sweden (2001: 87). Another way to categorize is to look at Latin countries, which all have quite high PDI-scores while Germanic countries have lower PDI-scores (2001: 119).

Education and occupation correlated heavily with the findings, as the distances in power between less educated and non-managerial subordinates and bosses were larger than between more educated and managerial subordinates and their bosses (2001: 88-89).

As organizations can be seen as a continuum of societies' units – the home, school institutions and work place – the power distance observed in the home between the parent and the child has a correlation with the relationship between the boss and the subordinate in the same society. (Hofstede, 2001: 82) In Finland, it is culturally accepted to question your parent, to debate with a teacher and confront your supervisor when a conflict arises, and the opposite rings true for China, where the elders hold a higher status in the community and questioning is considered as a sign of disrespect.

In *Culture's Consequences*, Hofstede gives a wide literary overview of many researches that confirm the correlations between the national, country specific Power Distance Index scores with organizational cultures (Hofstede, 2001: 102-108). The most important differences between the low and High-PDI societies' work organizations according to Hofstede's research (2001: 107) are collected below:

Low PDI

Decentralized decision structures; less concentration of authority.

Flat organization pyramids.

Small proportion of supervisory personnel.

Hierarchy in organizations means an inequality of roles, reflects established for convenience.

The ideal boss is a resourceful democrat; sees self as practical, orderly, and relying on support.

Managers rely on personal experience and on subordinates.

Subordinates expect to be consulted.

Consultative leadership leads to satisfaction, performance, and productivity.

Subordinate-superior relations pragmatic.

Institutionalized grievance channels in case of power abuse by superior.

Subordinates influenced by bargaining and reasoning; MBO is feasible.

Innovations need good champions.

Managers involved in relevant purchasing decisions.

Privileges and status symbols for managers are frowned upon.

Narrow salary range between top and bottom of organization.

Managers feel adequately paid.

Managers (increasingly) satisfied with career.

Possibilities to escape from role ambiguity and overload.

Openness with information, also to non-superiors.

Manual work same status as clerical work.

High PDI

Centralized decision structures more concentration of authority.

Tall organization pyramids.

Large proportion of supervisory personnel.

Hierarchy in organizations the existential inequality between higher-ups and lower-downs.

The ideal boss is a well-meaning autocrat or good father: sees self as benevolent decision maker.

Managers rely on formal rules.

Subordinates expect to be told.

Authoritative leadership and close supervision lead to satisfaction, performance, and productivity.

Subordinate-superior relations polarized, often emotional.

No defense against power abuse by superior.

Subordinates influenced by formal authority and sanctions, MBO cannot work.

Innovations need good support from hierarchy.

Managers not involved in relevant purchasing decisions.

Privileges and status symbols for managers are expected and popular.

Wide salary range between top and bottom of organization.

Managers feel underpaid.

Managers dissatisfied with career.

Frequent role ambiguity and overload.

Information constrained by hierarchy.

White-collar jobs valued more than blue-collar jobs.

Table 1. Key differences between low- and high-PDI societies' work organizations (Hofstede, 2001: 107-108).

The polar opposite examples of work organizations in countries with low and high power distance index values listed in table 1 demonstrate how the national PDI-scores tells us about the organizational cultures. They are also the kind of differences a foreigner might encounter working in a culture dissimilar from their own. Someone with extensive business travelling experience might take these as a given and as

‘business as usual’ but for someone with less experience in navigating the foreign markets, they might be seen as strange and exotic, frustrating and possibly even keep someone from recognizing opportunities in a foreign country. The PDI scores are therefore useful in learning about various areas of the world and in understanding how to communicate in a multicultural work setting – it is easier to adapt to a new management style and to avoid unnecessary conflicts if you are aware of the culture.

Table 2 below shows the PDI-scores for the chosen sample - East Africa, Finland, West Africa, Germany, Russia and China. The scores indicate an image that is innately easy to understand – countries with a mainly Western culture like Finland and Germany have lower PDI-scores, which indicate a less hierarchical culture, while non-Western societies (East and West Africa, Russia and China) are more hierarchical, with Russia topping the chart. The interesting point here is that East Africa is the least hierarchical of the other non-Western regions, which would make its business culture easier to enter for a Western than in places like Russia (Finland’s main export partner) and China. Also, the differences in PDI-scores between East and West Africa are clear and can be viewed as a proof of the vast differences within Africa – something that is often forgotten about in Western media and literature.

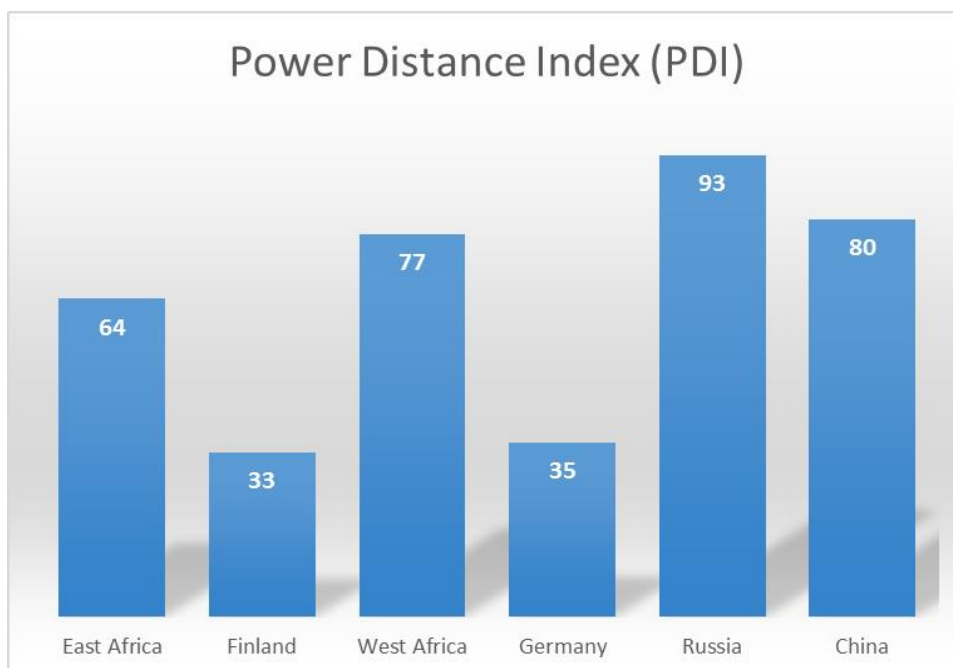


Table 2. Power Distance Index Values for chosen countries and regions. (Hofstede, 2001)

From the point of view of the Finnish business representative, when it comes to large markets in a convenient geographic location like Russia or the booming market

like China, the vast cultural differences between the countries do not seem to play a big role – companies recognize the opportunities that exist and enter the markets even without in-depth knowledge of the culture or family ties to the country.

Compared to Finland, East and West Africa do not have as wide differences in Power Distance Index. Therefore the cultural differences cannot in this aspect be a reason for not making a market entry in Sub-Saharan Africa – at least not when it comes to the dimension of power distance in a work organization. Later, after discussing the remaining cultural dimensions and elaborating on methodology of the research in this thesis, I will return in chapter four to the analysis of how these differences are perceived in everyday life by Finns with extensive knowledge of Kenya.

2.2 Uncertainty Avoidance Index

The second cultural dimension is the Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) which, according to Hofstede, describes the rigidity of a society – how sternly does the society keep to its norms and rules, and how it handles uncertainty (Hofstede, 2001: 145-146). The UAI-score is, therefore, an indication of the level of which a society is, among other things, tolerable or intolerable of outsiders, prejudiced or unprejudiced, traditional or untraditional, and tolerant or intolerant of behavior that is not according to its usual norms (2001: 146).

Countries with generally low scores in the Uncertainty Avoidance Index tend to embrace disruptive innovations more easily and allow flexibility in the society a lot more often than countries with high scores in the UAI. High-UAI scoring societies are prone to minimize surprises and shield themselves from them by forming strong institutions, relying on well-structured conduct in organizations and relationships (2001: 148). When describing the way how societies react to uncertainty, Hofstede writes:

Ways of coping with uncertainty belong to the cultural heritages of societies, and they are transferred and reinforced through basic institutions such as the family, the school, and the state. They are reflected in collectively held values of the members of a particular society. Their roots are nonrational, and they may lead to collective behavior in one society that may seem aberrant and incomprehensible to members of other societies. (2001: 146.)

While the level in which a society adapts to uncertainty is in some cases correlated with existing power distances in those societies, these should not be understood as

the same thing. However there are some meaningful correlations between the two, which Hofstede primarily explains relying on history and tradition (2001: 150-151). In the IBM-research, the country specific UAI-scores were calculated by using the mean scores of questions regarding following rules in an organization, how long employees intended to work for their company and how much the employees experienced stress at work (2001: 150). Staying with the same company for a longer period of time and supporting a strong rule orientation are key indicators of a higher level of uncertainty avoidance – a person stating the opposite is probably more flexible and less in need of control of their own surroundings. Examples of countries with very low UAI values are Singapore, Jamaica, Denmark and Sweden while among countries with high UAI values are Greece, Portugal, Guatemala and Uruguay, with Asian countries like Japan and Korea getting high scores and India and Malaysia scoring low. Hofstede adds by mentioning how Islamic countries score medium high but does not comment on how African states fare in comparison. (2001: 150-151.) So let us look at how our sample countries score in the Uncertainty Avoidance Index in table 3 below.

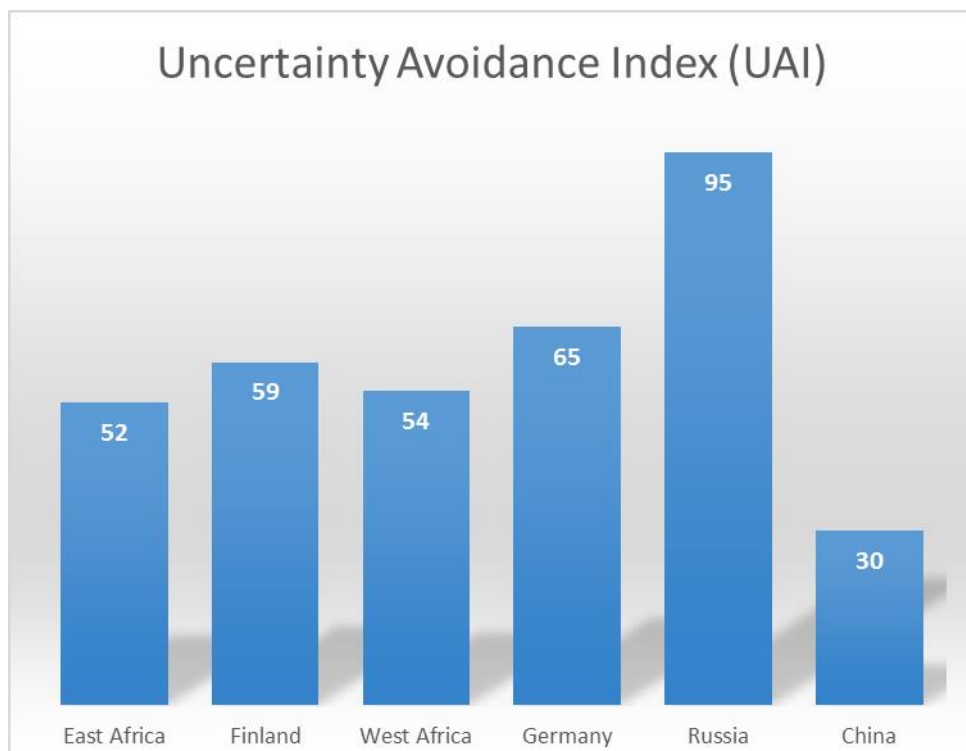


Table 3. Uncertainty Avoidance Index Values for chosen countries and regions. (Hofstede, 2001)

As table 3 shows, there is a dramatically smaller difference between Finland and Sub-Saharan African countries than was seen in the Power Distance Index (table 2). Landing very much in the middle, they all tilt slightly toward a higher Uncertainty Avoidance. The similarity of a Nordic country and SSA-countries might come as a surprise to some. Germany is also very close in its scores of uncertainty avoidance but Russia tops the bill with very high scores, indicating a stricter and more rigid society. China, somewhat surprisingly, scores extremely low in the UAI. Hofstede states that the index scores have been “remarkably stable over the past decades” and that “UAI differences are not expected to disappear in the foreseeable future” (2001: 145).

Despite the clear differences in Uncertainty Avoidance Index values between Finland and its biggest trade partners Russia and China, there is still an ample amount of business conducted between companies in these countries. Cultural differences in this aspect do not seem to be a hurdle when it comes to Finnish companies making market entries. With very similar scores between Finland, East and West Africa, all of these societies are seemingly like-minded in terms of following rules and norms at the workplace. One would thus presume that in this aspect conducting business in Africa would be culturally even easier for Finns than in Russia or China, an interesting topic for further research.

2.3 Individualism Index

Hofstede’s third national dimension is individualism – to what extent the society encourages individualistic behavior opposed to a more collective approach.

Hofstede uses the following definitions for individualism and collectivism:

Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose:

Everyone is expected to look after him/herself and her/his immediate family only.

Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. (Hofstede, 2001: 225.)

According to Hofstede, “individualism norm should also be seen as a value system shared especially by the majority in the middle classes in a society” (2001: 225).

Whether a country is collective or individualistic affects everything from the way

people live to how they work. (Hofstede 2001: 209.) Hofstede describes the effects of this dimension as the following:

The relationship between the individual and the collectivity in human society is not only a matter of ways of living together, it is intimately linked with societal norms. It therefore affects both people's mental programming and the structure and functioning of many institutions aside from the family: educational, religious, political, and utilitarian. (Hofstede, 2001: 210)

The everyday differences in individualist and collectivist behaviors are very clear. In Western, individualistic societies, speaking your mind and confronting members of a group is considered a desired quality, but in collectivist cultures such behavior could be tipping the scales to a less harmonious environment, which is unwanted (2001: 228). Rewarding is in individualistic organizations mainly focused on personal accomplishments as opposed to team-based rewards in collectivist organizations. In collectivist work organizations loyalty is expected, while loyalty in individualistic organizations is a more fluid concept (2001: 237). These kinds of differences at a work place might easily lead to conflict in international settings unless recognized early.

The index scores for individualism are based on the country mean scores on over a dozen questions relating to the employees' work goals and appreciation of personal time, such as "How important is it to you to fully use your skills and abilities on the job?" as well as opportunities to challenge and improve oneself (Hofstede, 2001: 214). Countries that rank highly on the Individualism Index Values (IDV) are the United States, together with other English-speaking countries like Australia, Great Britain and Canada. Low on the IDV-ranking are countries such as Guatemala, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela. Let us see how our sample countries rank against each other in table 4 below.

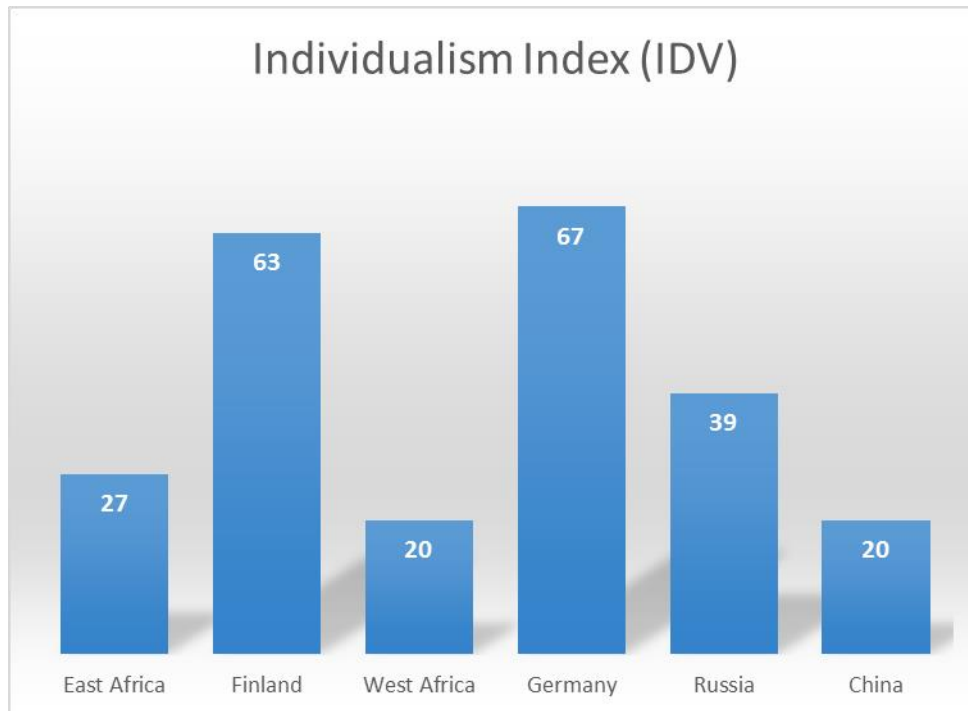


Table 4. Individualism Index Values for chosen countries and regions. (Hofstede, 2001)

This dimension shows the biggest differences so far between Finland and East and West Africa. Expectedly, the Western countries Finland and Germany have quite high Individualism Index Values (IDV), while West Africa and China have the lowest. There is a slight difference between East and West Africa, with East Africa having higher IDV-scores. Russia belongs to the collectivist countries in this dimension comparison.

The roots behind these scores might extend far in history, suggests Hofstede. He refers to the research by Blumberg and Winch (1972) where a relationship is recognized between the traditionalist society and collectivism. Traditional society models that centered on agriculture are more collectivist than the modern and urban – and the more individualistic – societies (2001: 210). The family model, for example, in East and West Africa is still a lot larger than the nuclear family model prevalent in the Nordics, like in Finland, or Western countries like Germany. But even if the family models still look the same today, can we expect that 15 years after Hofstede’s research the individualism scores have remained unchanged in the urbanizing and fast developing countries in SSA?

Like Hofstede states, the IDV is highly correlated with modernization, economic development, which would support the fact that a developing country might experience an individualization of a society. This is also supported by Hofstede's own IBM-research which found countries become more individualistic when they became wealthier. (2001: 253-254.)

As the individualism dimension is such a penetrating quality of a society, the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures are visible in everyday life. But once recognized and dealt with properly, how much do these differences affect conducting business? China and West Africa are culturally exactly similar in this aspect, nevertheless the Finnish companies seem to have their reservations when taking their business to West Africa, but less so in the case of China. The clear differences regarding this IDV score between Finland and SSA countries provides an interesting area to dive deeper into, which will be discussed later.

2.4 Masculinity Index

In the IBM-research, Hofstede interviewed employees about their work goals, and noticed that the importance of careers and money was more obvious for men, while women tended to put emphasis on helping others and having good relationships within work. This gives the base for the Masculinity dimension (MAS). If a person emphasized social goals instead of ego goals, they are according to Hofstede considered to have a high femininity score, while money- and career-driven people would score highly on the Masculinity Index. (Hofstede, 2001: 279.)

I will use the terms masculinity and femininity according to Hofstede's definition:

Masculinity and femininity, in the sense in which I shall use these terms, refer to the dominant gender role patterns in the vast majority of both traditional and modern societies (---): the patterns of male assertiveness and female nurturance. These words should not be taken to imply that men always actually behave in a more masculine manner than do women or that women behave in more feminine ways than do men; rather, statistically, men as a rule will show more "masculine" and women more "feminine" behavior. (2001: 284)

While these qualities like career-driven and emphasizing social relationships can be seen as something similar to the individualism dimension, the two dimensions should not be confused with each other. It is, for example, typical for countries with high-

MAS values to have varying value for the jobs performed by men and women – a male nurse would have more authority than a female nurse. Also for high-MAS-countries men are typically expected to be more assertive while women are expected to take a nurturing role. These sorts of examples of gender roles are normative and constructed in a society over a longer period of time, reassured in the homes, schools and in the society at large – and its effects at the workplace are easily recognized by people working in multicultural settings. (2001: 279-280.)

Hofstede looked for differences in gender roles by interviewing men and women in same occupations about the goals they had regarding work life. Statistically the most important trends in the gender differences are described as the following (2001: 281):

<u>More important for men</u>	<u>More important for women</u>
Advancement	Friendly atmosphere
Earnings	Position security
Training	Physical conditions
Up-to-dateness	Manager
	Cooperation

These preferences of work goals were to some degree dependent on the age of the respondent – the older employees tended to prefer goals generally more important to women, such as employment security and cooperation (2001: 289). Also, Hofstede provides countable examples of how the gender roles are not innate but socially constructed (2001: 299-301).

Among countries ranking high on the Masculinity Index were Austria, Venezuela and Italy with Japan topping the list. Ranking very low on the MAS-index were, not surprisingly, Denmark, Netherlands and Norway with Sweden with the lowest MAS-score. Let us see how our sample group of countries and regions performed (see table 5 below).

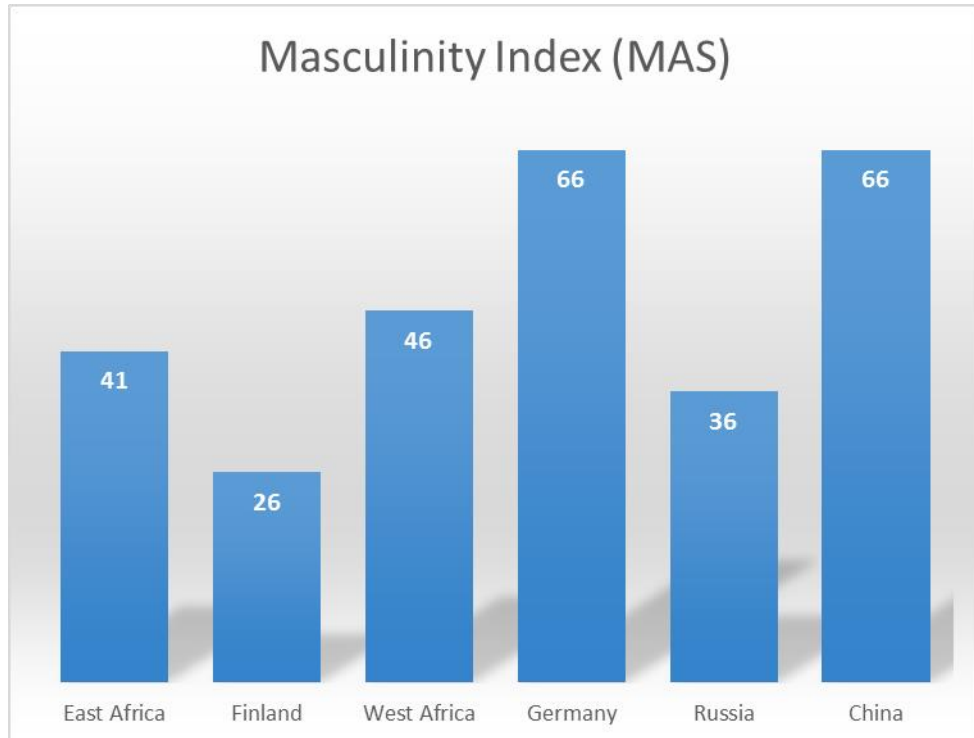


Table 5. Masculinity Index Values for chosen countries and regions. (Hofstede, 2001):500-502.

As a Nordic country, Finland scores the lowest on the Masculinity Index like its counterparts Sweden, Norway and Denmark, indicating a higher emphasis on so called feminine values of cooperation, good relationships with management and employment security. Russia is, somewhat surprisingly, not far from Finland. Germany and China have identical MAS-index scores, and thus are the most different from Finland in our sample group. What might come as a surprise here, is that the differences between Sub-Saharan regions and Finland are not as big as one might initially presume. Both East and West Africa are clearly closer to the middle of the dimension than Finland, which indicates a more masculine approach in work goals, but they are still closer to Finland than Germany and Russia. China's high masculinity score is a good example of how the Masculinity Index can differ quite dramatically with the Individualism Index, where China scores were on the collective side, with a score of 20.

When it comes to work cultures, the Masculinity Index is tangible in aspects like expectations for leadership. The favorable manager types differ clearly between low- and high-scoring MAS-countries. Very feminine cultures prefer the managers to have a more intuitive and consensus-driven approach and masculine cultures prefer the

managers to be strong, assertive and decisive. Being aggressive is considered rude in places like the Nordic states, but an ideal for leaders in Mexico – if the leaders are male. (2001: 313.)

The cultural differences in the Masculinity index come up in everyday life and affect the workplace dramatically, if not understood correctly from the beginning. We can again see that Finland and China are quite far apart from each other and still the business relations between the two nations are improving every year. (Finnish Customs, 2015) This difference between Finland and Germany does not stand in the way of business, either (Finnish Customs, 2015). As the gap is clearly smaller between Finland and the sample African regions, there is no need to see cultural differences as an obstacle for improved trade there either.

2.5 Power Distance and Individualism Index undergoing a change?

After reviewing Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and comparing index scores between the chosen sample countries, the Power Distance and Individualism stand out as dimensions where the difference between Finland and East Africa is the greatest. These dimensions were thus chosen as the target of some further research when learning more about Finnish business representatives' experience from working in Kenya. Both of the dimensions could possibly be undergoing a shift, which makes them interesting focal points for the research as well.

Hofstede shows that education and power distance are correlated and he admits that as educational opportunities become more prevalent, the higher PDI scores like the ones recorded in SSA-countries might decrease. He even says that a worldwide decrease in power distance can already be seen in the answers given in 1967–1969 and 1971–1973. As the number of educated people is on the rise in lower middle income countries like Kenya, it might lead to a change in attitudes down the road. I do not mean to say that the results of an IBM-research conducted today in 2016 would look utterly different than in the beginning of the 1970s – the traces of yesterday still stand out. However, it could mean that the differences between urban and rural Kenya are getting wider, since the highly-educated people tend to gather in the cities in look for jobs and better opportunities which changes the demographic in Nairobi. With the urbanization rate on the rise, it could mean that the PDI-scores in

Kenya taken in the 1970s would look different today in Nairobi and even more so in the future.

Hofstede also admits that individualism correlates with wealth and due to this the current differences may become fewer as the less developed countries become richer with the growing middle-class (Hofstede, 2001: 209). Hofstede shows how PDI correlates negatively and IDV positively with wealth (2001: 2016). To see whether a change in individualism dimension index is probable in our sample countries, let us look at the economic growth these regions have witnessed since 2001, the publication of the second and latest edition of Hofstede's *Cultural Consequences*. I have included the year 1991 to compare the growth that took place in 1991–2001 with how it has increased 2001.

In his sample countries, Hofstede grouped together Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia as the East African region due to similar or even identical scoring for the countries' dimension index. Growth in these countries has not, however, been identical and the development of business life looks different in Nairobi than it does in Addis Ababa. Let us see how the growth domestic product (GDP) per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP)¹ in current international dollars looks like in these countries since the year 1991 to 2014, according to World Development Indicator statistics provided by the World Bank (World Bank, 2015).

¹ "GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP). PPP GDP is gross domestic product converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates. An international dollar has the same purchasing power over GDP as the U.S. dollar has in the United States. GDP at purchaser's prices is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources. Data are in current international dollars based on the 2011 ICP round." (World Bank, 2015)

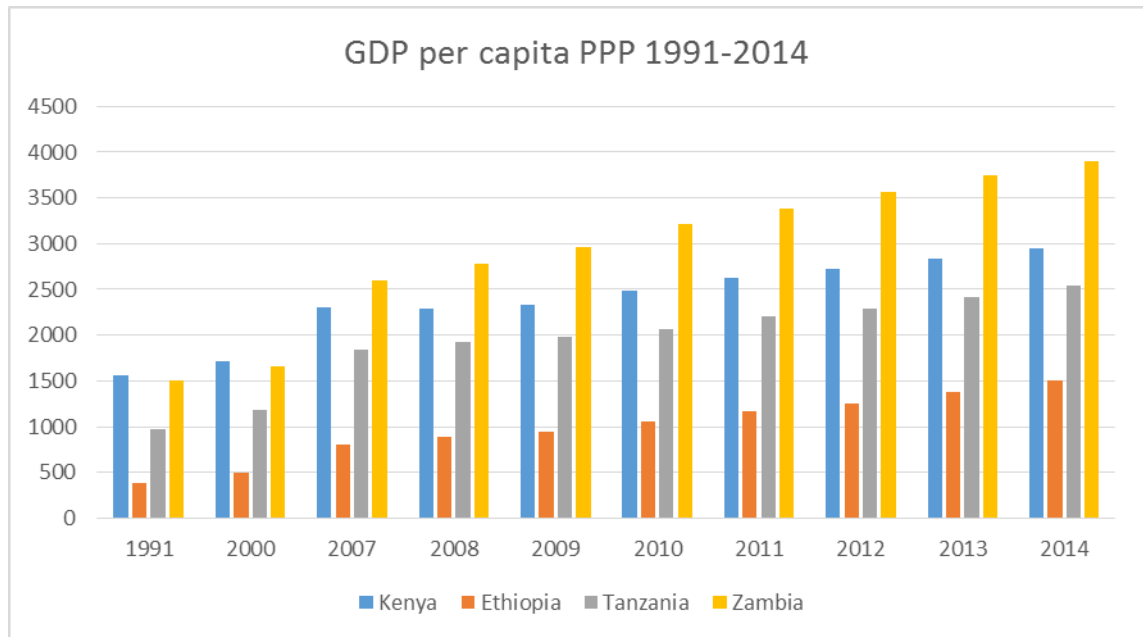


Table 6. The Growth Domestic Product (GDP) per purchasing power (PPP) in current international \$ for Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia in 1991–2014, according to World Development Indicators, World Bank. (World Bank, 2015)

Here in table 6 we can see that growth has been steady in all countries for those 24 years. Comparing statistics from 1991 and 2000 shows that dramatic growth did not happen, which explains how Hofstede would see this region as not making a lot of strides. Looking at the same time span of nine years, between 2000 and 2009, clear growth is visible for all four countries. The GDP per capita PPP in Ethiopia grew by 93 % in this time span from \$491 to \$949. By 2014 the records for all sample countries paint a very different picture with Zambia clearly topping the chart with its GDP per capita PPP, Kenya coming second, Tanzania third and Ethiopia last. Looking at economic indicators like these also clearly show the variance within the region. It is difficult to imagine that this level of growth and rising wealth would not have an effect on the individualism index, as Hofstede admits could be the case.

The United States is famously an extremely individualistic society (Hofstede, 2001: 2013). With the idealization of the American culture, the effect of the American individualism should not be disregarded in African countries like Kenya. Ma & Schoeneman studied the self-concepts of four Kenyan groups and one American group to see what effect culture had on self-concepts (Ma & Schoeneman, 1997). They used a shorter version of Kuhn and McPartland's Twenty Statements Test (TST) from the 1950s and asked the participants to answer the questions "Who am

I?” in 15 different ways in less than six minutes. The test was translated into Kiswahili and Maa. By using a one-way analysis of variance as well as a one-way multivariate analysis of variance, they found out that the individualist American group had similar scores as the Nairobi college student group did, showing a higher individualistic self-concept among the more educated and urban group. The pastoralist Maasai group and the rural Samburu group showed a higher degree of collectivism and a self-concept built around their society. A group from Nairobi, constituting of workers in blue-collar jobs showed that they fell somewhere in between the individualist and collectivist self-concept.

The authors confirmed what also Hofstede stated – education and development go hand in hand with a more individualistic mindset. (Ma & Schoeneman, 1997: 265–268.) The study by Ma & Schoeneman also points out the effect urbanization and modernization has (1997: 269). This leads me to believe that the Individualism Index has increased in Sub-Saharan countries like Kenya, and is thus closer to Finland nowadays, which in turn might decrease any cultural challenges a Finn might have in respect to the Individualist vs. Collectivist culture when doing business with Kenyans.

In work organizations, Hofstede links the degree of individualism together with level of education as well as the size and organizational culture of the company. He also recognizes the connection between technology and the modernity of the company and a more individualistic attitude within the employees of that company and states that: “Introducing such technologies in more collectivist countries represents one of the main forces toward a shift of societal norms in those countries” (2001: 2013). This is an important argument for the disruptive nature of technology adaptation in collectivist societies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

If we accept the fact that culture changes slowly, then even the oldest of records used in the IBM-research can still be said to be up to date – forty years since recording doesn’t mean anything in the scope of, say, two or three hundred years. However, the speed at which the world will change thanks to technological advancements and digitalization makes it interesting to speculate how fast cultures might change in the process.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, finally, will change not only what we do but also who we are. It will affect our identity and all the issues associated with it: our sense of privacy, our notions of ownership, our consumption patterns, the time we devote to work and leisure, and how we develop our careers, cultivate our skills, meet people, and nurture relationships. (Klaus Schwab, Economist, Foreign Affairs, 2015)

Klaus Schwab, a German economist, who started the Global Economic Forum around the time of the IBM-research, declared in an article published in December 2015 that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is upon us. (Foreign Affairs, 2015) From steam power via electric power to automation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution would build on the Third Revolution and combine technical, digital and biological methods and radically change the world faster than anything experienced before. The advances of these will affect all means of production, the automation will bring costs down and global economic growth will increase. The question, then, will be inequality, which will pose the greatest social challenge. Technology might also be a key factor in creating new types of economies and consumer behavior, based on sharing – this is already happening with the example of services such as Uber doing market entries in Nairobi. This trend will not only affect business, but also governments as new methods to engage in decision-making could be implemented, affecting surely the power distance experiences all over the world. (Foreign Affairs, 2015)

Schwab's views on the effect technology will have on the human kind are very different from Hofstede's. Hofstede states that the technological strides that have already been made do not play a significant role due to the fact that the high-PDI countries have less tolerance for change and would not let itself be affected like the low-PDI countries that embrace newer middle-class values more easily (2001: 123). But if that were true, even a mid-PDI country like Kenya would defy the rule – Kenyans embraced the innovative mobile banking app M-Pesa widely after its launch in 2007 which has been bringing financial services to millions ever since and has 12,8 million active users per month (Safaricom, 2015).

Additionally, when talking about the future of power distance differences, Hofstede makes a convincing case for culture changing very slowly.

Since the IBM surveys in 1973, power distances have been reduced in some countries, but they have not converged across countries. I believe that the picture of national variety presented in this chapter, with its very old historical roots, is likely to survive for a long time, at least for some centuries. A world-wide homogenization of mental programs about power and dependence, independence, and interdependence under the influence of a presumed cultural melting-pot process is still very far away, if it will ever happen. (Geert Hofstede, 2001: 122)

Here Hofstede might be restricted by the time in which he wrote this – the effect of the Fourth Industrial Revolution can't have been evident to him. This is clear in how he supports a rigid view of the unchanging cultures by referring to a research by Philippe d'Iribarne from 1989 (with a 3rd edition from 1997), *La Logique de l'honneur* (The Logic of honor) (Hofstede, 2001: 118-119). D'Iribarne researches the production plants in the Netherlands, the United States and France and finds out that they all have very distinctive cultural differences despite technically operating identically. D'Iribarne backs the differences up with the support of a historical narrative, all the way to the *ancien régime* citing Montesquieu from the 18th century. Hofstede sees this as complementary to his results in the PDI-values (2001: 119). But 15 years after Hofstede wrote this, he is unaware of what Schwab is proposing – technology and digitalization will further enhance the effects of globalization affecting everyone - not least in Africa.

2.6 A generational change affecting business culture?

The generation born between 1980 and 2000, the Millennials, grew up with technological innovations becoming a part of everyday life and they are more interconnected with the world than any generation before them – both in Finland and in Kenya. This is also the first Kenyan generation to have experienced and been able to benefit from education in a wider extent than any generation before – free primary education was implemented in Kenya in 2003, influencing the growing population massively. What makes these Millennials interesting and powerful is its magnitude – according to a survey published by PwC in 2008, Millennials will constitute 50 % of the global workforce by 2020 (PwC, 2008):3).

The possibilities to travel and stay connected via internet are endless and come naturally to this generation. Many of Western Millennials backpacked through Asia or participated in some sort of cultural exchange, be it for studies such as an

exchange program or a work opportunity. Acquiring good language skills in English became almost the norm for a person from the non-English speaking world and this has been bridging the gap between foreign cultures even more.

Millennials' exposure to foreign people, food and cultures is far higher than for previous generations in their youth. The number of Finnish students participating in exchange programs or internships abroad during their tertiary education has risen sharply since the early 1990s, fueled by the freer movement within the European Union and Schengen-contract. 26 % of university students and 16 % in polytechnic students in 2014 participated in an exchange program (CIMO, 2014). 67 % of the movement has been directed to countries within the EU, with Asia standing at 18 %. Africa is a more popular destination for students from polytechnics than university students, as the share of students from universities travelling to African countries stands at a mere 1,8 %. Tanzania, South Africa and Namibia are the most popular destination countries among university students, and Tanzania, Kenya and Swaziland among students at polytechnics. (CIMO, 2014) It is interesting to see that the share of students looking to Africa is the same as the share of companies doing business in Africa – both stand at around two per cent.

Being international is seen as a necessity for the advancement of one's career by 66 % of Millennials, as seen in the research done by PWC, where 4,000 Millennials from 24 different countries were interviewed. No Finns participated in the survey, and the only African country participating in the study was South Africa, with a whopping 88 % of respondents agreeing to that international experience was needed to further their careers – compared to for example the Netherlands' 38 %. (PwC, 2008).

When over 16,000 people aged 18 to 30 in 43 countries all across the world were interviewed in 2014 about their perceptions and expectations about work life, the results revealed the regional differences among Millennials (Harvard Business Review, 2015). The baby-boomers and representatives of Generation X are naturally affected by this interconnectedness the same way as Millennials are – their possibilities are the same and adaptation to this globalized world can be on the same level as a Millennials', while it might require some more adjusting to.

Is it possible that the Millennials are more attuned to cultural differences, more naturally aware of them and more capable to flexibly survive in a multicultural society or organization? How much are these people then actually in need of a “deeper understanding of cultural differences” which Hofstede wants to provide us? The effect culture has on expectations and attitudes to work life can’t be questioned, but it is another question how much it actually matters. Having the mindset of a globetrotter and an openness to foreign countries as well as a curiosity to learn about cultures other than your own can help you a long way. This was shared by all of the interviewees in this research, even those who had no experience whatsoever from Kenya or Africa beforehand.

3 Methodology

The topic of my research grew out of an honest bewilderment of why Finnish companies were not entering the promising markets in the Sub-Saharan Africa while countless reports showed that the markets were growing. It seemed that the companies in Finland were looking at completely other areas in the world for increased exports but not recognizing the opportunities existing in for example East Africa. When I discussed this with a Finn working in Nairobi, he suggested that the reasons might be that Africa is generally quite mystified and that people honestly do not know enough about the area to consider it to be a booming economy and a hub of countless opportunities. This drove me to research this topic further in order to understand how those working in Kenya really experience the country. This felt meaningful because Kenya seems to be topping many charts in development (PwC 2015), especially now that South Africa is suffering from the growing tensions and violence between ethnic groups and the oil crisis threw Nigeria for a loop. It would be fascinating to gain more knowledge of what Finnish companies should pay attention to while working in Kenya.

3.1 Conducting qualitative interviews

In order to understand how Finns have experienced the business culture in Kenya, I conducted a qualitative research based on interviews. The qualitative approach was most suitable for understanding the experiences, because semi-structured in-depth interviews were time-efficient and allowed the interviewees storytelling. Using semi-

structured interview guides allowed me to cover all the areas of interest with each of the interviewees, necessary for comparable data collection, but left room for changing the order of the questions when necessary.

3.1.1 Sample

With the topic being narrowed to Finns' experiences from the business culture in Kenya, I was interested in especially the experiences from Nairobi due to the trend of urbanization in Africa. It needs to be recognized that the information uncovered in this thesis are a reflection of this sample's experience in an urban center, and that the urban context described here might differ a lot from the country side. Also, as I wanted to gain useful information for entrepreneurs and companies looking to expand their operations to Kenya, I chose to therefore focus on Nairobi, because it is the main business hub in East Africa and a natural choice for the location of an office in Kenya – depending on one's field, of course.

I decided to limit the sample to only those with at least six months of work experience from Kenya. I was interested in the more in-depth understanding of the work life and business culture and felt that it would be harder for “work tourists” to comment on this if they had been in the country for less time. With my personal experience from living in Nairobi, I felt that this time span is the bare minimum as the first few months might be in some cases affected by a possible culture shock. Most of my sample had significantly more experience in working in Kenya, ranging from 11 months to even approximately 10 years.

When finding suitable candidates for interviewees, I ended up reflecting to what extent the ones working in Kenya over 10 years might be able to distinguish cultural differences. Possible interviewees were also ruled out of the sample due to spending too long of a time in Kenya as the disconnection to Finnish culture grows wider with decades spent abroad. One candidate honestly stated that after having spent almost thirty years in Kenya, they didn't recognize the “Finnish point of view” as their own anymore, making it difficult to comment from that perspective. Most of the interviewees had lived abroad for a long time before moving to Kenya, so this question still remains to some extent. Here I concluded that this point of view was extremely valuable – not only could these interviewees reflect on the cultural

differences or similarities between Finland and Kenya, but they could provide insight to cultural questions comparing Kenya to other interesting markets like for example China or emerging markets in South America. This could elaborate on Hofstede's research regarding cultural differences even wider.

After having stated the sampling frame for this research, there was a dire shortage of relevant interviewee candidates. The amount of Finns working within business in Kenya is limited despite long diplomatic relations between the nations. The list of a 15 prospective interviewees dwindled to seven due to time and scheduling limitations. Therefore this study should be considered as a pilot study with bountiful options for further research with larger sample sizes. However, the nature of the qualitative research and the interview structure being open-ended, these in-depth interviews provided a large amount of data. Albeit few, the interviews still provide an interesting outlook and especially in some areas data saturation took place, giving more confidence to hypothesize generalities in the phenomena described.

I strived to have as heterogeneous sample as possible. I was happy that the ages of the participants of the research ranged from mid-twenties to mid-fifties, in order to get a variety of point of views representing different generations. The majority of the interviewees held a management or C-level position and had years of experience in working abroad like was mentioned before, but it was still refreshing to get the opinions of younger interviewees. As for the gender division it must be concluded that it was male-dominated which is not utterly unexpected when the research has been directed to the management or C-level positions in the private sector, of which over 70 per cent are held by men (Statistics Finland 2011, Kauppalehti 2014). Due to the anonymity requirement of all compiled data, the specific ages or more detailed demographic information will not be elaborated on in more detail.

3.1.2 Interviewing

The method of semi-structured interviewing fitted this type of research because the expert interviews required the voluntary participation of busy, in some cases executive level people, who I only wanted to trouble for an interview once. I collected all background information of the interviewees prior to the interviews with a Google Forms -questionnaire, including eleven questions regarding biographic

information and previous work experience. This allowed me to frame questions specifically to the interviewee especially in the areas regarding comparison to other business cultures, as well as to not waste time on basic questions during the already lengthy interview. During the interview, I used an interview guide with altogether 29 outlined questions in the specific order I intended to discuss the topics. The open-ended questions were framed in order to encourage free description and reflection of own experiences and observations made from the point of view to the interviewee.

All interviews were conducted in Finnish due to it being the first or second language of all interviewees and myself. Thus all quotes used in this paper will be in Finnish, with English translations, with the exception of one, which was from an interview with a person who code-switched between Finnish and English, and the quote taken from this interviewee is in the language it was said, in English. The questionnaire (see Attachment 1) is found both in Finnish and in English. The five sections of exploration in the interview were:

- expectations prior to coming to Kenya
- experiences of business culture in Kenya
- challenges and opportunities experienced in Kenya
- comparison to other business cultures of which the interviewee had experience
- general opinions regarding the Kenyan market and advice to Finnish business representatives

These five sections were presented at the beginning of the interview to describe the structure of the interview, which lead to interviewees moving around independently and swiftly between the areas, as they knew what was expected of them. Thus the order and amount of questions asked differed somewhat, but the content discussed still remained comparable and consistent. I began each section with a wide, open-ended question that I added to with more specific, probing questions to gain more in-depth knowledge of the answers. Therefore the length of the interview varied quite a lot depending on the verbosity of the interviewee, ranging from approximately forty minutes to as much as two hours and most of them taking for about an hour. Luckily all interviewees were generous in sharing their experiences and thoughts and they

discussed the various issues in a relaxed and honest manner despite the sometimes sensitive matter.

The interviews were conducted in August–October 2016. Two of the interviews were conducted as face-to-face interviews in Helsinki, Finland, and five as phone interviews with interviewees residing abroad. The phone interviews were conducted over Skype and there were some technical difficulties in the connection which lead to the connection breaking quite a lot during some of the interviews but luckily the interviewees seemed to be quite used to this and had patience for it. The phone interviews allowed probing and clarification of answers and it was convenient to do when meeting face to face was not an option. It might have also contributed to the honesty of the interviewees when the interview was not done face to face, as phone interviews might enhance the feeling of anonymity in answers.

3.1.3 Transcription

The transcription was conducted using the F4 program. There is some variety in how careful the transcriptions are – the first couple of transcriptions are completely honest with all “uhms” and “errs” carefully noted, but at the end I cleaned the language out somewhat by removing repetitive filling words such as “niinku” (eng. *like*). When I have used the transcriptions for source of a comment, I have cleaned the language up in the quote in order to present the interviewee in a way more suitable for the written context. Laughter was marked in the transcription for added insight to style of talking or areas with humorous content, and long pauses which could be interpreted as hesitation. These long pauses have also been considered to mean careful wording in difficult or sensitive areas, such as taking part in corrupt practices. All of the transcriptions combined resulted in approximately hundred pages of text material.

3.1.4 Research ethics

Anonymity of the interview was guaranteed already in the interview request and I emphasized it at the beginning of every interview prior to the start of recording to provide the interviewees the sense of trust. In my view, this was successful, as I was able to find the interviewees sharing partly sensitive issues and doing so quite effortlessly. The atmosphere, even in the phone call interviews, was mostly very relaxed and jovial, providing a fruitful platform for discussion.

Even if all interviews were recorded for transcription purposes with the permission of the interviewee, all transcriptions and notes of the interviews were coded with numbers. No names of people or organizations were included in the transcripts. These were changed either to the status of the person, such as *employee*, or completely removed to protect the identity of both the interviewee and stakeholders in question. Close attention to this is also paid throughout the description of the data as well as the analysis section in this thesis.

The name of the interviewee was asked in the form with background information for data handling purposes. The results of this questionnaire was stored separately with the list with the coding and personal information about the interviewees to assure this. As the data compiled from the interviews is somewhat sensitive, the anonymity of the data was key. There is no need to share personal information for the purpose of this research and hence the transcriptions, including recognizable details about the identity of the interviewees, is not presented in this thesis at all.

3.2 Methods for data analysis

The purpose of the research was to understand what experiences Finns have had while conducting business in Kenya, and to see to what extent the possible culture differences recognized by Hofstede are experienced as challenging for business. My hypothesis is that even if a person recognized cultural differences or experienced challenges while working in Kenya, they still hold very positive views of the markets and might even advice companies to enter the market. The expectation was that the business opportunities of a growing market outweighed any existing challenges, and that the experiences were, in the end, positive.

To uncover this, I examined words used to describe the expectations of the business culture prior to going to Kenya and analyzing how interviewees reflected on their expectations in hindsight. With the risk of generalization, the results uncovered here might be understood to reflect at least to some extent the views Finns overall hold to the Kenyan, or even African, markets – possibly correlating with the interest in pursuing the market entry.

The questions posed in the second section of the interview regarded the business culture with specific focus on power distance and individualism. As Hofstede points

out, the low scores in individualism go quite seamlessly hand in hand with high power distances, which is the case in all of our sample countries, although not for all societies (Hofstede, 2001: 212-213). All regions and countries in the sample group with low-IDV-values, East and West Africa as well as China, also have higher Power Distance values (see table 7 below).

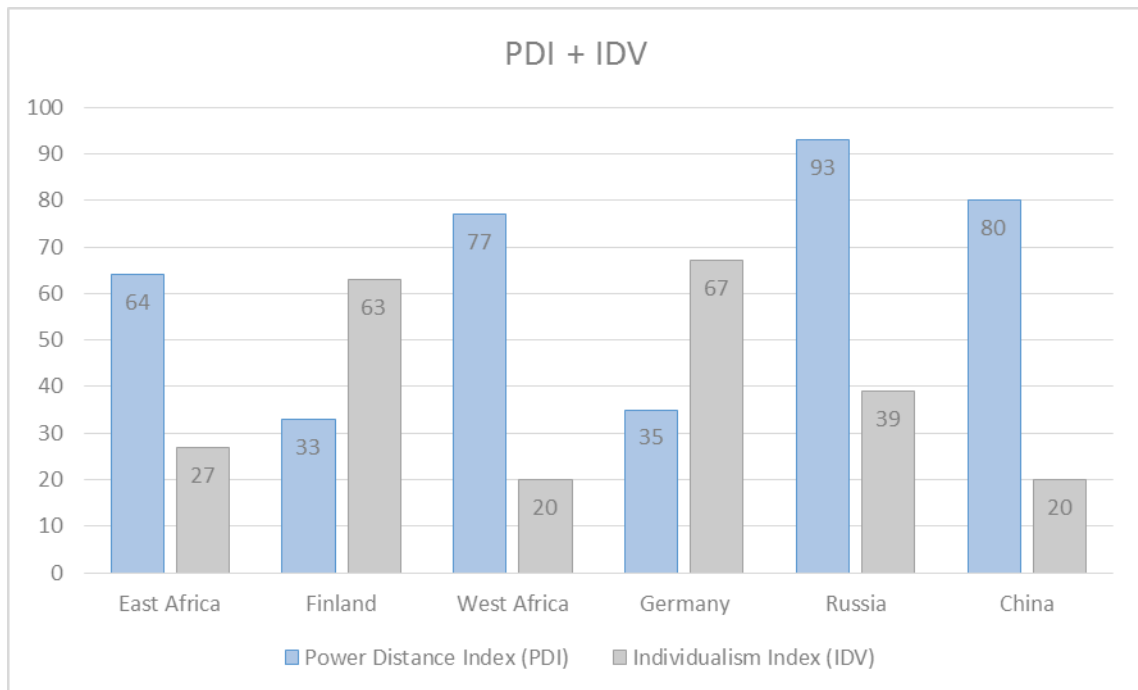


Table 7. Power Distance Index Values together with the Individualism Index Values for chosen countries and regions. (Hofstede, 2001):500-502.

Because these areas were the ones where Hofstede has recognized big differences in the business cultures in Finland and East Africa, I was very interested to see to what extent these issues are recognized in this day and age by Finns.

As mentioned above, there seems to be a trend of individualization happening in urban centers, with the younger population being more educated, more connected and having more international work experience. Is the power distance really an issue when working in Kenya? Do the organizations differ from Finnish organizations too much, making it difficult for Finns to navigate in the strange business culture?

I included a section covering the challenges but also the opportunities the people had experienced, as well as a general overview regarding the markets from the perspective of their fields. I was curious to see what kind of challenges people

reported from working in Kenya and how much these challenges varied from other foreign countries the sample interviewees had experience from. Here my aim was to uncover honest reflections of the reality of the markets in order to be able to provide Finnish company representatives with no knowledge or practical experience from the market with an overview of what to expect. Therefore I also included the last section with advice to Finnish companies. The advice given is also a reflection of how the interviewees actually saw the markets, with its challenges and all.

To test my hypothesis of cultural differences not making a dire difference for the average Finnish business representative working in Kenya, I analyzed the interview data using content analysis. I identified descriptive words and phrases that recurred often and created codes based on these findings. This was done for example by labelling words like *“hustling”* and *“having a lot of drive”* to mean hard-working people. By clustering the comments I was able to distinguish larger descriptions of how Finnish business representatives view Kenya – now and in the future.

4 Data analysis

In this chapter I will uncover what was found in the data and it is categorized thematically according to the five areas of exploration: expectations vs. reality, experiences of business culture in Kenya, challenges and opportunities experienced in Kenya, comparison to other business cultures, general opinions regarding the Kenyan market and advice to Finnish business representatives.

4.1 Expectations vs. reality

I started out the interviews with warm-up questions, urging the interviewees to go back to the moments prior to moving to Kenya to work. The attitudes of interviewees were tested with the discussion regarding expectations of the local business culture. I looked for signs that could explain what kind of understanding these business representatives had about the Kenyan culture and people prior to moving there. Were they curious or afraid? What was the level of development of the business culture they expected to encounter and how did the reality correspond with the expectations? Growing up in Finland myself, I could have easily imagined people’s views having

been dominated by limited knowledge of anything regarding Africa and influenced by the one-dimensional way Africa is often portrayed in the Finnish media.

Tietenkin moni tulee tänne jonkin valtion organisaation kautta, koska he ovat kuulleet jotakin myönteistä, mutta silti se yllättää. Meillä on kuitenkin tiettyjä ennakkotajatuksia, että Afrikkahan on pelkästään nälänhätää, sisällissotia ja tauteja... Siinä mielessä tämä yllättää, että kuinka järjestäytyneet ja normaali yhteiskunta tämä loppuen lopuksi bisnesmielessä on. (Interviewee 4)

Of course many come here through some state organization, because they have heard something positive, but still it surprises you. We still hold certain prejudices that Africa is merely famine, civil war and diseases... In that way this is surprising how organized and normal this society in the end is in the business sense. (Interviewee 4)

Contrary to my expectations, most of the interviewees had not been very familiar to the region prior to moving to Kenya – those having worked elsewhere in Africa before were in the minority. Most had, however, worked or lived abroad before, some for years, and the mindset of the interviewees could be overall described as open and understanding of various cultures.

Interestingly the lack of experience in the region hadn't been an obstacle when considering to move to Africa and some even admitted having had very limited knowledge about Kenya or Africa for that matter. The general expectation seemed to have been that people are lazy and always arriving late to meetings due to being “on African time”. Words like ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘uneducated’ were used. Many mentioned how the hustle and bustle of the capital had taken them by surprise, even if some mentioned having experienced culture shock in the first months. Generally Nairobi was described as an easy city to adapt into compared to other countries they had lived in, such as China or even Western countries like France.

Mielestäni täällä on hirveän helppo elää, olla ja tulla toimeen ihmisten kanssa. En ymmärrä. Paljon helpompi kuin Meksikossa tai Brasiliassa, missä ei osaa kieltä ja se kulttuuri on sisänpäin lämpiävä. Täällä sinut otetaan hyvin vastaan ja annetaan hyvät mahdollisuudet. (Interviewee 6)

I think it is incredibly easy to live, be and interact with people here. I don't understand it. A lot easier than Mexico or Brazil, where you don't know the language and the culture is introverted. Here you are well received and you are given good opportunities. (Interviewee 6)

The background of each interviewee was very different, and obviously each will compare Kenya to whatever they have been used to. Someone coming from a large

Chinese metropolis will no doubt mention troubles adapting to Nairobi during the first months compared to someone coming from Ethiopia. When reflecting back on the first months spent in Kenya, some mentioned the hardworking population, development of markets and Western culture with a tone in their voice resembling admiration or surprise while some mentioned difficulties in getting used to a different service culture or lack of basic necessities at the home, indicative of perhaps having a minor culture shock in the beginning. All in all any negative expectations or prejudices the interviewees admitted to having were to some extent at least proved wrong.

4.2 Kenyan business culture: power distance and individualism

Next in the interviews I moved to the questions related to the specifics of business culture. In order to see how people understood ‘business culture’, I asked the interviewees to describe the Kenyan business culture first openly, and it was only later that I dove deeper to the specific aspects of business culture as is understood by Hofstede. This instigated free association of wordings and phrases and made it possible to hear what the interviewees mentioned when prompted to examine the culture independently. All used positive attributes such as being eager, having a lot of drive and ‘hustling’. The formality of the business culture was highlighted by a couple of interviewees as something varying from Finnish business culture. They described it as dressing more properly for work, such as in a suit, calling people ‘sir’ or ‘madam’, using small talk before getting to the matter at hand as well as emphasizing work titles. Some compared it to being similar to British or American, making the connection of this kind of formal business culture to the British influence on Kenyan culture.

I wanted to find out to what extent the biggest differences between business cultures as recognized by Hofstede actually affected everyday business life. What does power distance or collectivism in organizations mean in practice and how much do they hamper business according to these Finnish business representatives?

The questions asked were inspired by the interview questions Hofstede used in his research regarding power distance and individualism as described in chapter two about the cultural dimensions, questions he deemed as indicative of hierarchic and

collectivist organizations. These included “Have you noticed that employees do not question instructions given by supervisors?” or “How would you describe the meaning of personal relationships in business in Kenya?”. My hypothesis was that these would not be viewed as highly problematic areas of conducting business and that the interviewees would merely feel that these aspects of the Kenyan business culture were ‘business as usual’, nothing special.

Generally the interviewees reported having experienced very high power distances and they emphasized the importance of personal relationships in business, reflecting the collectivist aspect as indicative for Kenyan business culture according to Hofstede. High power distance was reported by each of the interviewees – reports of the boss being ‘a king’ and having to supervise and instruct employees carefully were frequent.

Täällä ollaan periaatteessa kovia tekemään töitä, mutta tämä on myös hyvin hierarkkinen yhteiskunta, eli pomo on pieni kuningas täällä. Vaikka ovat kovia tekemään töitä, sellaista itsenäisyyttä ei ole kovinkaan paljoa niin kuin esimerkiksi Suomessa on tottunut, että täällä saa aika paljon ohjata työntekijöitä ja valvoa. (Interviewee 4)

In principle people here are hardworking, but this is also a very hierarchic society, meaning that the boss is a small king here. Even if they are hardworking, there’s not a lot of this certain kind of independence to which we are used to in Finland for example, so here you have to direct and supervise employees quite a lot. (Interviewee 4)

One practical example of this is how the reception often controls opportunities to contact the decision makers in organizations. "Getting pass the receptionist" or having to convince the "gatekeeper" that you are worthy of the highly esteemed supervisor's limited time was mentioned by a few of the participants in the research, being signs of a higher power distance. The centralized, top-bottom decision making was seen by all of the interviewees as creating bottle necks and slowing down operations. In everyday operations this cultural dimension was visible for example in meetings, where only the supervisors participated in the discussions and the employees would not dare to second guess or report problems to the supervisor. The interviewees explained that this unwillingness to share bad news or not letting someone know about an issue was due to both cultural reasons and the fear of committing a mistake – firing is very easy and with high unemployment rates being

let go is a serious threat. Some, however, had ended up training their staff in a more flat hierarchy style of business culture by for example emphasizing participation in all meetings. A few mentioned that the younger, Western educated work force is showing signs of change in these aspects of the work force, but it was clear that the Hofstede's power distance scores are still visible in everyday business in Kenya and high power distance was indeed experienced challenging.

All interviewees agreed that the personal relations and networks are very important in business in Kenya but the extent to which the relationships are necessary varied. When asked if the interviewees had witnessed that certain groups were preferred as business partners, indicative of a collectivist business culture according to Hofstede, the reports were very varied.

Täällä liike-elämä pyörii kahden väestöryhmän puitteissa. Teollisuus ja kauppa on pitkälle paikallisten intialaisten ja toisaalta paikallisten kikuyu-heimolaisten käsissä. Tietenkin on poikkeuksia, mutta nämä on ne porukat, joilla ne avaimet on käsissä. (Interviewee 4)

Business runs within two ethnic groups here. Industry and trade are mainly in the hands of local Indians and on the other hand in the hands of Kikuyus. Of course there are exceptions, but these are the people holding the keys. (Interviewee 4)

Ethnic disputes and tensions are still prevalent in Kenya and this view of specific ethnic groups 'holding the keys' to certain businesses was mentioned by a couple of the interviewees. Some saw that the emphasis on networks is only natural in business and not specific to the Kenyan context but 'business as usual'. It was also seen as a positive – the collective culture provides a safety net in a country with otherwise lacking systems:

Kaikki liiketoiminta edellyttää jonkin sortin luottamusta ja se on ehkä varmaan suurin haaste, ei pelkästään Keniassa vaan ylipäätään Afrikassa. Se luottamuksen puute. Ihmiset pyrkivät käyttämään kaikkia henkilökohtaisia verkostoja, sukulaisia ja muita. Silloin se huijatuksi tulemisen riski on vähäisempi, koska hyvin tiedät, kuka se ihminen on ja niin pois päin. Sitä kyllä joutuu ongelmiin jos huijaa. Mutta näin ulkopuolisena se luottamuksen puute on kyllä haaste. Jos katsoo, miten paikalliset yrittäjät toimivat, kyllä se on Suomeen verrattuna tosi iso se niitten henkilökohtaisten verkostojen merkitys. Totta kai ihmiset luonnollisesti aina tuntee enemmän ihmisiä, sukulaisia, koulukavereita, jotka ovat useammin siitä omasta etnisestä ryhmästä. (Interviewee 2)

All business requires some sort of trust and that is possibly the biggest challenge, not only in Kenya but overall in Africa. The lack of trust. People try to use all personal networks, relatives and others. Then the risk of getting cheated is smaller because you

know well who the person is and so forth. You will get in trouble if you cheat. But as an outsider the lack of trust is a challenge. If you look at how local entrepreneurs function, the importance of personal networks is very big compared to Finland. Of course people naturally always know people more often from their own ethnic group – relatives, friends from school. (Interviewee 2)

A couple of the interviewees remained optimistic about this being an old way of conducting business, and that it is undergoing a change, where the focus will in the future be more on the quality of the product and service instead of a traditional relationship. This view, described below, makes a divide between the old and the new Kenya where these tensions can be ignored, but this voice was still in minority in this sample:

Se on varmasti old school -businessmalli näissä maissa. Aikaisemmin, kun oikeastaan raha oli valtiolla ja tehtävänä oli myydä niille jotain laitteita tai whatever, siihen liittyi paljon korruptiota ja näitä heimojuttuja, eli että kun kuulut oikeaan heimoon niin sinulla on paremmat mahdollisuudet. Sitä kulttuuria on edelleenkin olemassa, mutta mielestäni jos haluat ulkomaalaisena menestyä ja toimia näissä maissa niin jätät sen paikallisille ja keskityt tähän uuteen talouteen, joka toimii ihan normaaleitten sääntöjen mukaisesti. Eli se on sellaista enemmän neutraalia, että heimo ei ratkaise tai ketä tunnet vaan mikä tuotteesi on, ja miten se hinnoitellaan ja niin pois päin. (Interviewee 6)

It's probably the old school business model in these countries. Before when the state basically had the money and your duty was to sell them equipment or whatever, there was a lot of corruption or these tribe things involved, meaning that if you belong to a certain tribe you have better opportunities. That culture still exists, but I think that if you want to succeed and conduct business as a foreigner in these countries, you leave it to the locals and focus on the new economy, which works according to normal rules. So it's more neutral, that the tribe or who you know are not the deciding factors but what your product is, how it's priced and so on. (Interviewee 6)

Besides the varying reports of preferring certain business partners based on ethnicity, all interviewees emphasized having good local contacts. Having a Kenyan in a team or as a business partner was seen as crucial by many and definitely an asset by all. This was because of the fact that not only can a well-connected partner open a lot of doors, they were seen as informal guides to the local ways of conducting business.

One aspect of business culture that stood out in the responses of a majority of the interviews was the focus on short term goals by Kenyans. The inability to think long term was mentioned to be prevalent everywhere, whether it was in regards to conducting business, dealing with employees or dealing with the house help. One

interviewee distinguished this to be specific for employees, and that management level people were different. Reports of someone risking to be fired just to steal a tiny sum of money or not willing to invest a lot of time and energy on something when the goals can only be achieved after a long time were given as examples of short term thinking.

4.3 Challenges and opportunities

The aim of the research was to understand to what extent the cultural differences are considered to be an issue when conducting business in Kenya. To find this out, I wanted to explore the general challenges Finnish business representatives had experienced. After having mapped views regarding power distance and individualism in the business culture, I wanted to hear about any and all challenges and opportunities the Finnish business representatives had encountered.

I expected to hear everyday challenges regarding logistical issues or even worries about security in Kenya, and I wanted to see how much these sorts of issues, not necessarily rising from cultural differences, dominated the challenges mentioned by the interviewees. I was also keen to find out whether aspects that could be considered to be of a cultural origin were seen as problematic. This was done by once again asking firstly an open-ended question about the challenges experienced. Free association would be key here – are the listed challenges of a cultural or a practical nature or possibly a combination of both? I continued to ask specific questions regarding the way how Finns were welcomed in the business, to what extent corruption should be taken into account and how gender equality was experienced at the work place.

The challenges were then contrasted with the prospects and opportunities the interviewees recognized, and with most of the interviewees still residing in Kenya with plans to stay for the time being, it was evident that in their opinion the good outweighs any bad they might have encountered. Here I hypothesized people to experience the color of their skin or having a Western background as a personal asset in business, and to mention the growing markets as opening up professional opportunities.

Even if I had had personal experience from living in Nairobi and had personally found the city safer than its reputation might intend, I was pleased to find out that the security concerns were rarely raised by the interviewees – it was only mentioned briefly twice. One interviewee compared Nairobi to Khartoum, saying the latter felt freer because they felt safe to walk around town after dark, something not recommended in Nairobi. Another mentioned security concerns due to having heard about friends having had some trouble, but stated that it was still a lot safer in Nairobi than in Rio de Janeiro or Mexico City and that one simply has to deal with it by living in a better neighborhood and being careful.

The challenges reported were multifaceted. The practical challenges regarding the personal day-to-day in Nairobi included price of food, electricity, housing and education for children. From a business perspective the interviewees mentioned problems in obtaining work permits, visas, having importation and logistical issues, traffic jams, power cuts, unclear legal texts, counterfeit products and sexual harassment as issues dealt with on a fairly regular basis. The market's competitiveness and price sensitivity of customers were seen as challenges by some. When dealing with clients and business partners, challenges reported were client conversion and trust. Building trust and local networks was emphasized a lot, like was mentioned before regarding the collectivist culture. Being able to find the right connections and building a relationship with them was mentioned as a challenge quite often by the interviewees. There were many accounts where the habit of not honestly telling bad news felt frustrating coming from a very direct culture in Finland.

A couple mentioned the difficulty to act honestly and conduct business by the book in a system that is as corrupt as Kenya is. When it comes to corruption, I was interested to find out to what extent it actually had to be taken into account while conducting business. The topic dominated the data regarding challenges, but the comments were quite varying. Consider the difference between these two takes on corruption. This first interviewee with years of experience working abroad and travelling for business, comments on corruption in Kenya:

Jos vertaat Tansaniaan, Ugandaan, Etiopiaan, Etelä-Sudaniin tai Zimbabween niin tähän on mainio paikka. Korruptio on kohtalaisen rajoitettu ja ihmiset on

koulutettuja, työteliäitä ja fiksuja. Kaikki toimii aika lailla normaaleitten sääntöjen mukaan mielestäni verrattuna melkein kaikkiin muihin Afrikan maihin. (Interviewee 6)

If you compare to Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe then this is an excellent place. Corruption is moderately limited and people are educated, industrious and smart. In my opinion everything works according to normal rules compared to almost every other African country. (Interviewee 6)

Having a positive outlook on the situation, the interviewee finds corruption to be limited and sees Kenya therefore as an easier environment to navigate in than many other Sub-Saharan African countries. This view was echoed by most of the interviewees – many felt that the level of corrupt practices could in some fields of business be very low, even non-existent, and in some fields it was so prevalent, that conducting business would require “paying kick-backs” on a daily basis. The next interviewee, also with years of experience in conducting business in Kenya, has clearly another point of view:

Interviewer: Miten paljon koet, että korruptio noin yleisesti ottaen pitää ottaa huomioon kun tekee liiketoimintaa Keniassa?

Interviewee: Se on A ja O.

Interviewer: Okei.

Interviewee: Eli siis täällä on korruptio täysin yhteiskunnan läpitunkema. (Interview 4)

Interviewer: How much do you think that corruption generally has to be taken into account when conducting business in Kenya?

Interviewee: It's the bread and butter of it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: So society is completely permeated by corruption. (Interview 4)

Some made a clear distinction between corruption that occurs when dealing with the national governmental institutions such as the police, ministries and various agencies, and between the kinds of corrupt practices going on between businesses in the private sector. The latter was clearly more dependent on the fields in which businesses operated as well as the size of the company. Being a large multinational company, the competitive advantage made it possible to avoid corruption, while some reported it being very difficult to operate as small or medium-sized company and be completely ‘clean’. According to some, paying bribes to governmental officials was seen as necessary when dealing with the public sector, while others

didn't feel it was a requirement but merely frustrating, because not paying bribes simply slows down the process tremendously.

Getting pass the receptionist was mentioned by an interviewee as one of the hardest challenges in business, and it could be a sign of high power distance, as presumed above. Here's an example of what everyday corruption means in practice, and it offers another side of how getting pass the receptionist might just be a part of the corrupt system:

By the book se on väärin, mutta sosiaalisesti se ei ole paheksuttavaa. (---) Tiedän paljon kenialaisia yrittäjiä, jotka sanovat, että aluksi ovat tehneet vaikka myyntiä omalle firmalle eikä tullut mitään diilejä. Sitten kun alkoi tehdä niin, että kun meni johonkin firman tapaamiseen, aluksi annat vähän sille portinvartijalle, se oppii tuntemaan sinut ja se päästää sinut sisään. Sitten annat vähän sille respalle rahaa ja se oppii tuntemaan. Sitten se aina soittaa pomolleen, että 'tuu paikalle', ja sitten... No, jos se joku, joka päättää, että ostaa tuotteen, on vaikka joku ostopäällikkö, niin siinähan se korruptio tapahtuu käytännössä. Eli lahjotaan ne, jotka päättävät että mitä tuotteita ostetaan firman sisään. Se, joka saa jotenkin käännettyä ne ostopuolen päättäjät, voittaa sen kilpailutuksen. Sen olen ymmärtänyt olevan aika äärimmäisen yleistä täällä. (Interviewee 3)

By the book it is wrong, but socially it is not frowned upon. (--) I know a lot of Kenyan entrepreneurs who say that in the beginning they've been doing for instance sales to their company and not getting any deals. But when you go to a meeting with a company, giving first a little to the gatekeeper, who learns to know you and they let you enter. Then you give a little money to the receptionist and they learn to know you. Then they always call their boss, like 'come here' and then... Well, if that someone who is in charge, decides to purchase a product, being some purchasing manager, then practically that's where the corruption occurs. So you bribe those who decide which products are purchased. The one, who manages somehow to turn the managers on the purchasing department, wins the tender. From my understanding that's pretty extremely common here. (Interviewee 3)

Corruption could be, according to the various interviewees, by-passed by simply only conducting business in fields where corruption was not a problem, trying to go around the person requiring bribes, or hiring a local agent, who is responsible of dealing with the people demanding bribes.

When asked about the possible challenges in regards to gender inequality and how it is for a woman to work in Kenya, the interviewees all felt that culturally women are well represented in the work life and that they often hold middle-management positions. Individual remarks were made about women being viewed as more honest

and less corrupt than men, and that having a woman on the team could be an asset in business meetings because it relieved the tension in, at times, hard negotiations. The prevalence of sexual harassment was more visible to some. While others felt it definitely wasn't an issue, at least not in Business to Business -operations, some felt that it was a daily nuisance or a serious issue. The business environment was however deemed safe for women, especially when compared to for example Arab countries. The women were seen to have equal opportunities but some noticed that they rarely occupied C-level positions, indicative of perhaps a glass ceiling of sorts.

Despite all the challenges, especially regarding corruption, the views about the markets were generally positive according to all of the interviewees. Even with corrupt practices, the markets were viewed as working normally like markets do, and because of the liberal market system, the "corrupt hand of the government can't reach everything" as put by one interviewee. The markets were in general described as booming, developing and growing fast. Kenya offers opportunities in countless fields, according to the interviewees, such as in infrastructure, food, agriculture, energy, IT, construction and health. As one interviewee said the opportunities are where the people are:

It's a numbers game. Wherever you have people. So it's food. Because there are 45 million people who need to eat. Anything food related. And there's 45 million people who need to move. Transport. Wherever there's 45 million people doing something. (Interviewee 7)

The ever growing purchasing power of consumers and the "greenness" of the markets guarantees that with a niche-product a very good market position can be reached by little or no competition in certain fields, leading to great rewards. By recognizing the opportunities in these sectors which are not riddled with competition, the player can make a fortune, which in more developed markets can be nearly impossible to do. Some mentioned their friends being very successful by simply importing consumer goods. One mentioned as a sign of development and of growing purchasing power the building of bigger and bigger shopping centers, a lot larger than those in Finland. Setting up a business was seen as easier to do in Kenya than in Ethiopia or Tanzania, and there was an individual remark on the tax system working decently in Kenya. The excellent position of Kenya on the East African coast and the connection it provides to the Middle East and India also came up as a strength.

Access to finance systems was mentioned as something giving the European and Asian companies competitive advantages in the market.

Many reported being treated well by Kenyans as a foreigner and one interviewee stated that for example the hostility displayed in South Africa against immigrants is nonexistent in Kenya. As a Finn the interviewees said they were treated very neutrally. Specifically being a Finn rarely gave an advantage since not many know a lot about Finland, but at the same time there was no negative treatment either. Kenyans as a people are described as being very open and friendly. Especially the young population was described as Western educated, travelled and smart, which smooths any cultural differences that otherwise may exist, making it a very easy country to live in. Communication was considered easy due to the excellent level of English spoken especially in Nairobi, and this importance of no language barrier was emphasized especially with those having worked in Egypt or Tanzania. So called white privileges did not stand out, albeit the color of the skin was at times viewed as an asset, because it could open doors and be a symbol of quality or credibility. However, the interviewees generally found that skin color mattered far less than merits and a couple of interviewees thought it was due to the long history of the white minority in Kenya – the “White man” is not an uncommon sight in Nairobi.

4.4 Comparison to other foreign business cultures

Earlier in this thesis I highlighted points in Hofstede’s research regarding cultural dimensions between Finland, Germany, Russia, China and Sub-Saharan African countries. I found that countries such as Russia and China are according to Hofstede very different from Finland, but this is not viewed as an obstacle for Finns rushing to explore these large markets. In my interviews I wanted to explore the experiences of Kenyan business in comparison to other countries that the interviewees had work experience from, and to my luck, most of the interviewees had vast expatriate experience ranging from a couple of years to as many as 15. This provided a fruitful opportunity to contrast Kenya to its neighboring countries like Ethiopia and Tanzania, which in Hofstede’s research were grouped together, having the same index scores in cultural dimensions like power distance or collectivism. Based on my personal experience, I expected to hear examples of how for example Kenya’s

business culture was more Western than Ethiopian and that the cultural differences weren't as overpowering in Kenya than for example in China.

The main accounts people made in the interview had a very similar tone. The variation between African countries is wonderfully showcased by the comments given by the interviewees. Those having worked before in other countries in East African countries such as Uganda and Ethiopia described Kenya as more developed and more civilized. There were individual comments regarding the stereotypical, underdeveloped views of Africa being more reality in Tanzania and that the understanding of the business world is far lacking in Tanzania compared to Kenya. In comparison to these neighboring countries, the work force in Kenya was reported consisting of more educated, skillful people, especially in the younger generation. Having a competent and energetic population only takes you so far, as pointed out by a few of the interviewees. They maintained that the liberal markets in Kenya are its biggest strength, especially when comparing to Ethiopia and Uganda, where the governments play a bigger role in controlling the markets.

Overall, those with experience from other African countries like Cameroon, Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia commented on Kenya being far more developed, while Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa were mentioned as being more developed as countries and markets compared to Kenya.

Like was mentioned before, Kenya was regarded as easier to adapt into compared to Latin countries such as Brazil and Mexico due to language and safety issues, but one interviewee also felt it was easier to adapt to the local customs in Kenya than in France. A couple of the interviewees had previous experience in working in China, which they viewed as completely different compared to Finland and for example the language barrier made it impossible to conduct business without an interpreter, something clearly not an issue in the English-speaking Nairobi. Even if neither stated clearly that they preferred Kenya over China culturally, both of them emphasized that it's too late to start conducting business in China now, as the markets have become too competitive, and that the place to be in right now is definitely Africa.

It seemed that all of the interviewees agreed on one thing – the opportunities are extremely interesting, especially in some fields. Compared to many other countries,

it was easier to navigate the business world in Kenya. This following perspective on the opportunities in the Kenyan market compared to other developing markets in Africa and globally provides a good overview of the positive views held by all of the interviewees in a nutshell:

Tämä on viimeinen suuri markkina, joka on juuri avautunut. Nyt on valtavat mahdollisuudet seuraavan 10 vuoden aikana. En menisi minnekään muualle tekemään mitään. Tämä on niin kuin Kiina '95 tai Brasilia 10 vuotta sitten. Nythän täällä tapahtuu. Kenia on valtavan hyvä siinä mielessä, että tämä ei perustu mineraaleihin eikä öljyyn vaan siihen, että on erittäin hyvä koulutustaso ja paljon fiksuja ihmisiä, joilla on valtava yritys päällä. Eli tästähän tulee Afrikan hubi juuri siitä syystä, että täällä on sitä rahoitusosaamista, toimiva oikeusjärjestys, hyviä lakimiehiä ja kirjanpitäjiä ja vaikka mitä. Mielestäni Kenia tulee dominoimaan ennen kaikkea nyt kun Etelä-Afrikassa niillä on paljon enemmän ongelmia kuin täällä. Ja tähän on siis 'open for business', eli ei ole näitä valuuttarajoituksia niin kuin Etelä-Afrikassa ja Etiopiassa, eikä täällä hirveästi rajoiteta sitä, että ihmiset saisi tulla tänne. Mielestäni tämä on tällä hetkellä Afrikan ykkösmä. En tiedä, mikä olisi parempi. Ei ole ainakaan Nigeria, koska se on niin riippuvainen öljystä. Ei Egypti, koska siellä on omat ongelmansa. Ei ole Etelä-Afrikka... No, mikä se sitten olisi? Ja okei, tämä ei ole yhtä suuri maa kuin Nigeria esimerkiksi mutta täällä on kuitenkin 200 miljoonaa ihmistä, jotka kaipaavat Keniaa, jos laskee Ethiopian, Ugandan, Tansanian, Ruandan, Etelä-Sudanin... Uskon tähän tarinaan täysin. Okei, Kenia ei ehkä kasva yhtä nopeasti kuin Etiopia, mutta sehän johtuu siitä, että taso on huomattavan paljon korkeampi. (Interviewee 6)

This is the last great market that has just opened. Now there are huge opportunities during the next ten years. I wouldn't go and do anything anywhere else. This is like China '95 or Brazil ten years ago. Now is when it's happening. Kenya is good in that aspect that it is not based on minerals or oil, but on a very good education level and a lot of smart people who have an immense drive. So this will be the African hub just because the economic knowhow, functioning justice system, good lawyers and accountants and everything are here. I think Kenya will dominate before anything now that there are a lot more problems in South Africa than here. And this is 'open for business', so there are no limitations to currency like in South Africa and Ethiopia, and they don't terribly restrict people coming here. I think this is currently the number one country in Africa. I don't know what could be better. Not Nigeria, because it's dependent on oil. Not Egypt because they have their own problems. Not South Africa... So what could it be? And okay, it's not as big as Nigeria, but here are still 200 million people who depend on Kenya, if you count together Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Sudan... I believe this story completely. Okay, Kenya might not be growing as fast as Ethiopia, but that's because the level is notably higher. (Interviewee 6)

With the challenges and opportunities mapped out, we can move onto the advice these Finnish business representatives would have to give to Finns, the Finnish government and those with obvious business opportunities yet harnessed.

4.5 Advice to Finnish business representatives

With compiling information about how the reality of Kenyan business culture met expectations, how problematic possible cultural differences were seen and what kind of challenges Finns had experienced in Kenya, my aim was to provide interested Finns, especially those working in fields with market opportunities in Kenya, with data about do's and don'ts of business in Kenya. I wanted to find out what attitudes business representatives with extensive hands-on experience held about the markets in general and what kind of advice they would give other Finns. This was done by asking the interviewees to analyze the situation now and how the markets were going to develop in the future. The expert views about the future would be very interesting, as the data from the likes of McKinsey or World Bank still paint a pretty picture. Would these experts corroborate the expectations, and how did they see the Finnish government's role in harnessing the potential of the markets? I expected the interviewees to hold a very positive role due to the fact that they in most cases still resided in Kenya.

Kun matkustaa Afrikkaan, ei matkusta mihinkään Marsiin. (Interviewee 2)

You don't travel to Mars when you travel to Africa. (Interviewee 2)

This 'It's Africa, not Mars'-type of comment given by one of the interviewee puts into words something that could be researched further – what kind of image do Finns really have about Africa or Kenya specifically? This research only scratches the surface by finding out that most interviewees reported of not having any expectations at all or to have had some misconception of the business culture and being positively surprised about Nairobi and Kenya. After working in Kenya, in some instances for a very long time, most of the interviewees ultimately viewed the country very positively despite all challenges. They criticized other Finnish companies for being shortsighted and not doing more to harness the opportunities.

Suomalaiset, monet vientiyrietykset, on todella kädettömiä ja sitten ne näkevät jonkun Kiinan markkinan, mikä on totta kai helvetin iso markkina, kun Kiinassa on miljardi ihmistä, mutta niin on Afrikassakin. (Interviewee 4)

Finns, many export companies, are very incompetent and then they see some market in China, which of course is a hell of a big market when there are a billion people in China, but that's true for Africa, too. (Interviewee 4)

This view of Finnish companies being blind of the opportunities was echoed by another interviewee, who reflected on how for example Finnish dairy companies were struggling during the trade sanctions to Russia and how, if only having been brave enough, they could have compensated the loss of business by exporting to Kenya:

Täällä varmaan keskiluokkaista porukkaa on ehkä se 10 miljoonaa, jolla olisi varaa ostaa Valion juustoja ja muita tällaisia tuotteita. (Interviewee 4)

There is probably 10 million middle-class people who could afford Valio cheeses and other products like these. (Interviewee 4)

And another interviewee added:

Täällä koko ajan rakennetaan teitä. Nyt rakennetaan rautatietä ja infrastruktuuriprojekteja on tosi paljon. Eipä näy Lemminkäistä ja YIT:tä ja muita suomalaisia yrityksiä tekemässä tarjouksia. Täällä kiinalaiset tekee suurimman osan näistä. (Interviewee 6)

They are building roads all of the time. Now they are building railroads and there are many infrastructure projects. But Lemminkäinen and YIT and other Finnish companies are nowhere to be seen making offers. The Chinese make most of them here. (Interviewee 6)

Some were more understanding. They maintained that the challenges are indeed major and that because internationalization is always a risk for a company, it is understandable that the companies pursue markets with a surer expected success rate. In many cases they still maintained that being brave and outward-looking would benefit the companies, but not forgetting to be realistic in the expectations:

It's not as easy as you think. There's no free dinner, there's no free lunch. You have to work hard. You have to work hard and you have to be present. You have to be ready to invest time. Time is the biggest thing to invest here. (Interviewee 7)

Plenty of advice was provided by the interviewees. In practical terms many recommended having a strong local presence, making the effort to build lasting relationships with local people, who were viewed as key in the success of the penetration to the markets. Getting these local agents to handle all matters with the government agencies was an advice given by some of the interviewees. When trying to find the right partners, background checks and referrals were recommended, as well as relying on common sense and their hunch, which naturally develops over time and after 'having to pay your dues', like one interviewee said. Like I wrote

above, Kenyans' short-term thinking was considered prevalent among the interviewees, and therefore many suggested to do all you can to get a local partner with appropriate long-term goals. Some recommended getting in touch with the Finns residing in the country for some support as a newcomer, but some advised against it, as the most meaningful connections are local.

Tips like remembering to make small talk and dressing appropriately for the formal business culture or not relying solely on e-mails when trying to approach people were shared. A few of the interviewees warmly recommended having more of a control at the workplace, communicating goals clearly to employees and making constant follow-ups, all aspects derived from the high power distance in the business culture. Due to the markets being very price conscious, most recognized opportunities in fields where competition still remained low and the Finns wouldn't have to compete with cheaply manufactured Chinese products, meaning quality consumer goods in niche markets, which was recognized as the strengths of the Finnish companies in general. Customization of products in for example package sizes was mentioned as one idea for localizing products.

Ei se nyt ole niin vaikeaa. Sen kun vaan hyppäät lentokoneeseen ja tulet tänne ja pyörit täällä kuusi kuukautta. Siinä ajassa kyllä tajuat, että voiko täällä tehdä jotain vai ei. Turha luottaa mihinkään muuhun. (Interviewee 6)

It's not that hard. Just get on a plane and come here and hang around for six months. In that time you can tell whether or not you'll be able to do anything here. Don't trust anything else. (Interviewee 6)

Aspects regarding the attitude of Finnish entrepreneurs were emphasized by most. Not daring or being brave enough, having a lack of faith or lacking the right entrepreneurial mindset were repeated in the data. This was in some extent viewed as being connected to the way Africa is portrayed on the Finnish media, with only bad news and little or no positive news coming from the region and 'from the other side of the coin'. Positive experiences of how other companies have entered the markets successfully were mentioned a couple of times as important role models.

As the Finnish government has several governmental agencies working to increase exports, I inquired the opinions of these business representatives regarding the way they felt the opportunities were best grasped and how they saw the government's role in this. Interestingly a few comments were made about this not being the

government's role at all, and that the companies are independent, following the trends in the markets and if someone is not doing that properly, it's their loss. When asked what kind of assistance they would have appreciated getting from the government when they ran into trouble or challenges in Kenya, quite many felt that there wasn't really anything that the Finnish government could do. A couple, however, felt that the government could have a bigger role in assisting the Finnish businesses when they are harassed by the Kenyan government only due to corrupt government officials. While many were unsure of what the correct way to encourage businesses to start conducting business in Kenya or in Africa overall, many were critical of the actions taken so far as they were viewed as useless 'delegation tours to shake hands with the wrong people'.

One interviewee offered a very concrete solution to help the companies in internationalization and referred to the Vie program in France, offering tax breaks to all French companies hiring recent graduates to explore the opportunities in fresh markets. Another suggested establishing a hub in Kenya for Finnish business representatives, where they would have co-working facilities and a chance to network with the right local people. Also suggested was that specific marketing to companies in Finland would be done more actively to educate the companies about the opportunities.

5 Findings

When looking at the research data, the research methods used seem fitting for this type of research, where understanding the interviewee's point of view. It was interesting to find that even in such a small sample there were many similarities in the answers and outlooks on the markets. Despite the small sample size, the data was saturated in many cases and therefore the findings of the interviews can be viewed as suggestive of a probable trend among Finnish business representatives, at least to some extent. The information gathered by the Finns in this research might also be valuable to people with similar backgrounds in the Nordics or Western cultures generally. This research can thus be understood as a promising pilot study which can work as a base for further research in how Kenyan business culture is perceived.

This being said, the heavily male dominated sample could be seen as a weakness of the research. The amount of Finnish women in management level positions working in the private sector in Kenya is not too large to begin with – a problem in its own accord, not to be discussed further in this work. Certainly it would be good to conduct further research about this topic with more women involved. In questions of sexual harassment or gender equality experienced at the work place, the accounts from more women would be very valuable.

Another point to take into account is whether or not a person who has not lived in Finland in 15 years is a suitable spokesperson for the ‘Finnish perspective’. A couple of the interviewees had lived in many countries for long periods of time before moving to Kenya, resulting in one case to over 21 years abroad. National identity has not been addressed in length here, but this and its effect on views of foreign business cultures could be further explored. One interviewee even stated directly that they feel estranged from Finland as they haven’t lived there in years, do not follow Finnish media or feel that they know what is going on in Finland.

The open and curious mindset all of the interviewees might not be indicative of all Finns in general and it is something to keep in mind when going through the findings of the research. This kind of attitude is perhaps a requirement for someone to be willing to move to another country for work – those with the opposite attributes are perhaps not the first entrepreneurs to rush to foreign markets or the ones in charge of the internationalization operations in Finnish companies. Interestingly not all participants in this research had experience from working in Africa and there were some very honest accounts of prejudiced attitudes before moving there. Therefore all Finnish business representatives expressing doubt or disbelief in markets are encouraged to reconsider. As experts business representatives in their field, the interviewees in this research still rely on facts and their personal experience, and their views should definitely not be disregarded solely because they haven’t lived in Finland in a long time.

The expectation of the research resulting to the conclusion that the culture differences would not matter as much as Hofstede thinks cannot be said to be completely accurate based on this research, even if some interesting data was uncovered to support the changes going on in the country, affecting the business

culture. The at times polarized views can be understood as indicative of the “old and the new Kenya” as one interviewee framed it. Let us see how the cultural dimensions were visible in the data.

Hofstede’s research regarding culture dimensions in organizations showed Finland having a low power distance (a score of 33), while East Africa had a score of 64, indicating a high power distance. The research clearly corroborated this and gave multiple accounts of how this difference in business culture is evident from the perspective of a Finn. The question is: how problematic is this according to the Finns interviewed? Some were clearly frustrated with aspects indicative of this, especially when it came to centralized decision-making creating bottlenecks for operations and slowing things down. Others didn’t seem that bothered by it, and stated that it was just something that you get used to. The challenges that interviewees reported were generally of a practical nature and one interviewee stated clearly that the power distance is the least of the problems in doing business in Kenya.

The Individualism Index showed Finland ranking high with a score of 63, indicating a strong sense of individualism in the business culture, while the East African score was 27, showing a more collectivist approach. A heightened importance of personal networks to the extent of favoring business partners according to their ethnic background was substantiated by the interviewees in this research. All emphasized the importance of having good relations, but the reports on favoring specific ethnicities was debatable. Some thought the culture of business is shifting to a more meritocratic system, where business is done with those offering the best quality and the best prices, not necessarily because the one offering represents the same ethnic group. None experienced this as a serious hurdle for business – due to the openness of Kenyans they often felt that the social circles were easy to get into, even if finding a reliable local business partner was experienced challenging by some.

The findings of the research would suggest that the causalities and connections as outlined by Hofstede seem to play out also in the Finnish-Kenyan business culture pair, and the cultures are in many aspects similar. With the increase in wealth and the strides made in technology, the results in the Individualism Index in especially urban centers in Africa might look very different if updated to today in 2016. What matters for the Finnish small and medium sized company head is that the differences that do

still exist for example in power distance are not perceived as a hindrance to conduct business in Kenya by those with experience from working in the private sector there. When analyzing the results of the data, it seems that practical issues matter more than the cultural differences, and in the end even those are outweighed by the positive sides of the booming market. Any cultural differences can be learned and adapted to, as it only requires an open mind, as evident in this following comment:

No ne puolet, jotka vetävät sinne [Keniaan] ovat niitä että se on kasvava, se on menossa siihen 'developing country' tasoon ja tämä luo hyvin paljon mahdollisuuksia. Se, että esimerkiksi rakentaisi paikallisen nettijakeluverkoston, kaikkea tällaisia mahdollisuuksia on tosi paljon. Ja usein, kun pääsee ja onnistuu jossakin, tuotto prosentit ovat ihan muuta kuin mitä täällä [Suomessa]. Se on yksi suuri vetävä tekijä sinne. Jos pärjää jossakin, se mitä sulla jää taskuun on siellä, on huomattavasti enemmän kuin mitä täällä. Se, miten sen toteuttaa on hyvin pitkälti kiinni siitä uskaltamisesta ja rohkeudesta feilata. Siinä tulee tekemään virheitä ja sitä tulee oppimaan ihan kantapään kautta, mikä toimii ja mikä ei. Ehkä se on enemmän se, että näitä kulttuurillisia asioita ei pysty aina edes selittämään etukäteen mutta ne oppii sitten tien päällä. (Interviewee 1)

The aspects that attract you [to Kenya] is that it is growing, going to the 'developing country' level and this creates a lot of opportunities. For example if you were to build a local internet distribution network – there are a lot of opportunities like this. And often when you go and succeed in something the profit percentages are something completely else than here [in Finland]. That's a big appealing factor to go there. If you do well, whatever is left in your pocket there is remarkably more than here. How you implement this is quite dependent on daring and the courage to fail. You will make mistakes and you will learn the hard way what works and what doesn't. Maybe it's more that these cultural things can't be even explained beforehand but you learn them on the road. (Interviewee 1)

What is clearly noteworthy is that the main message from the data is a positive view on Kenya and Kenyan markets. Despite all challenges and problems experienced in everyday business, the opportunities and profit possibilities outweigh the bad. Those having a prejudiced attitude prior to coming to Kenya, were often taken by surprise of and the views were proved wrong in many ways. Here's a very honest account of how the reality was perceived in comparison to the expectations, echoed by many in the data:

Aluksi kun tulin tänne niin ajattelin, etten voi luottaa kehenkään, kun nyt menen sinne "Oikeaan Afrikkaan" ja Nairobi on vielä tosi vaarallinen. Mulla oli sellainen vaikutelma, etten voi luottaa keneenkään ja on tosi vaarallista. Sehän on todella länsimaalainen asenne, 'Musta Afrikka'. Aliarvioit paikallisia ihmisiä ihan täysin. Mutta ihmisethän on ihan samanlaisia mihin tahansa mennään. Kaikkien pitää syödä,

meillä on sosiaalisia tarpeita, haluamme ystäviä ja turvallisuuden tunnetta. Halutaan ihan oikeasti ihan samoja asioita. Mutta sitten jengi näyttää erilaiselta ja on kaukana. Jos joku olisi alkanut kadulla juttelemaan jotain, niin enhän mä sille voisi mitään vastata [nauraa]. Kyllä mä olin reissannut ja ollut Etelä-Afrikassa, että tavalliseen suomalaiseen verrattuna olin paljon avoimempi, mut näin jälkikäteen katsottuna niin olihan minulla helvetin paljon ennakkoluuloja. Katselin sivusta, että 'onpa oudon näköistä sakkia'. (---)

En tajunnut, miten ihmiset olivat avoimia, uteliaita ja täällä sinulla ei ole ulkomaalaisena pakko olla iso sukunimi, [maisterin] paperit tai oma firma, jotta pääset juttelemaan ihmisille. Jos selailee bisneslehtiä, kyllähän Afrikasta sanotaan että 'full of potential, mahtavaa, menkää sinne, ovet auki', mutta en tajunnut, että se voisi ihan yksityishenkilönä olla niin sopiva paikka. Täällä on niin paljon mahdollisuuksia ja tämä jengi on niin avointa ja positiivista, joskus vähän liiankin optimistia. Täällä on hyvä ympäristö kehittyä ja menestyä mielestäni. Vieraanvaraisuus, ystävällisyys ja avuliaisuus, se on myös sellainen, etten osannut odottaa. Suomessa on tärkeää työ ja kovat arvot, sun pitää olla täsmällinen, meillä on taipumus ylisuorittamiseen ja kun on ongelmia, niistä ei puhuta. Me ollaan aika rajuja ja vaativia itseämme kohtaa. Täällä oppii vähän downshiftaamisesta. Kenialaisten kanssa on helpompi jutella. Kenialaisilta oppii, miten ne ajattelevat elämää eri vinkkelistä kuin me. Ne on tyytyväisempiä pienemmistä jutuista. 'Hei [nimi], sä oot terve ja tää on vaan työtä'. (Interviewee 5)

At first when I came here [to Kenya] I thought I can't trust anybody when I go to the "Real Africa", and also Nairobi is very dangerous. I had the impression that I can't trust anybody and that it is very dangerous. Now that's a very Western attitude, "Black Africa". You underestimate the local people completely. But then people are exactly the same as anywhere you go. Everybody needs to eat, we have social needs, want friends and a sense of security. We genuinely want the exact same things. But then people look different and they're far. If someone had started talking to me on the street, I was like "I can't answer them" [laughter]. Sure I had traveled and been to South Africa, so compared to a regular Finn I was a lot more open, but looking back I had a hell of a lot prejudices. I would look from the sidelines and think "These people look strange." (--)

I didn't understand how open and curious people are and that here as a foreigner you don't have to have a known last name, a degree or your own company before you can talk to people. When you flip through business magazines, sure they say about Africa that it is "full of potential, great, go there, the doors are open" but I didn't realize that for an individual this is such a suitable place. You have so many opportunities here, and the people are so open and positive, sometimes too optimistic. This is a great environment to develop and succeed in my opinion. The hospitality, friendliness and helpfulness is something I couldn't expect. In Finland work and hard values are important, that you have to be punctual, we have a tendency to over-perform, and when there are problems, we don't talk about them. We are quite hard and demanding on ourselves. Here you learn about downshifting. It's easier to talk to Kenyans. You learn from Kenyans how they view life from a different perspective. They're satisfied with less. Like, 'Hey [name], you're healthy and this is just work'. (Interviewee 5)

This reflection to expectations, initial reactions and of personal experiences later shows a development trajectory of attitudes and views which I presume resonates in many who have worked in Kenya or other African countries for that matter. When it comes to experiencing the positive sides, all naturally emphasized the possibilities in the markets and the business they were in, and this was a fresh perspective on the personal gains from working in Kenya.

What also stood out was that while I expected Finns to report getting special treatment due to their skin color, most saw it only to be true to some extent. It might help you get into the meeting and seeming credible, but in the end success depended on merits and having the best product or service with the best price. According to some, what mattered more was how much one was willing to pay bribes.

This takes us to the findings regarding corruption. Corruption taking place in Africa is not news, but the extent of which all interviewees thought that it has to be taken into account especially in some fields, was somewhat surprising. To my understanding the corrupt practices were more prevalent when dealing with the public sector, and it was intriguing to hear information about how corruption affects the business-to-business operations. More often than not the discussion about corruption moved from personal experiences to general overviews of “how things are done” and descriptions of what they themselves had witnessed or heard from friends. Some maintained that at least in business-to-business corruption is not an issue, and that there any of the corrupt practices can be bypassed. Some had adapted a mindset of ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do’, viewing it as the necessary evil of the booming market. All in all it was not seen as a deal breaker for entering the market and even those with very negative experiences of corruption still thought that the Kenyan market is definitely promising.

When speaking of the challenges of conducting business, corruption related issues got the most mentions, and among others the challenges can be mainly labeled as practical issues, not specific to Kenya per se. Key in expatriation still lies in the ability to adapt to local ways and customs without fighting against them in every turn.

When working in any developing country, the same visa and work permit issues, logistical and importation problems are recorded. This was also the case when Finnish companies were interviewed about challenges in internationalization. The interviewed business representatives mentioned especially slowness in obtaining work permits and customs procedures as challenging in business (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2013) which was also corroborated by the interviewees in this research. However, customs, importation, logistics and work permit challenges nor corruption cannot be said to be Kenya-specific issues, or being limited to only African countries. The countries most mentioned when reporting difficulties in business abroad were naturally the ones Finns have experience with – Russia and EU being the two most important trade partners for Finland, they got the most mentions of hurdles for business. The answers regarding Africa constituted less than 2 % of the total answers, which correlates with the amount of existing exports from Finland to various African countries. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2013) Those with experience claimed visa processes and logistical costs as challenges, not cultural reasons. These challenges are probably similar also in South America or Asia, but not necessarily especially difficult aspects of international business in Africa.

Interestingly only two mentioned safety concerns which are typically discussed in regards to Nairobi. A cultural aspect of people not wanting to share bad news was mentioned by the majority of the interviewees, as was the short term thinking of most of the Kenyan people. These seemed to be frustrating to the interviewees, but a manageable issue nonetheless. Being that most of them had spent years in Kenya, it was clear that a process of normalization had occurred at least to some extent. Things Finns might complain about during a shorter time spent in the country like every day nuisances rarely came up. For example the famously awful traffic jams in Nairobi was only mentioned twice, even if it undoubtedly is something the interviewees clearly take into account there.

Kenya was compared by the interviewees to many countries, as most of them had a lot of international work experience. Kenya fared very positively to other East African countries, as it was considered in many ways to be more developed. The person with some experience in working in Nigeria viewed Nigeria to be more

developed and the people working in the private sector having a more global mindset compared to Kenyans.

In comparison to Latin American and Asian countries, Kenya was viewed as an easier culture to adapt into. In many ways it was deemed similar to Western countries – the formality of the business culture was similar to England, the competitiveness of the markets was even compared to the United States and the bureaucratic nature of the government was compared to France.

Nyt on vielä mahdollisuudet tänne tulla. 10 vuoden päästä on liian myöhäistä. Mun mielestä ei se Venäjäkään ollut hirveän helppo paikka, ja sinne kuitenkin suomalaiset meni ihan mielellään. (Interviewee 6)

The opportunities to come here are now. In ten years it is too late. Russia wasn't an awfully easy place to be in either but Finns still went there with pleasure. (Interviewee 6)

The advice pooled together in this research for those interested in the markets is very valuable. Emphasis on strong local presence, finding the right local partners and recognizing niche-markets belonged to the top three of the recurring topics. From personal experience I remember people sometimes wondering about the level of localization of products and services to Kenyan markets, and generally very few comments were made about having to 'Africanize' what is on sale. The same champagne is in demand in Kenyan clubs than elsewhere in the world. When wanting to achieve better price competitiveness, a sole tip was shared by one interviewee regarding package sizing with which the prices of products can be pushed down to increase sales also in the poorer communities. Mainly the interviewees recognized opportunities in the middle or high-income consumer groups, where the demand for quality products and status symbols are increasing fast and Finnish companies have great opportunities. Specific examples were given from fields where rarely Finnish companies are present currently.

Many of the interviewees encouraged Finnish companies to be bold, to conduct their own background checks and see for themselves.

The sky is the limit. Mä toivoisin, että tänne tulisi muitakin suomalaisia. (Interviewee 6)

The sky is the limit. I wish other Finns would come here. (Interviewee 6)

The majority of the interviewees' answers reflected a view of the Finnish companies and entrepreneurs as independent and capable of taking care of themselves, and when asked about what kind of assistance they would have wanted in the various pitfalls of the time spent in Kenya, they recognized that those are simply the 'dues to be paid' and that there is very little that for example the Finnish Embassy or the government of Finland can do. One comment was made that with the diplomatic relations extending over decades, perhaps Finland should take a stronger stance when the companies are getting 'bullied by the government' if they are not willing to pay bribes.

The actions taken by Finnish governmental agencies in an effort to increase exports were in general deemed unproductive, but when asked what the role of the government should be, quite many were hesitant. Perhaps this was because of the understanding of the complicated issue and knowledge of the kind of measures that have already been taken, or maybe it is due to the instinctive mindset of the independence of the companies – the government should not be expected to do much. Some individual tips regarding educating companies about the opportunities and assisting in the internationalization process were still shared.

6 Conclusions

Hofstede dedicated his book *Cultures and Organizations: software of the mind* to his grandchildren, "the generation to whom the future belongs" (Hofstede, 2005: Preface 11). It is almost 40 years since the original research Hofstede conducted in the late 1970s, and aging with the research is that "future's generation" – Hofstede's grandchildren as well as the author of this thesis. Our generation, the Millennials, are now in their 30s, and are entering the work life with force.

While Hofstede is the grand-old man of the national and organizational cultures, his research might not hold up in the future when it comes to the emerging markets, the technology jump, the era of digitalization and the expected rise of the middle class. Thus I have made an effort to build on his extensive research and elaborate on it with qualitative interviews with business representatives with experience from Kenyan business culture. The qualitative research shows that the high power distance and collectivist organization culture recognized in Kenya by Hofstede are still alive and

well, creating some challenges for the business representatives working in Kenya. The challenges do not, however, overrule the clear opportunities in the region.

In many ways Kenya is, according to the experts interviewed, an easier country to work in, compared to many other countries. When thinking about customs, language and religion, a relatively westernized Kenya with mostly Christians and a large English-speaking population might be easier to navigate than China. Practical issues in everyday business like time differences or travel times are aspects of global business everywhere but can be easier when doing business in Africa than in Asia, for example.

The findings of the interviews can be viewed as suggestive of a probable trend among Finnish business representatives. Also, it can be valuable to the government of Kenya to understand how Kenya is perceived by foreign investors. Due to the similar results in Hofstede's research about the Cultural Dimensions, this can be of interest to any companies in countries with similar scores to Finland – that is Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Netherlands. Comparing the experiences of business representatives from these countries could offer an interesting area for further research. Are the challenges mentioned limited to Finns or do business representatives from these other countries recognize themselves in this research?

It is evident that the Finns rushing to grasp opportunities in African markets are in the minority. Perhaps the lack of interest toward African markets among Finns is due to the fact that the relationship between Finland and several African countries such as Kenya and Tanzania has been aid-based, not trade based. It might be time to cut the cord and define the dynamics of the bilateral relationships to benefit the two parties more mutually and to enhance economic development in African countries by conducting economically, environmentally and socially sustainable business with and in African countries.

The media's role should also be taken into account as a major player in creating mental imagery of African countries like Kenya. If the focus of the Finnish media was more on the similarities between the regions than on the differences, or the development more than underdevelopment, people in Finland might be more inclined to take under advisement the market opportunities existing in both East and West

Africa. Objectivity and equality of the kinds of news and documentaries aired by Finnish media outlets is necessary.

My research, as shown in this thesis, suggests we can expect a process of individualization and increased Westernization in the business culture in Kenya and undoubtedly in other emerging urban markets elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa. The narrowing of the cultural differences might lead to an increased understanding for other cultures, and cultural differences might even end up playing a lesser role. The quiet and introverted Finns are already navigating Chinese markets and doing well. With Millennials taking the reins in organizations all over the world within the next 10-20 years, the global work place will be more international than ever before. On the flipside it will put pressure on communication and language skills. Nevertheless, as an interviewee put it, a well-behaved business representative with common sense will do fine – anywhere in the world.

7 Attachments

Attachment 1. Interview guide

1. Taustatiedot / Background information (Google Forms)

Tämän lomakkeen tarkoitus on kerätä taustatietoa haastateltavista ennen haastattelua. Vastaukset käsitellään luottamuksellisesti.

Lomakkeessa pyydetään nimeä vain tutkimuksen datan käsittelyä varten eikä nimiä julkaista missään, ellei haastateltava anna erikseen siihen lupaa.

The purpose of this form is to collect background information about the interviewees before the interview. The answers are handled confidentially.

Names are asked in this form only for data handling purposes and no names will be published anywhere, unless the interviewee gives permission to it separately.

1.1 Nimi / Name

1.2 Ikä / Age

1.3 Sukupuoli / Gender

1.4 Miten pitkä on työkokemuksesi liike-elämästä Keniassa? (kuukausissa ja vuosissa) / How long is your business experience in Kenya (months and years)?

1.5 Miltä alalta tai aloilta sinulla on työkokemusta Keniassa? / What sector(s) do you have work experience from in Kenya?

1.6 Mikä on tai oli viimeisin asemasi organisaatiossasi Keniassa? / What was or is your latest position in the organization in Kenya?

1.7 Mikä on tai oli viimeisimmän organisaatiosi koko Keniassa (Kenian toimisto, työtiimi Keniassa)? / What was or is the office size of the latest organization you worked at in Kenya?

1.8 Minkämaalaisista henkilöistä organisaatiosi Keniassa koostui (Kenian toimisto, työtiimi Keniassa)? / What were the team member nationalities of your organization or team in Kenya?

1.9 Onko sinulla aiempaa kokemusta ulkomailla työskentelystä (vähintään kuusi kuukautta) ennen Keniaa? Nimeä maat ja maissa vietetty aika kuukausissa ja vuosissa. / Do you have previous work experience from abroad (minimum six months) prior to working in Kenya? Name the countries and the time spent in them in months and years.

1.10 Jos sinulla on muuta työkokemusta liiketoiminnan harjoittamisesta muissa Saharan eteläpuoleisen Afrikan maissa (alle kuusi kuukautta), nimeä maat, joista sinulla on kokemusta. Kuvaile lyhyesti asiantuntemuksesi tasoa maiden liiketoimintakulttuureista. <http://data.worldbank.org/region/sub-saharan-africa> / If you have work experience in conducting business in other Sub Saharan African countries, (less than six months) name the countries you have experience from. Describe briefly the level of expertise from the business culture of the countries.

2. Haastattelu / Interview

2.1 Ennakko-odotukset / Expectations:

2.1.1 Mitä odotuksia sinulla oli Kenian liiketoimintakulttuurista ennen Keniaan saapumista? Päällimmäinen muistosi. / What expectations of Kenyan business culture did you have before coming to Kenya? What memories come to mind?

2.1.2 Miten kuvailisit ensimmäisiä kuukausiasi Keniassa? Miten odotukset vastasivat todellisuutta? / How would you describe the first months in Kenya? How did the reality meet the expectations?

2.2 Työkulttuuri / Work culture

2.2.1 Miten kuvailisit työkulttuuria Keniassa? / How would you describe work culture in Kenya?

2.2.2 Miten se eroaa mielestäsi työkulttuurista Suomessa (jos ollenkaan)? / How does it in your view differ from the work culture in Finland (if at all)?

2.2.3 Power distance:

2.2.4 Miten olet kokenut organisaatioiden hierarkkisuuden liiketoimintaa harjoittaessasi Keniassa? / How have you experienced the hierarchy of organization while you have conducted business in Kenya?

- 2.2.5 Oletko kohdannut pullonkauloja liiketoiminnassa Keniassa? / Have you encountered bottle-necks in business in Kenya?
- 2.2.6 Miten koet, että alaiset ottavat vastaan esimiehen antamat ohjeistukset? Oletko huomannut, että alaiset eivät kyseenalaista esimiehen antamaa ohjeistusta? / How do you feel that employees take instructions given by supervisors? Have you noticed, that employees do not question instructions given by supervisors?
- 2.2.7 Miten kuvailisit henkilökohtaisten suhteiden merkitystä liiketoiminnassa Keniassa? / How would you describe the meaning of personal relationships in business in Kenya?
- 2.2.8 Tiimissä, joka koostuu enimmäkseen kenialaisista: kannustetaanko omien tavoitteiden tavoitteluun vai suositaanko koko tiimiä koskevaa kannustusjärjestelmää? Miten sinun pitää mielestäsi huomioida tämän kaltaisia seikkoja työskennellessäsi Keniassa? / In a team consisting of mainly Kenyans: do you encourage pursuit of individual goals or are general, team-specific encouragement systems preferred?
- 2.2.9 Näkyykö kenialainen yhteisöllisyys liiketoiminnassa? Esimerkki: joitain ihmisryhmiä suositaan liikekumppaneina. Miten se vaikuttaa sinuun suomalaisena liiketoiminnan harjoittajana Keniassa? / Does Kenyan collectivism appear in business? Example: some ethnic groups are preferred as business partners. How does this affect you as a Finn conducting business in Kenya?
- 2.3 Haasteet ja mahdollisuudet / Challenges and opportunities:
- 2.3.1 Omien kokemustesi perusteella, mitä haasteita olet suomalaisena kohdannut, kun olet tehnyt töitä liike-elämässä Keniassa? / Based on your own experiences, what challenges have you encountered as a Finn working in business in Kenya?
- 2.3.2 Minkälaisiin käytännön ratkaisuihin olet päätenyt? / What kind of practical solutions have you settled upon?
- 2.3.3 Mitä apukeinoja olisit kaivannut ongelmia kohdatessa? / When encountering problems, what kind of assistance would you have needed?

- 2.3.4 Miten sinut on suomalaisena otettu vastaan liike-elämässä Keniassa? / How have you been welcomed in business as a Finn in Kenya?
- 2.3.5 Millaista on ollut työskennellä liike-elämässä Keniassa naisena? / What is it like to work in business in Kenya as a woman?
- 2.3.6 Mitä mahdollisuuksia olet huomannut Keniassa olevan omalla kohdallasi suomalaisena? / What opportunities have you noticed existing on your part as a Finn in Kenya?
- 2.3.7 Miten paljon koet, että korruptio on yleisesti otettava huomioon, kun teet liiketoimintaa Keniassa? / To what extent do you think that corruption should be generally taken into account when conducting business in Kenya?
- 2.3.8 Oletko kohdannut korruptiota liike-elämässä Keniassa? / Have you encountered corruption in business life in Kenya?
- 2.3.9 Miten olet ratkaissut haasteet liittyen korruptioon? / How have you solved the challenges regarding corruption?
- 2.4 Vertailua muihin maihin / Comparison to other countries
- 2.4.1 Jos aiempaa työkokemusta *Afrikan muista maista* / If previous work experience from other African countries: Miten Kenia eroaa mielestäsi muista Afrikan maista liiketoiminnan harjoittamisen suhteen? / How do you think Kenya differs from other African countries in regards to conducting business?
- 2.5 Jos aiempaa työkokemusta *ulkomailta, muualta kuin Afrikasta* / If previous work experience from abroad other than Africa: Millaista suomalaisena on harjoittaa liiketoimintaa Keniassa suhteessa muihin maihin? / What is it like to conduct business as a Finn in Kenya in relation to other countries?
- 2.5 Mielipiteet yleisesti markkinoista ja neuvoa suomalaisille / General opinions about the markets and advice to Finns
- 2.5.1 Miten kuvailisit alasi näkökulmasta Kenian markkinoita tällä hetkellä? / How would you describe the markets in Kenya within your field at the moment?
- 2.5.2 Miltä Kenian markkinoiden tulevaisuus vaikuttaa alasi näkökulmasta? / How does the future of the Kenyan market look like in your field?

- 2.5.2.1 Jos myönteinen kuva / If the interviewee holds a positive view of the future:
Miten suomalaiset suhtautuvat näihin markkinoihin? / What kind of attitude do Finns have about the markets?
- 2.5.2.1.1 Jos muilla kielteinen suhtautuminen: Mistä kielteinen näkemys johtuu? /
If others have a negative attitude: What causes the negative attitude?
- 2.5.2.1.2 Miten näet median roolin? / How do you see the media's role?
- 2.5.2.2 Jos kielteinen kuva / If a negative view: Mistä luulet, että se johtuu? / Why do you think that is?
- 2.5.3 Minne menossa seuraavaksi? Missä tunnistaa mahdollisuuksia? / Where is this headed next? Where do you recognize opportunities?
- 2.5.4 Mitä neuvoja antaisit suomalaisille, joita kiinnostaa markkinat, tai joiden alalla näet mahdollisuuksia Keniassa? / What kind of advice would you give Finns who are interested in the markets or those working in fields with opportunities in Kenya?
- 2.5.5 Miten näet valtion hankkeiden roolin tässä? / How do you see the role of governmental projects in this?

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