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University of Applied Sciences

Degree Programme in International Business

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BUSINESS CULTURE DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION
BETWEEN FINLAND AND TUNISIA

Bachelor's Thesis 2013

ABSTRACT

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JEMAIEL, KARIMA	Business Culture Differences in Communication between Finland and Tunisia
Bachelor's Thesis	46 pages + 2 appendixes
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The topic for this thesis is the business culture differences in communication between Finland and Tunisia. The business world is increasingly international which means that the business men and women should acknowledge the cultural differences which they are facing when conducting business in a foreign culture.

The objective of this thesis was to identify business culture differences between Finland and Tunisia. By identifying the culture differences this thesis was able to find answers for the causes of cross-cultural communication problems.

The main research method was a qualitative research conducted by questionnaires with open ended questions. Both Finns and Tunisians businesses participated to this questionnaire. The secondary data was gathered from books, scholarly articles and from the internet.

Having knowledge and understanding the own and the foreign culture can lead to more successful cross-cultural business communication. As well identifying the culture differences leads to a better cross-cultural communication management. Also the key to success is to respect the cultural differences.

ABSTRAKTI

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Degree Programme in International Business

JEMAIEL, KARIMA	Suomen ja Tunisian yrityskulttuurierot Viestinnässä
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Tämän opinnäytetyön aiheena on liikekulttuurierot viestinnässä Suomen ja Tunisian välillä. Liike-elämä on yhä kansainvälisempi, mikä tarkoittaa sitä, että liikemiesten ja -naisten pitäisi tietää kulttuurierot, joita he mahdollisesti tulevat kohtaamaan eri maissa.

Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli selvittää liikekulttuurierot Suomen ja Tunisian välillä. Tunnistamalla kulttuurierot liikemiehet ja -naiset voivat saada vastauksia kulttuurienvälisiin viestinnän ongelmiin.

Tärkein tutkimusmenetelmä oli laadullinen tutkimus, joka toteutettiin kyselylomakkeilla, joissa oli avoimia kysymyksiä. Sekä suomalaiset että tunisialaiset yritykset osallistuivat kyselyyn. Toissijainen aineisto kerättiin kirjoista, tieteellisistä artikkeleista ja internetistä.

Keräämällä tietoa ja ymmärrystä omasta ja vieraasta kulttuurista voi johtaa parempaan kulttuurien väliseen viestintään. Tunnistamalla kulttuurierot voi myös johtaa parempaan kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän hallintaan. Kulttuurierojen kunnioittaminen on avain menestykseen.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The research objective

This thesis topic is business culture differences in communication between Finland and Tunisia. The objective of this thesis is to find out the major culture differences of Finland and Tunisia. As well the objective is to find out ways to improve the communication between these two cultures. In addition with this thesis the author wants to get new insights how Company X can better manage their communication with Tunisians and therefore have more successful business. Moreover, the objective is to enhance the cooperation between Finns and Tunisians.

1.2 Presentation of the company

Company X has been working with Tunisians from the beginning of 70's by exporting timber from Finland to Tunisia for various customers. In the beginning Company X traded timber with various trade houses in Finland. Company X sold the timber to different trade houses and the trade houses sold them directly to Tunisia. In the beginning of 2000 the trade to Tunisia started independently in Company X and the use of Letter of Credits started as a payment method of the goods. As well from the beginning of 2000 the business visits to Tunisia started and therefore more cross-cultural management were needed.

Tunisia is the biggest timber market for this Company X. From the 2000 till to the Arab Spring in 2011 the trade has been smooth. Only in January to February 2011 the trade paused. Now at the end of 2013 there have been problems with customers in opening the Letter of Credit because of the economical difficulties in Tunisia.

1.3 The research problem

The problem for this thesis is the misunderstandings in communication between Finns and Tunisians. Cross-cultural communication misunderstandings have lead to issues which prolong the trade cycle and therefore decrease competitiveness. Especially lack

of knowledge of the cross-cultural communication style can lead to difficulties in negotiations. As well lack of knowledge of the business culture differences can sometimes lead to uncomfortable situations.

1.4 The research purpose

In today's world which is more and more globalized it is not enough only to acquire the knowledge of the target country's economic situation and therefore to provide competitive products. One must also understand and have the knowledge of the national culture of that particular country. The more there is a cross-cultural encountering the more there is cultural understanding. Understanding the foreign culture leads to the situation where there is less cross-cultural miscommunication (Babcock, 1996).

This thesis will help Company X to improve the cross-cultural communication with Tunisians. As well with this thesis Company X can understand better the business culture differences. In addition Company X will have more detailed information on why certain things in Tunisian business culture are done differently compared to Finnish business culture.

Also the Tunisian customers of Company X can use this thesis as a guide to understand the major culture differences of Finland and Tunisia. As well the Tunisian customers can even get some answers to their business culture questions concerning Finnish business culture. The timber industry is vital for Finnish economy and therefore it must have all the advantages which are available for it. Therefore by providing detailed knowledge of the Tunisian business culture the timber industry can compete better against other countries.

Finnish and Tunisian businesses which are planning to cooperate together can have valuable information from this thesis. When cooperating with one another it is important to share the cultural knowledge with both parties. An example of the latest Finland-Tunisia cooperation is the new energy industry cooperation which started in October 2013. Moreover, since these countries have always come along including good diplomatic relations it is beneficial for both to have even more cooperation with each other.

The author's own interests for the thesis subject is that she has Finnish and Tunisian culture background and therefore she is really keen to enhance and to promote the cooperation of these two countries. Especially in the future the author wants to enhance the Finland-Tunisia cooperation.

1.5 The research question

The research questions for this thesis came up from the cross-cultural issues between Finns and Tunisians. These questions will have answers in this thesis. The research questions are the following ones:

- What are the business culture differences between Finns and Tunisians?
- How to enhance the communication between Finns and Tunisians?
- How to enhance the cooperation of Finns and Tunisians?

2. METHODOLOGY

The research data was acquired by using qualitative research method. Qualitative research method means that the research contains collecting and/or working with text, images or sounds. In this thesis the author has collected and worked with various texts. The theory was gathered from scholarly journals, books and from internet journals. As well the major part of the theory is from the existing cross-cultural studies made by Hofstede (1994), Hall (1993) and Trompenaars & Hampden Turner (1995). These three cross-cultural studies were used in this thesis since they are very comprehensive studies made on cross-cultural management and communication. Hofstede's and Trompenaars studies were used in order to understand the major cultural differences. Hall's theory on the other hand was used in order to provide comprehensive knowledge of the cross-cultural communication.

The case study research data was gathered via online questionnaires. There were made three questionnaires one for Finnish businesses, one for Tunisian businesses and one for people who have knowledge of both cultures. These questionnaires were created with questionnaire online tool. These questionnaire links were sent by email to the participants.

Overall there were totally 47 responses to all these questionnaires together. The questionnaire made for Finnish and Tunisian companies had 12 questions each. The questions were related to business culture differences and to business culture and cross-cultural communication problems. The third questionnaire had seven questions focusing on common culture differences between Finns and Tunisians.

There were totally 16 Finnish participants in the first questionnaire made for Finnish businesses. The author researched the Finnish participants through the internet. The respondents have cooperated with Tunisians varying from a few one to 20 years. In addition Finns' responses to the times visited Tunisia varied from zero to 45 times. Questionnaire made for Tunisian businesses got 9 responses. The respondents have done cooperation with Finns varying from few years to 30 years. Respondent's answers concerning the visits made to Finland varied from zero to 25 times. This questionnaire was sent to the customers of Company X. The Tunisians who answered

to this questionnaire represent different parts of Tunisia. The questionnaire for Tunisians was conducted in French language. Both the Finnish and the Tunisian businesses represent many fields, but mostly they represent timber industry as Company X.

The third questionnaire got totally 22 responses. It was sent to people who live or have lived in Tunisia. Most of the respondents are currently living in Finland. However, a number of respondents lived one to 30 years in Tunisia. As well most of the respondents represent both Finnish and Tunisian culture background. By having responds from people who have Finnish and Tunisian culture background the author got more accurate responses since these persons know well both cultures. The author had her own personal contacts for the third questionnaire.

Also the author's own knowledge of both Finnish and Tunisian culture worked as a basis for this thesis. When the author was younger the Tunisian culture was mostly seen as any tourist sees it: only the basic elements of culture food, music, clothing and language. The more the author got to know the Tunisian people the more she knew the culture. The author herself has experience even of the South and North-Tunisia cultural differences. During the research the author herself understood new issues of the culture of Tunisia. The older the author has grown the more she has noticed that after all she does not know the Tunisian culture as well as she thought. After living one year in Tunisia and after getting to know more Tunisian people the author understood better how much differences there really are between Finnish and Tunisian culture.

2.1 Data analysis

The theory of this thesis was analyzed by comparing the three major cross-culture studies made by Hall (1993), Hofstede (1994) and Trompenaars (1995). There are differences and similarities between these studies and therefore they were compared. The data from the questionnaires were analyzed by comparing all the three questionnaire results together. The Finnish questionnaire results were compared with the Tunisian questionnaire results. Since the questionnaires for the Finnish and Tunisian businesses had same questions the author compared the answers question by question. Finally in this thesis the questionnaire findings will be compared to the theory. By finding similarities between the questionnaires answers and theory we can

make sure that the results of this thesis are accurate. The more accurate the results are the more applicable are the managerial implications.

3. CULTURE

"Culture is everything which makes us foreigners when we are in a foreign country" (Sinkkonen, 2009 p. 39). These words explain well how greatly the foreign culture affects any person. As a start of this thesis it is good to know the basics of culture as a scientific field and how it is defined. Anthropology is a field in sciences purpose of which is to research and understand culture. Therefore in order to understand and manage better the cross-cultural communication we should pay attention to this field of science. This field of science is vital especially nowadays when markets are worldwide and cross-cultural and therefore there is more competition (Hall, 1993)

Cross-cultural researcher Trompenaars (1995) defines culture in the following ways: "Culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems" and culture is "a shared system of meanings, it dictates what we pay attention to, how we act and what we value" (Trompenaars, 1995).

Hofstede (1994) another cross-cultural researcher describes culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another". Alternatively cross-cultural communication researcher Hall (1993) states that "culture is communication and communication is culture".

There are major cultural elements which affect cross-cultural business; the communication style, values, behavior, attitudes, habits and religion. Culture affects the person's mentality and to the way of thinking. Also how to solve problems are highly affected by culture as mentioned earlier by Trompenaars (1995). Culture is obtained already from the early age. Family, school, religion, workplace, friends, television, newspapers, books and many other sources are parts of culture which have a great affect on anyone's personality (Jones, 2007).

Moreover, Hall (1976) proposes that culture touches all the parts of the human life. Culture affects the personality and the way people express themselves (Barrera, 2010). Hall (1976) states really interesting point of view of how culture affects the personality: "there are significant portions of the personality that exist out of one's own awareness but which are there for everyone else to see may seem frightening". Culture controls person's behavior in a ways which are outside of the person's awareness and therefore are not controlled by the individual (Hall, 1966).

Confucius said (511 BC quoted in Babcock, 1996) "Human beings draw close to one another by their common nature, but habits and customs keep them apart". Culture separates human beings from one another, but culture also creates the uniqueness of human beings. Culture is what makes Easterners different from the Westerners. Culture makes Chinese a Chinese and American an American. As well with culture humans are easily compartmentalized for example to Easterners and Westerners (Babcock, 1996).

Operating in a cross-cultural environment, individuals may knowingly act as natives of that particular culture at the external level. However, unconsciously, they are still tending to reveal their own cultural characteristics (Babcock, 1996). According to Hall having awareness and sensitivity towards the cultural differences are the features for successful business in the world (Hall, 1993).

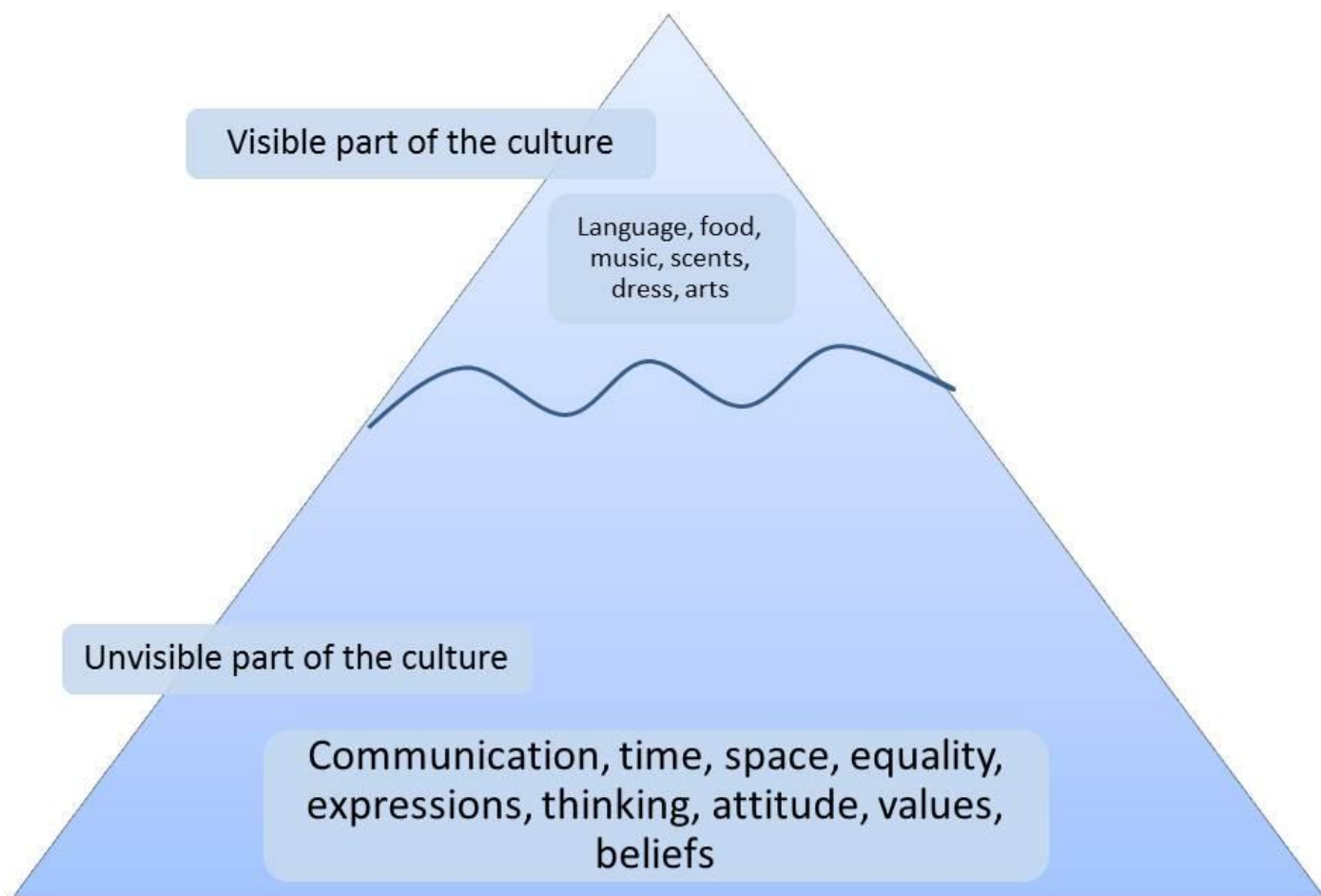


Figure 1. Culture iceberg (Hall, 1985)

Specific elements as language in culture can be seen more easily and conversely for example values and attitudes are harder to see. Reason why some culture features are harder to see is that they are more hidden in the society and therefore need more exploring (Sinkkonen, 2009). Hall describes culture as an onion. To really know the culture one must peel it layer by layer (Hall, 1993).

Hall's (1985) iceberg model is a one way to observe culture. In this model we can see in the top of the iceberg the elements of culture which are easier to notice and therefore are visible part of the culture. The elements which are challenging to notice are the hidden part of the culture. The hidden elements part of the culture in the iceberg model is much greater part than the visible part of the culture. People may think that they know the culture when they know the language, food, music and scents. These though are only elements of culture which are in the surface and therefore easy for anyone to see. When one really knows the culture he/she knows the hidden part of the culture as well like attitudes, the concept of equality, values and beliefs (Sinkkonen, 2009).

Researcher	Hall	Hofstede	Trompenaars
The research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-cultural communication - Conducted research on the U.S. military government administration of Truk on 1946 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-cultural management - Research made between 1967 and 1973 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-cultural leisure and management - 10 years of research - Dimensions published 1997 - 46,000 managers in 40 countries
Number of dimensions (used in this thesis)	4	4	6
Name of dimensions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High context vs. low context 2. Monochronic vs. polychronic time 3. Space 4. Fast and slow messages 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collectivism vs. individualism 2. Power distance 3. Masculinity vs. Femininity 4. Uncertainty avoidance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Universalism vs. particularism 2. Specific vs. diffuse 3. Individualism vs. communitarianism 4. Neutral vs. emotional 5. Achievement vs. ascription 6. Sequential time vs. synchronous time

Table 1. Comparison of the theories Hall, Hofstede and Trompenaars

3.1 Geert Hofstede

The objective of the study made by cross-cultural researcher Geert Hofstede was to discover “how values in the workplace are influenced by culture” (Hofstede Centre 2013). The goal of the culture dimensions created by Hofstede is meant to explain the business culture differences (Nishimura, Nevgi, Tella, 2009).

As there are no scores for Tunisia in the culture dimensions created by Hofstede the *itim international* advised to construct a research and to analyze which scores Tunisia would obtain. Tunisia is near to the cultural dimension scores of Arab countries (based on the scores of Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia) and Morocco and

therefore these can be used as a basis of the research and be compared to the additional research findings (E-mail itim International 5.8.2013).

3.1.1 Collectivist vs. individualistic culture

Collectivist versus individualistic cultural dimension measures the importance of the individual versus group. In this dimension Tunisia represent the collectivist culture (Dakhli, 2009) and Finland represents the individualistic culture. Collectivist culture emphasizes the importance of the group and the decisions are made accordingly. Persons in collectivist culture tend to ask: what is the best for us. In collectivist culture and business culture the relationships are vital. People from collectivist cultures prefers to do business with friends and family. There is used term “ingroup” to symbolize this type of social life. In collectivist culture if their business partner is from out-group they have to get familiar to them before starting business. When there is a personal relation then the business is possible to conduct. Showing distrust to another person does serious harm to the business relations in collectivist societies. (Verwaart, 2011).

To be part of the family in collectivist culture means that they will protect each other in exchange for absolute loyalty (Hofstede, 1985). Honor is a cultural element which has a major importance in the Arab families. Collectivist cultures are seen as a shame cultures because in these cultures it is a big shame to lose face. Protecting the family from shame is an important part of the collectivist culture. Moreover, nepotism is part of collectivist culture which means that relatives are favored over others (Sinkkonen, 2009).

Individualistic culture in contrast emphasizes the importance of the individual. Individuals tend to ask what is the best for me. In individualistic culture it is expected to only take care of themselves and the nuclear family (Hofstede Centre, 2013). People from individualistic cultures tend to be honest and direct in their opinions. As well efficiency and performance are vital in individualistic cultures (Sinkkonen, 2009). Overall the individual's need is the priority in individualism cultures (Nishimura, Nevgi, Tella, 2009).

3.1.2 Power distance

Power distance cultural dimension measures the hierarchical level of the culture. In other words it measures how wide the power distance is between people. Additionally it measures the level of inequalities citizens accept within the society. Tunisia has high power distance (Dakhli, 2009) and Finland has low power distance. Cultures which have high power distance usually have a high hierarchical level in the society (Hofstede Centre 2013). Respecting the managers and the persons in high positions is essential in high power distance cultures. As well showing ones status is common in high power distance cultures (Kwintessential, 2013).

On the contrary in low power distance cultures people tend not show their status. This describes Finnish culture well since Finns are modest and bragging does not impress them (Lewis, 1995). Societies do not have high hierarchical level in low power distance cultures. The power distance is big in Arab countries since they have score of 80 in this dimension. In Finland it is much lower since they have a score of 33 (Hofstede, 1985).

3.1.3 Masculinity vs. femininity

This dimension measures how the gender roles are managed in a specific culture. Also this dimension measures on how the culture sees the roles of men and women. As well it measures how competitive the culture is when it comes to work and economy. (Prosser, 2009). Masculinity versus femininity can be described in other words to be aggressiveness versus nurturing. In this dimension Finland is considered as feminine society by having the score of 26. People value equality and are not that competitive in the case of work in femininity cultures. Having consensus is important in feminine cultures especially the managers are striving for this. People in feminine societies tend not show their status. As well managers take the opinions of employees into consideration when they are making decisions (Hofstede, 1985). There are more strict differences in the roles of men and women in then masculine societies. Usually in masculine cultures there is a clear differentiation in gender and in the social roles. In masculine cultures people tend to compete more seriously especially in workplaces.

According to Hofstede Arab countries have a moderate Masculinity versus Femininity score (Hofstede, 1985).

3.1.4 Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance cultural dimension measures the level on how people cope with the unknowable. Tunisia has medium uncertainty avoidance (Dakhli, 2009) and Finland has medium-low uncertainty avoidance. High uncertainty avoidance countries try to diminish the unknown, surprising or anything which is different from usual (Hofstede, 1985). Additionally in high uncertainty avoidance cultures people tend to have a strict rules about issues that are strange or different from the religious rules (Yusuf, 2006).

On the contrary the low uncertainty avoidance cultures have characters like time is money, they are untraditional, people work hard and punctuality is must (Hofstede, 1985). In these cultures people accept more easily different opinions. As well people from low uncertainty cultures are more open-minded in the case of religion (Verwaart, 2011).

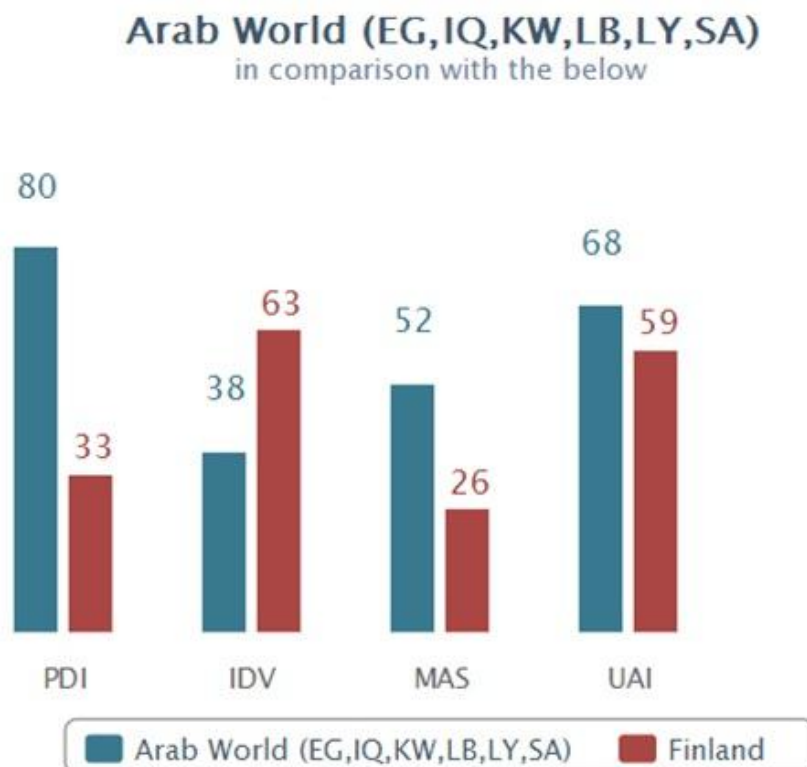


Figure 2. Geert Hofstede culture dimension scores for Arab world and for Finland (Hofstede Centre, 2013).

In this figure we can see the cultural dimension scores of Finland and the Arab World according to Hofstede.

3.2 Trompenaars

The seven dimensions of culture was the result of the research made by management consultants Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997). The cultural dimension model was first published in the “Riding the Waves of Culture” book in 1997. These dimensions were outcome of 10 years of “researching the preferences and values of people in dozens of cultures around the world”. For this research over 46,000 managers in 40 countries took part in the questionnaire (Tht Consulting, 2013). From this research they found out that cultures differ since every culture has according to Trompenaars (1997) “its own way of thinking, its own values and beliefs, and different preferences placed on a variety of different factors” (Mindtools, 2013).

As there are no scores specifically for Tunisia the scores of the Arab countries are used here since they are the closest ones to the Tunisian culture since Tunisia is also an Arab country.

The first cultural dimension created by Trompenaars and Hampden Turner (1997) the *universalism vs. particularism* dimension describes how the culture behaves concerning the rules versus relationships. Finland has a more universalist culture (Trompenaars and Hampden Turner, 1997) and Tunisia has a more particularist culture (Brett, 2007). Universalism prevails in a culture where people follow the rules. In these cultures rules are more important than relationships. People from universalist culture need to be given clear instructions and one should keep promises when working with this culture (Trompenaars and Hampden Turner, 1997 p. 19).

On the contrary in a particularist culture the relationships are more important than the rules. People from particularist cultures generally think in the following way: ”This person is not “a citizen” but my friend, brother, husband, child or person of unique importance to me, with special claims on my love or my hatred. I must therefore

sustain, protect or discount this person no matter what the rules say” (Trompenaars and Hampden Turner, 1997 p. 31).

In the second cultural dimension *Individualism versus communitarianism* we can see various same characters as in Hofstede's collectivist vs. individualistic culture dimension (Al-Soufi, n/d). Group is more important than individual in the communitarians cultures which is the same element as in the Hofstede's collectivism versus individualistic culture dimension (Trompenaars, 1997). In this dimension Finland represents individualism (Lewis, 2005) and Tunisia communitarians as in Hofstede's theory as well. In individualism culture the personal freedom has a great importance. In addition in these cultures it is believed that individual should take care only of themselves (Lewis, 2005).

People in communitarianism cultures always think first what is the best for the group. In communitarianism culture having group's loyalty means that one can get help and safety from the group (Trompenaars, 1997).

Specific vs. diffuse is a third cultural dimension which means “how far people get involved”. In specific cultures people tend to keep work and home life separated. As well they tend to keep distant relationship with co-workers. In diffuse cultures the business relationships have greater importance and are even necessary in order to conduct successful business. (Trompenaars, 1997).

Neutral vs. emotional cultural dimension measures the range of feelings expressed. Finland is more a neutral culture and Tunisia in contrast is more emotional culture. Finnish people are known that they do not show their emotions as easily as people from other cultures. Especially face expressions which are part of the nonverbal communication are very rare among the Finns (Lewis, 2005).

Achievement vs. ascription culture dimension measures how people view status in their culture (Trompenaars, 1997). This dimension has similarities with Hofstede's power distance cultural dimension. In an achievement cultures people categorize individuals according what they do. As well individual's worth is set accordingly and this is the case in Finnish culture (Lewis, 2005). Also performance is highly appreciated in achievement culture. In ascription cultures people categorize each other according who and what people are (Trompenaars, 1997).

Sequential vs. synchronous cultural dimension describes how people from different cultures manage their time. Similar dimension was created by Edward T. Hall the “polychronical vs. monochronical” time dimension which will be described more detailed in further in this thesis. Finnish culture represents the sequential time which is stricter in the case of time management. People from sequential cultures want events take place on time and as well they want everything to go by the schedule. People from these cultures feel anxious if people do not follow the schedule and especially if something is late. In addition they feel anxious because in these culture people think that they are losing precious time since in these cultures “time is money”. In synchronous cultures on the contrary people tend to work on several projects at the same time and are more relaxed when it comes to scheduling (Trompenaars, 1997).

4. COMMUNICATION

This part of the thesis is good to start with the following statement made by Hall “the essence of effective cross-cultural communication has more to do with releasing the right responses than with sending the “right” messages” (Hall et Hall, 1990 p.4).

This means that the business partner should pay a careful attention to the messages that the foreign business partner is sending. By examining carefully the messages sent by the foreign business partner there is a better chance to respond more accurately to the message and therefore have more successful cross-cultural communication.

Communication is one of the major elements of culture. It is usually one of the biggest differences between cultures since it includes verbal language, nonverbal language (body language) and the written communication. People communicate in verbal way and in nonverbal way. The nonverbal communication consists of the tone of the voice, volume of tone, posture, expressions and gestures. Communication occurs when two people are exchanging verbal and/or nonverbal language. The cross-cultural communication occurs when at least two different cultures interact with each other (Posser, 2009).

The definition for international business communication is that the national borders are crossed for business purposes. Cross-cultural business communication occurs when the business communication is conducted with consumer or with customer whose culture represents difference in at least in one major cultural element for instance in language or in religion (Guan & Trotter, 2012).

Generally when there are differences between people in values, beliefs, rules of behavior or styles of communication it leads to misunderstandings (Rugman & Collinson, 2008). Usually when there is knowledge of the communication differences it will be easier to understand each other and therefore there will not be huge misunderstandings in communication (Nishimura, Nevgi, Tella, 2009).

There are several issues to consider when communicating in cross-cultural environment. First of all maintaining positive communication maintains positive relationship. Many cross-cultural researchers comment that keeping the verbal communication positive is particularly important in collectivist and high-context cultures. In these cultures being indirect is the key to maintain the harmony and saving

face. It is easy to misunderstand communication especially when we are in a foreign culture since their way of communication differs. The differences exist because of the different language spoken in each country and because of the nonverbal communication differences (Hall, 1997). It is stated that communication between cultures can be an invisible barrier in international business (Babcock, 1996).

It is important to have knowledge of the foreign culture's communication style in order to diminish the barriers which derive from the different communication styles. Also it is important to have knowledge of the foreign communication style in order to succeed internationally (Guang & Trotter, 2012). Hall (1993) and Mason (1993) states that it is better to understand our own culture before getting to know the other cultures.

Communicating effectively in the international environment is far more complex than just knowing how to greet people or just being kind and open to your business partners. In order to be competent in foreign culture one must have knowledge of the hidden parts of the culture as well. Knowledge of the foreign culture is essential in order to understand the communication process. Through communication, people can either be brought closer or to get more separated. When communication takes place within the home culture individuals are automatically aware of the environment and are less likely to misunderstand the send out messages. The threat of miscommunication increases when communicating with individuals from different language and cultural backgrounds (Babcock, 1996).

Having only cultural knowledge does not necessarily lead to an effective communication. Though learning to interact and cope with individuals from other cultures is essential. Both self-awareness and cultural knowledge are important in order to have a better cross-cultural communication style. In order to enhance the cross-cultural communication one needs to develop self-awareness (of their own personalities and values) and cultural knowledge (of their native culture and foreign cultures) (Babcock, 1996).

Language is one of the most visible parts of the national culture. Language is a cultural aspect which is easier to see compared to values and attitudes of the specific culture. Also it is one of the biggest cultural elements which distinguish cultures. Rugman and Collinson (2008) state that language is the biggest barrier when it comes to the face-to-face meetings. Particularly language can be barrier for cooperation and coordination in cross-cultural encountering (Rugman & Collinson, 2008).

In order to be successful in cross-cultural negotiations one must have knowledge of the national negotiation style. Having this knowledge one can realize what the opposite party wants from the negotiations. Having respect of the foreign cultures beliefs is seen as factor of success in cross-cultural negotiations. Differences in decision making, status procedure, social aspects of negotiations, how time is viewed and personal relationships are all features to consider when having cross-cultural negotiations (Poon & Fatt, 1998).

It is advised to learn as much about the unfamiliar culture and therefore recognize the cultural differences. There will be less cultural misunderstanding when there is profound knowledge of the culture differences. The greater understanding there is of the other culture the greater the tolerance is for the cultural differences. These are beneficial in order to have an effective cross-cultural business communication. The more person get to know the culture and therefore knows why matters are done the way they are done the less confusing the culture is and therefore less problems it will create. If the person does not know anything of the unfamiliar culture he/she will have lot of questions going on in his/her mind. Though if the person have knowledge before working in the unfamiliar culture immediately he/she understands better the differences and therefore the time can be used more effectively (Babcock, 1996).

4.1 Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication which means body language accounts 93 percent of the whole communication which leaves only seven percent for the verbal communication (Poon & Teng, 1998). These figures come from the study made by Dr. Albert Mehrabian. He conducted various nonverbal studies where he found out that seven percent of the message is expressed through words. The nonverbal elements (body language, facial expressions) count 55 percent and vocal elements counts 38 percent of the message (UCLA, 2013). From these figures we can see that the role of the nonverbal communication is huge. As well these figures are vital to consider especially when it comes to cross-cultural communication since business partners need more carefully to examine the foreign business partners' nonverbal communication. The reason for the need for more careful examine is that the foreign business partner's

nonverbal communication can differ in various ways from what the individual is used to in home country (Poon & Fatt, 1998).

There are various elements in nonverbal communication. Hall describes nonverbal communication as an out-of-awareness communication. It means that the person is not aware and is often uncontrolled by the way he/she does nonverbal communication. In different cultures people have different ways of showing nonverbal communication. How people show nonverbal elements like emotions of frustration and approval differs among cultures (Rugman & Collinson, 2008).

The better the knowledge is acquired of the foreign culture's nonverbal communication the better negotiation can be expected. It is important to be aware of the own personal nonverbal communication in international negotiations. This is important in order to minimize the sending of wrong messages unintentionally. Also to have knowledge of the foreigner's nonverbal communication is ideal. It is regarded as a great advantage for negotiations if there is knowledge on how the individuals own nonverbal communication is viewed by the foreigners. To overcome barriers as fear and distrust in nonverbal communication one must be a good listener and observer (Poon & Fatt, 1998).

4.2 Edward T. Hall

Edward T. Hall has written various books concerning cross-cultural communication. *Silent Language* book written by Edward Hall is kept as a document which founded the cross-cultural communication field. Deriving from this Edward Hall is kept as a founder of this field (Roger, 2002)

Hall has various interesting point of views of the cross-cultural communication since he has comprehensive knowledge of this field. First of all Hall (1982) states that people should understand their out-of-awareness communication. Also Hall states that culture controls our daily lives even in unsuspected ways referring to the out-of-awareness communication. With this Hall means that as mentioned before the nonverbal communication is often done unconsciously without the realization of the person (Hall, 1982).

In addition Hall states that when people are having conversation they cannot assume that the other person understands everything he/she says. The reason for this is that people understand the messages send in conversation in a different ways compared to their background. Moreover, Hall states that culture hides more than it reveals and this we can see more clearly in the iceberg model figure in the beginning of this thesis (Roger, 2002).

Hall also created cultural dimensions as Hofstede and Trompenaars. However, Hall's dimensions are more concentrated to the issues of cross- cultural communication. Hall has totally created four different dimensions of culture (Roger, 2002).

4.2.1 High Context vs. Low Context

The high context and low context term was created by Hall. It is a cultural dimension and therefore it is one a way to categorize cultures. Arab cultures are seen as a high context cultures and North-European cultures are low context cultures. Therefore Tunisia has a high context culture and Finland has a low context culture. In high context cultures people are more unified and more group oriented compared to low context cultures. In high context cultures human relationships have a great importance. Also these cultures have a clear social hierarchy. When having a conversation with person from high context culture one can notice that they use a lot of nonverbal communication (Nishimura, Nevgi, Tella, 2009).

Low context culture is a culture where everything is stated clearly when having discussions. This is a culture where specific words are used in communication in order to deliver a clear message. The use of nonverbal communication is very little in low context cultures. In addition in low context cultures the communication is more direct, precise and open compared to high context communication (Nishimura, Nevgi, Tella, 2009).

It is helpful to know whether the particular's country's culture is on the high or low side of the high versus low context scale since every person is influenced by the level of context. By knowing whether the culture is high or low context culture the individual can prepare for example for business trip by gathering knowledge of the

specific culture. This way the communication may be easier since there is more knowledge of the foreign culture (Hall & Hall, 1990).

4.2.2 Space

This cultural dimension describes how the use of space differs among cultures. This cultural dimension was described by Hall (1982) in the book of *Hidden Dimension*. There is a big contrast between Finland and Tunisia in this cultural dimension. First of all Finnish people tend to keep much bigger space when they are around people and especially when they are around unfamiliar people. Arabs on the other hand have a much higher tolerance for crowded public spaces compared to Northern Europeans. Intrusion in public is a concept which does not exist for Arabs because for them public means public. Personal space is what exists in every person, for others the personal space is bigger and for others it is smaller. There are various elements which affect the personal space. Everyone's personal space or the "invisible bubble" expands and contracts depending of the person. It is stated that culture affects greatly to the personal space. In Nordic countries the public personal space is kept very wide compared to Arabs. In order to communicate more clearly in cross-cultural situations one needs to know the general personal space which is normal in that specific culture. Especially this is important to know when working in a foreign culture. This is vital to know since in cross-cultural situations people easily misinterpret others especially when it comes to personal space since they are unaware of the foreign culture. Example of this is a Finn who goes first time to an Arab country may end up in uncomfortable situations where the people seem to be too close. Sometimes the people can even feel threatened since in some cultures what is considered "normal" personal space can be regarded as too close in other cultures (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013).

4.2.3 Monochronic vs. polychronic time orientation

In this dimension we can find similar elements as in the Trompenaars sequential versus synchronous time cultural dimension. This dimension explains how cultures differ in the concept and in the management of time. Lewis states that Arabs and Northern Europeans represent the two ends in the monochronic-polychronic scale

(Lewis, 1995 p. 402). Therefore with this cultural dimension we can see clear differences between in Finnish and Tunisian cultures. According to this theory we can state that Tunisia has polychronical culture and Finland has monochronical culture.

Polychronical time concept means that deadlines are not strict, people tend to do various tasks at once and meetings do not begin in the exact time. Having polychronical time concept means that people focus more on relationship rather than on the task (Hall, 1993). In polychronic culture customers and clients have an obligation and a desire to be helpful to each other (Hall et Hall, 1990). Monochronic cultures conversely are strict about time and people tend to start everything on the exact time and according to the schedule. In addition in monochronic culture deadlines are vital to follow. Also people in monochronic cultures pay attention to one thing at a time (Lewis, 1995).

4.2.4 Fast and slow messages

Fast versus slow messages is a dimension which measures how people interpret the speed of the messages. Examples of fast messages are TV commercials, propaganda and headlines. Slow messages are books, culture and research. Speed of message differs among different cultures. "A fast message sent to people who are geared to a slow format will usually miss the target". For example it takes long time to get know other person therefore a person is a slow message (Hall et Hall, 1990).

5. FINLAND AND TUNISIA

These countries' cooperation started in 1950's with the establishment of diplomatic relations. Tunisia was Finland's first development target and as well in 1960's Finland constructed a forestry school to Bizerte North-Tunisia which is still operating. There have been visits by ministers and President's in both countries. Finland's President Kekkonen visited in Tunisia in 1960 which was first Finland's President visited in Tunisia. Embassy of Finland is located in the capital of Tunis and as well the Embassy of Tunisia is located in Helsinki. The diplomatic relations of these two countries are good. In addition Finland and Tunisia both have a role as a bridge builder in international politics (Embassy of Finland Tunis, 2013)

There is a new cooperation on energy sector between Finland and Tunisia. There were arranged *Energy days* in October 2013 in Tunisia. The purpose of this was to bring the Finnish companies and introduce them to the North-African market (Energy Vaasa, 2013). Another cooperation between Finland and Tunisia is a political cooperation organized with Demo organization. This is an organization by the Finnish political parties in order to enhance democracy in countries where they need it (Demo Finland, 2013).

5.1 Finland

Finland has a long history with Sweden and Russia. Finland was under the rule of Sweden from 1150 until 1809. After 1809 Finland was ruled by the Russian Empire though keeping their autonomous. Finland became independent in 1917 (This is Finland, 2013). The major religion in Finland is Christianity which is practiced by 79,9 % of the population. Famous Finnish characters are: Martti Ahtisaari who is former President of Finland and won the Nobel Peace Prize on 2008 (CMI, 2013). Tarja Halonen is another famous Finnish character who was the first female President of Finland from 2000 until 2012 (President Halonen, 2013).

5.1.1 Finnish business culture

Finnish leadership style is a balance of authoritarianism and consultative. In Finland they try to have the bureaucracy at a minimum. For timing Finnish people come to the meetings on time and they expect everyone else to be on time as well. Trompenaars (1997) states that relationships are instrumental when it comes to business in North-West Europe. The most important issue in business relationships in North-West Europe is to achieve objectives (Trompenaars, 1997 p. 9).

Typically Finns trust more easily on people compared to Arabs. Deriving from this there is a character which is linked with Finnish people which is that they are easily deceived by other people (Lewis, 1995 p. 331). Lewis (1995) states that Finland's cold climate has affected their personality and therefore they are seen as cool, strong and resilient (Lewis, 1995 p. 334).

Here are characters on how foreigners see Finnish people: hard-working, honest, accurate, effective, expressionless, emotionless, cold, quiet, serious and serious. The Finnish character of honesty is partly deriving from the fact that when Finnish person promises something it is sure that it is going to happen (Sinkkonen, 2009).

Moreover, Finns are seen as a strong, silent, fiercely independent and a true friend. One of the main characters of Finnish people is modesty. This can be seen in the way they do not leverage on their personal achievements. In addition Finnish people do not like people who brag about themselves (Lewis, 1995 p. 335).

Religion does not affect business in Finland in the way it can affect in Tunisia.

Although Christmas time may not be the best time to arrange visits and meetings since many Finns have holiday at that time (Trade Commissioner, 2013).

5.1.2 Finnish way of communication

In this part of the thesis we first concentrate on Finnish communication style followed by Tunisian communication style. General characteristics of Finnish communication style are that when listen they listen carefully and do not interrupt the speaker. For them it is rude to be interrupted and it is not seen often in Finnish communication style. Lewis a cross-cultural researcher mentions (1995) in his book *When Cultures Collide* that it is hard for Finns to have a word in international meetings. The reason

for this is the fact that Finns feel uncomfortable to interrupt other people (Lewis, 1995).

Finns are more observers and listeners when a person is speaking. This can be seen as an offensive in other cultures. However, by listening carefully is a Finnish way to show politeness and respect. Finns are more listeners than talkers and therefore this is one of the reasons why Finns do not interrupt each other. Finnish culture can be described as a reactive and listening culture. Finnish communication style is seen as a reactive culture which means that people prefer to listen first and then give comments. Also they try to avoid conflicts when having conversations (Lewis, 1995, 70–71). Finns can sometimes sound mean when they express clearly their own opinion. However, foreigners misinterpret this since it is just a custom in Finnish culture to state clearly ones opinions. Because of this Finnish communication is seen as direct communication (Lewis, 1995).

When it comes to nonverbal communication style Finns do not to use as intensely facial expressions compared to Arab cultures. For this reason it might sometimes be difficult to know what Finns are truly feeling especially from the point of view of foreigners (Kwintessential, 2013).

In Finland people speak Finnish which differs from the other Northern-European languages. However, the language in Estonia belongs to the same family as Finnish language. Swedish is Finland's second official language which is mainly used in cities which are bilingual. In North-Finland people speak with slightly different accent compared to South-Finland therefore it there are different dialects between Finnish people (Lewis, 2005).

5.2 Tunisia

Tunisia's history dates back to the time of Carthago which was significant trade location in the ancient Rome. Hannibal is famous historical character who ruled Carthago and lost the war against Romans 201 BC. Another important part of Tunisian history is the France's colonization period from the year 1881 which finished when Tunisia became independent in 1956 (BBC, 2013). Habib Bourguiba became Tunisia's first president after being prisoned 20 years because the French accused him of encouragement of Tunisians to the civil war. Bourguiba was a President who

improved women's position in the society by eliminating polygamy and by banning veils in work places (Bourguiba, 2013). Farhat Hached another Tunisian hero was a labor movement leader who was against France's colonization. Hached was assassinated by the French para-military hit group called La Main Rouge (The Red Hand') because he wanted independence for Tunisia (Open Democracy, 2013). Arab Spring revolutions started from Tunisia in 2010. In Tunisia the revolution is called *Jasmine revolution* because Tunisia is well known for the jasmine flower (Elthaway, 2011).

As women's position in the society is look differently in Finnish and in Tunisian culture it is good to mention the basic facts regarding this subject. Tunisian women's position is better compared to other Arab countries although there are still issues to be worked on. Women participate increasingly to the work force although men are still lead of it in Tunisia (INS, 2013). After Tunisia's independency in 1956 the equality of men and women has increased. Women's equal position went backwards when Tunisia's Islamic political party Ennahda became as a ruling party in the elections in 2011 in Tunisia. After the elections when Tunisia constructed a new national legislation women were described to be as a fulfillment of men. This means that they were not stated as equal to men (Borovski and Yahia, 2012). In contrary Finland is 3rd in the rank of EU's women's equality. Finnish women were first to have authorization to vote in Europe in 1906 (Yle, 2013).

5.2.1 Arab culture and Islam



Figure 3. The Arab countries Florida State University, 2013

Arab countries are Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Arab countries are countries where people speak Arabic and they have an Arab culture. In addition Arab is a person who speaks Arabic and has Arab culture background (Lewis, 1996 p. 400). Muslim countries on contrary are countries which has Islam as a major religion. Additionally Muslim is a person who practices Islam as a religion. People easily assume that Muslim is an Arab and vice versa. Lebanese people are great examples who share an Arabic culture but they represent various religious groups as Muslims, Christians and Jews. We can state that not all Muslims speak Arabic and not all Arabic speaking people are Muslims. Arab culture and language is far older than the religion of Islam (ADC, 2013).

Islam is the second largest religion in the world. The Holy Book of Qur'an the Islamic holy book is originally written in Arabic language and also it is the official language of the book. Jesus, Moses and Abraham who can be found from the holy Bible of Christians are also respected as prophets in Islam (BBC, 2013).

Ramadan is fasting month for Muslims. They do not eat or drink from the sunrise till sunset. Ramadan can be seen clearly in Tunisia. During the dinner time all the shops and almost all restaurants are closed. Also during Ramadan it is not recommended to drink or eat in public places since this is seen as a respectful towards the ones who are

fasting (Gerard, 2009). One of the major religious holidays for Muslims is the Eid-Al Adha where the tradition is to sacrifice a sheep (Herchichi, 2010 p. 141).

Islam is practiced by the majority of Tunisians and it governs their personal, political, economic, and legal lives (Finpro, 2013). Therefore the religion has a big role in the Tunisian society. 98 percent of the Tunisian population is Muslims and one percent of the population is Christians and Jews (Lewis 1996 p. 420).

Since Tunisia is located between the Arab countries and Europe it is said that Tunisia describes itself as a bridge between Arab World and Europe (US Commercial Service, 2012).

5.2.2 Tunisian business culture

In Tunisian business culture first business meetings are meant to get to know each other and a way to gain trust of the new business partner (Al-Soufi, n/d). In cultures where relationships are emphasized good contacts with the right people can enhance the business as in Arab cultures. Also it takes longer to develop personal business relationship in these cultures (Guan & Trotter, 2012).

Small talk and getting to know each other in new business relationship is often viewed as a waste of time in Western cultures. However, in Arab cultures small talks are used to gain knowledge of the new business partner. This knowledge is used to discover if the new business partner is to be trusted or not. This is a normal custom in relationship-oriented cultures as in Tunisia (Brett, 2007). In addition Tunisian people make business with the people they like (Kwintessential, 2013).

Asking business favors in Finland is really rare and on the contrary it is very normal behavior in Tunisia. It is important to agree to do the favor although there is not possibility to fulfill the favor. Agreeing doing the favor shows that you are aiming to do the best for your business partner (Kwintessential, 2013).

Arabs may agree to do something they have no intention of doing in order to avoid giving offense. This is not normal behavior in Finland and therefore this is regarded as offensive. This business culture element from the point of view of Finns is seen as a lack of trust (Seattle Trade Alliance, 2013).

Managers have different role in Tunisian and in Finnish businesses. In Tunisia managers make the decisions and on the contrary in Finland it is possible that the manager asks also the opinion of the employees. As Tunisian culture is hierarchical it is not recommended to doubt the manager's decisions. Therefore employees should respect their manager's decisions (Kwintessential, 2013). Tunisian people put a lot of importance on clothing especially in business, which can reflect the personality and the social class (Intercultures, 2013). By praising, flattering and showing enthusiastic personal interested on Arabs can make progress in the business relations (Lewis, 2006 p. 405).

Bargaining is said to be important in the Middle East business culture. According to Hall other cultures do not see how important the bargaining is for the Middle Eastern. It is stated that bargaining is one technique to build the relationship (Lewis, 1995). Where as Finnish people want to know the exact price of the product in contrary Arabs want to have more room in the case of bargaining (Verwaart, 2011). Therefore there should be offered various prices for the product when conducting business with Arabs. The prices of the product can be justified with quality or with the choice of material (Sinkkonen, 2009 p. 88).

Greetings differ slightly in Tunisia compared to the Finnish way of greeting. Usually Tunisians who are members of the same gender greet with handshake and with two kisses, one for each cheek. In situation where one does not know the person only handshake is approved. If there is a situation that the person does not know whether to give kisses or not it is advised just to shake hands and see what the other person will do. In North-Tunisia people give two kisses and in South-Tunisia people give four kisses (Gerard, 2009 p.156). Moreover, coffee culture is one of the main habits of Tunisian people and also big part of the Tunisian business culture. Meetings can take place in office, in restaurants or in coffee places. In addition giving business gifts are normal habit in Tunisia (US Commercial Service, 2012).

In addition meetings are not advised to have during the Holy Month of Ramadan. Since the offices are open just half of the work day from 8 am to 2 pm. This also implies that especially ministers and authorities are busy at this time and it takes longer to have official paper documents done (Kwintessential, 2013).

5.2.3 Tunisian way of communication

Arab way of communication differs greatly compared to Finnish way of communication. Firstly Arabs are not as direct when it comes to communication. Communicating in an indirect way means that one does not say openly their own opinions. Being too direct can have serious consequences in business. The consequences can be serious especially if there is involved losing face of the Arab business partner. In addition for Arabs it is important to have an eye contact when having a conversation.

As Finnish culture represent the reactive culture Arab in contrast represents multi-active culture. In multi-active cultures people are warm, emotional, talkative and impulsive. Moreover, it is rare to experience silence between multi-active cultures (Lewis 1995). Arabs speak more in a lively and animated way compared to Finns because of the usage of nonverbal language. Also it is common in Arab cultures to be interrupted repeatedly when having conversation. Finally Arabs' noise level is much higher compared to Northern Europeans (Hall, 1982 p. 155).

First language in Tunisia is Arabic which differs from other Arabic dialects which are spoken in other Maghreb countries and in the Middle East (Colliander, 2004). Maghreb consists of Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Standard Arabic is used in news, newspapers and in official written documents. There is a difference in the accent and words used in North-Tunisian and in South-Tunisian dialects (Gerald, 2009 p.154).

French is the second language in Tunisia since it was colonized by France. The French language is widely used in business. French is more used in North-Tunisia than in South-Tunisia. Especially highly educated and wealthy people are using more French words in their dialect (Finpro maaprofiilit Tunisia, 2013).

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this part of the thesis there is explained the questionnaire findings. As mentioned before the questionnaires were done by using qualitative research. There will be defined the Finnish and Tunisian business culture differences which came apparent in the questionnaire results. Firstly there are explained the main culture differences and then the business culture differences.

6.1 Finland and Tunisia culture differences

The following answers are from the third questionnaire which was sent to people who have knowledge of both Tunisian and Finnish culture. Various respondents said that being independent and self-centered are general Finnish characters that greatly differs from Tunisian culture. It was mentioned that the Tunisian culture is very collective compared to Finnish culture which has more emphasis in individualism. The essential role of the family differentiates Tunisian and Finnish culture. In Tunisia the family has much greater importance compared to the Finnish culture. Family is seen extremely important in Tunisia and therefore family members are very close together. Family consists not only of parents and siblings but also of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Tunisian families spend more time together and are more social compared to Finns. The appreciation and the importance of family in Tunisia are seen as a positive sight. One mentioned though that there is not much privacy which means that all the affairs are divided with the family.

In Tunisian culture if there is any problem among the family or relatives the problem is worked out together. Family and relatives always try to help each other in the best possible way. Tunisians are not shy to ask help even in the little issues. Tunisians do not have a social security as Finnish people have and therefore this is one of the reasons of the heavily supporting family. Tunisian people grow by helping each other. On the contrary it is a part of the Finnish culture to rely on to the society. Since Tunisia is hierarchical society, in general the parent's status sets the child's social status.

Other culture difference which came apparent in the questionnaire results is that the woman's position and the role of woman in the society are seen differently in the

Finnish and Tunisian society. For example differences for Tunisian women are not accepted as easily as in Finland. One difference between Finnish and Tunisian women is that in Finland women are more outside of their home; in work and in hobbies compared to Tunisian women. In Finland men and women both make decisions together, but in Tunisia the man is usually the one who makes the final decision. One respondent answered that she does not think that Tunisian men take the Finnish business women as seriously as the Finnish businessmen.

Another difference which was revealed is that in Finland matters are dealt from a very objective point of view. People follow the rules, because they know that it is better for the whole society. In contrast in Tunisia, the family, circle of friends, street corner, etc. are the ones who are seen as the most significant. Therefore society as a whole has generally secondary importance and therefore the rules are broken often in the Tunisian society. Also one respondent stated that the major element which differentiates the cultures of Tunisia and Finland is a religion. One respondent acknowledged that the religion is everywhere in Tunisia except in the touristic places. Moreover, in the North-Tunisia people are more influenced by the European culture. In North-Tunisia there are more people from abroad and more tourists which affect the culture. In contrary in South-Tunisia traditions are much more part of the daily lives of the Tunisians.

6.2 Finland and Tunisia business culture differences

The following viewpoints are gathered from both the first and the second questionnaires which were addressed for Finnish and Tunisian businesses. The following point of views answer to the question *what are the biggest business culture differences between Finland and Tunisia?*

One of the greatest differences which was visible in the business culture differences is the perception of time. This is an element which greatly differentiates Tunisian and Finnish business culture. In these business cultures time is not seen in the same way as a concept and as a unit of measure. For example "tomorrow" refers in Finland as "the next day" or after 24 hours. In Tunisia this concept means that a certain thing might happen in the future, if it will happen.

Additionally the meaning of time is secondary in business culture in Tunisia. Even in the business environment there are many who value the so-called *laisser-passer* mentality which means that issues are not taken care of in vain in advance; schedules are not settled or if they are they are not followed. In Finnish culture, there is a complete contrast: issues and schedules are planned carefully and thoroughly. Finns are known of their punctuality and that they are well organized. Tunisia on the other hand represents the opposite elements; lack of punctuality and that they are unorganized. One said that the absence of schedule during the business trip created problems. This was said to be a problem especially for Finns who want to work according to schedule in order to work efficiently. In addition in general there were mentioned that the differences in firmness to execute and implement creates issues between Finns and Tunisians.

Also the cultural differences tend to relate to the fact that Tunisians have promised something to happen in a certain period of time and in the end it does not take place on the time promised. Tunisians have a habit to say they can do something although they know they cannot; this is their way to show loyalty and respect. In Finland on the other hand people do not promise to do anything unless they are sure they can do it. This is a problem for Finnish since when one promises something to happen Finns expect it to happen. Breaking a promise can have serious issues in trust. Especially in business one has to be careful since Finns like to do business with people who keep their word since they keep it too. Respondent who has done business between Finland and Tunisia more than 20 years stated that sometimes Tunisians give empty promises however it is not always up to them. Occasionally it just depends on the authorities, the bank's employee's slowdown and the largest reason for this is bureaucracy.

The concept of *in'shallah* is important to understand by Finns. The word of "In'shallah" is used very often in various circumstances. For example if one says "see you tomorrow" Tunisian might response "see you tomorrow *In'shallah*". This means if the God will. Therefore one cannot accuse a Muslim if something did not happen since it was "out of their hands" or more specifically "God did not make this meeting as his/her destiny". This is one of the reasons why Muslims do not schedule the future as carefully as Finnish people do. Also they have a strong believe in destiny and all their actions are supported by fate. Muslims put everything in the hands of destiny. This might be strange for Finns since they do not have this kind of concept in their

culture. By explaining this concept Finns can understand Tunisians better and especially understand their lack of scheduling.

One Finnish respondent has lived five years in Tunisia and explains that Finns are generally accurate and therefore they want to know the details. In contrast for Tunisians the details are not always self-evident. In general, the delays and long/uncertain processing times may be difficult for Finnish people in Tunisian business culture. In addition the differences between these two business cultures which are often seen are the strictness in Finnish culture and the flexibility in the Tunisian culture.

Moreover, Tunisian people do not trust people as easily as Finnish people do. Also there was mentioned that it takes time to get the trust of the Tunisians. This may be strange for Finnish people since they have used to trust people more quickly and think that people are honest. Tunisian culture is different in this subject, they do not naturally think that people are honest. As well it is very important first to build the relationship with the business partners and after that there can be discussions regarding the actual business. Establishing personal relationships with co-workers in Tunisian business culture is important for long-lasting and successful business relationship. Tunisian people appreciate greatly the relationships build on trust. This comes to the fact that; when Tunisian partners trust the business partner then they can do business. Therefore signing contracts takes time since Tunisians want to form a relationship and gain a full trust of the business partner first.

If business partners have been doing business together over ten years the business partners are more likely to be seen as a family than business partners. Also they are not only seen as partners to do business with but they are seen as well as friends from whom one can ask help for anytime needed. In Finnish business culture on the other hand relationships have secondary importance. The most important thing is to achieve the business goals and get the work completed on time.

Additionally there is a difference when it comes to the pricing of the products. Tunisians want to have several prices when they are purchasing products. Bargaining takes place usually when there are changes in the currency and for others it is just a habit to bargain even one euro. On the other hand bargaining of the products is small compared to the fact that it is a pleasure for Tunisians to provide the hotel and to maintain the business partners even hundreds of Euros.

6.3 Finnish view of the Tunisian business culture

The following point of views of the Tunisian business culture is collected from the questionnaires addressed to the Finnish business men and women.

There was a question in the questionnaire of *what are the positive elements of the Tunisian business culture?*

The respondents answered to this question in a various ways. Many respondents stated that the Tunisian culture is much more social and in some ways more generous; issues are done less according to the rules. This quality has good and bad side, since this phenomenon will also have the flexibility to communicate. One said that in general he appreciates the transparency of the people in the Arab culture. Also was stated that Tunisian culture is a kind of a culture where people tend to be faster to get closer to each other. Traditions are still part of the society and Tunisia is pro globalization.

One of the most used adjectives to describe Tunisians was that they are very friendly. Additionally hospitality was used a lot when describing Tunisians. They are said to be very hospitable when foreign business partners visit families. People's helpfulness was mentioned in various occasions. Also their openness when interacting with people was seen as a positive side. In addition the kindness and warmth of people was said to be one of the main characters of Tunisian people. Moreover, taking others into account is an element which strongly presents them. People help if one is having problems although the person would be a total stranger. Furthermore these qualities were answered: respectful, enterprising, persistent and cheerful.

Moreover, one mentioned that they are more systematical compared to other business cultures in North-Africa region. Tunisia is closer to the purchase of Western culture than one could imagine. One stated that Tunisians are better in problem solving and are more flexible than Finns. Finally was affirmed that they stress the desire to be a part of the European community.

Another question was *what are the challenges related to the business culture you met with Tunisian people?*

Finns who have a various years of experience of the Tunisian business culture wrote that having a good atmosphere is important in Tunisian business culture. As well they said that Tunisians want to only talk about the good things. One respondent said that Tunisians do not always tell the bad news and that they want to maintain the good outer shell. As well they try to steer clear of problems and they do not want to show that there are any problems. Even though there would be a business problem Tunisians are not likely to speak about it.

Bureaucracy was responded to be one of the problems which affect doing business in Tunisia. This is an issue that ordinary Tunisian citizen cannot affect on if they do not have someone they know who could help them and speed the bureaucracy process. The official paper work can be done more quickly if a person knows someone. This comes to the other big problem which Tunisia is facing now which is corruption. One referred a corruption to be one of the problems: “the clearance of the goods required different kind of documents, which in principle should not normally be required. It seems the local official’s a way to try to get some kind of a bribe by making the clearance of goods”. Corruption is relatively approved and relationships affect the rules. Having social skills one can accept on the violation of the rules. One respondent said that have not encountered great difficulties with Tunisian culture but said that during the Ramadan the trade can be sometimes slow.

6.4 Tunisian view of the Finnish business culture

The following point of views of the Finnish business culture is collected from the questionnaires addressed to the Tunisian business men and women.

What are the positive elements of the Finnish business culture?

The high level of discipline is seen as positive character of Finns. Additionally they were described to be very practical. Practicality of Finns was said to be a dual blade sword. The Tunisian respondents mentioned that Finns have high respect towards other people. They were described to be generally polite and educated people. Also there was mentioned that they are civilized people who respect human values. Moreover, the Finnish scheduling habit was said to be a positive element. In addition

was mentioned that Finns are helpful when interacting with others. Finally one respondent answered that Finns calm and serious characters are seen as good qualities.

What are the challenges related to the business culture you met with Finnish people?

One answered that the Finnish high level of discipline might sometimes be too much for Tunisians. Finns are more strangers to each other and it takes more time to be familiar with them at least when compared to Tunisians. Finns are cold and reserved at first therefore it takes time to get to know them. Also Tunisians said that communication and language in general are the biggest obstacles.

When asked about similarities among Finns and Tunisians most of the Tunisian respondents answered that they do not see any similarities in the Tunisian and Finnish business culture. Although one mentioned that the common goal is profits. One responded that both people like to work and improve his/her country at the national and international level. Finns responded that there are similarities in people but not in the culture. There was mentioned that after all everyone is trying to think a better future and therefore over all they aim for the same goal.

6.5 Communication differences

From the research findings it can be stated that Finns and Tunisians have differences when it comes to communication. A method of discussion has significant contrasts between Finns and Tunisians. Finns compared to the Tunisians are quiet and low-key when having discussion. Tunisians on the other hand are not as direct as Finns when it comes to communication. In addition Tunisian people like to talk much compared to Finns.

There came up various nonverbal differences between Finns and Tunisians in the questionnaire findings. First of all Finnish person does not as easily show their emotions of happiness, anger and frustration compared to Tunisians. Tunisians use lots of face expressions when they have discussions. They truly express their feelings through their face. As well they use lot of use hand expressions when they talk. Finnish people who see Tunisians communicating can sometimes think that they are fighting especially when the communication is loud and there is plenty of facial and

hand expressions. However, this is just common way of communication in Tunisia. Since Finnish people have not got used to this kind of communication they misunderstand it. More accurately they are seeing the whole scene from their own cultural perspective and this is the reason they misinterpret it. While having discussions, Tunisians are used to touch, sit and stand a lot closer than Finns are used to. From Finnish perspective the small space distance might feel uncomfortable. Finns' big space distance on the contrary might seem odd for Tunisian.

When comparing communication in Finnish workplace and in Tunisian workplace we see major differences between them. First of all it is normal that the conversation is yelled in Tunisian workplace in contrast yelling in Finnish workplace is really rare.

Finns and Tunisians have also differences in one the most important elements of international business which is negotiation. Negotiation skills differ among the Tunisian people; others have been trained and they are familiar with the quality of the products. Having trained and knowledgeable business partners can lead to negotiations which are more effortless and rapid. Also by having knowledgeable business partners leads to situations where there are less misinterpreting. In contrast Finnish private firms have better negotiation skills and patience.

Although there are various differences in communication style nevertheless there can be found similarity between Finns and Tunisians in the negotiation style. The similarity is that both of them try to keep harmony in the negotiations. Tunisians want to have a harmony to keep the atmosphere positive in order to save face. Finns on the other hand want to keep harmony since it is not their custom to yell or to be too dramatic.

7. ANALYSIS OF THE THEORY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

This part of the thesis critically discusses the cross-cultural studies used in this thesis. As well there will be analyzing of the theory and the questionnaire research findings.

Hofstede's (1994) research was done over 20 years ago and therefore many issues have changed since culture changes all the time. For example the Finnish culture was not completely the same 20 years ago. Technology and globalization has a great affect on any culture nowadays. There are more foreigner's in Finland now than there was 20 years ago (Väestöliitto, 2013).

In addition there are many Arab countries placed in a same score in Hofstedes cultural dimensions. Hofstede made "Arab group" according to his research findings. However, this has been criticized since there are differences in cultures among the Arab countries. Every country should have their own cultural dimension scores in these dimensions since there are differences for example in Arab countries. Also the questions in different cultures are interpreted differently same as communication is interpreted differently.

The cross-cultural studies are great way to start to think and to create new ways to do research on cross cultural communication and management. These theories can be used only as a general guide since nowadays the cultures are more and more mixed. Because of the world's globalization there are plenty of people who have a bicultural background. Therefore they cannot be categorized in one specific culture.

Questionnaire findings compared on Hofstedes theory

We can see various similarities when we compare the theory and the research results. The main similarity is that Arab culture is seen as a culture that emphasizes the importance of the group. The importance of group and family was clearly acknowledged in the research and in the theory findings as well. Also the second important similarity between the theory and in the questionnaire findings was that the Arabs lack in punctuality.

Also the differences in the roles of men and women in the Arab culture come apparent in questionnaire findings. According to Hofstede's theory Arabs score high in power distance dimension which means high hierarchy level. This came apparent also in the questionnaires. The respondents answered that hierarchy is much more involved in Tunisian than in Finnish society.

Tunisians describes Finns in the similar ways to those found in the theory for example that Finns are punctual. It takes long time to get to know to Finns. As there are many similarities between Hofstede's and Trompenaars' study, it can also be stated that the Trompenaars' theory on Arabs and Finns are correct.

Questionnaire findings compared to Hall's theory

Hall states that Arab countries have high context cultures. The same results came up in the research findings. Tunisian way of communication is loud and they are close together. These are the elements of high context cultures. Also monochronic time concept is seen as a lack of punctuality and according to the research findings Tunisians lack in punctuality.

As pointed out there are no cultural dimension scores for Tunisia in Hofstede's or in Trompenaars' studies. The Arab group's scores of these studies were used in this thesis as Tunisia's scores since their culture is the closest one to the Tunisian culture.

8. CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis the author researched the Finnish and the Tunisian business culture differences emphasizing the differences in communication. The data was researched with questionnaires with open ended questions. According to the research we can state that there are great business culture differences between Finns and Tunisians. Some business culture differences for example the concept of trust came clearly apparent in the research findings. What can be noticed is that with open mind, respect and having knowledge of the other culture can lead to successful cross-cultural business cooperation.

8.1 Key findings and managerial implications

In this part the author answers to the thesis research questions according to the research findings. The first question was *what are the biggest business culture differences between Finnish and Tunisian culture?* The biggest business culture differences which were raised in this research are the concepts of *punctuality, time, trust, promise and relationship*.

What became apparent in the research is that Finns are known for their punctuality compared to Tunisians who do not possess this quality. As well the concept of time is understood very differently in these cultures. For instance when a Tunisian person thinks that he/she is on time in the meeting, the Finnish person thinks that it is already too late.

Trust has totally different meaning in Finnish and Tunisian business culture. Finnish person do not need a much time to build trust whereas Tunisian requires several meetings before he/she is ready to trust the new business partner. Business can be conducted only after there is a trust. Finnish person mentioned in the questionnaire response that there were too many coffee breaks when conducting business in Tunisia. In these situations Finnish people have to understand that these “coffee brakes” are not only “coffee brakes” for the Tunisians. These coffee brakes are meant to create trust and

to get to know each other better. Although this might feel a waste of time from the Finnish person point of view it is crucial for Tunisians.

The concept of promise differs greatly in Finnish and Tunisian business culture. Finns are used to the fact that when a person promises something it is going to happen. In Tunisia the concept of in'shallah and bureaucracy has great influence whether the promise is executed or no. By knowing the concept of in'shallah Finnish people can understand Tunisians better and especially understand their lack of scheduling. It is a Tunisian way to show politeness to agree to do a favor although they know they cannot accomplish it.

Business relationship has also different meaning for Finns and Tunisians. Business relationship has a great importance in Tunisian business culture. Whereas Finnish person sees the business relationship only as a way to achieve the business objectives for Tunisian it has more meaningful purpose. Business relationship means in Tunisian business culture that business partners are there for each other to help in any issues.

The second research question was *how to enhance the communication between Tunisians and Finns?*

From the responses we can analyze various practical solutions for both business cultures. The cross-cultural communication can be improved by having more contact and human interaction. The more there is human interaction the better knowledge business partners have of each other. There were mentioned many times that having more meetings and gatherings are one of the best ways to know and understand each other more. Tunisians should visit more Finland and vice versa.

Finns should be cautious when doing business with Tunisians to not to be too straight forward. Being too straight forward can have serious consequences especially if there is involved losing face of the Tunisian business partner. Losing a face-situation, for example, is a situation where person has to admit that they do not have knowledge of a certain issue. Also patience and smile are important when developing relationship with Tunisians.

One person answered that tries to understand the undertones of the conversation and also to do questions in order to clarify the situation. This is really important to do

when working with foreign cultures. It is essential to ask questions in order to make sure that everyone understands the issues. Without asking questions certain issues may be misunderstood and therefore these issues can create even more problems in the future. Therefore it is advised to make sure that everyone has understood the issues while the business partners are still together discussing about them.

As it came apparent in the research findings that Tunisians do not prefer to discuss about the problems. This is not good for the business since if there is a problem these problems cannot be solved by pretending that everything is good since this may create more problems in the future. When there seems to be a problem Finns should try in a subtly way to clarify if there really is a problem. Finns should try to explain that solving problems at present is far better than solving even bigger problems in the future.

As for the communication tips the questionnaire respondents say that French proficiency is very important for the Finnish. Also the Finnish respondents' advice for the Tunisians is to learn more English. Creating Finnish, French and English language courses is a great way to ease the communication between the two cultures. As well respondents answered that there should be an Arab culture short course for business men and women who are going to do business in Tunisia.

As a conclusion it is wise to choose an appropriate style of communication especially if the other person represents foreign culture. A better mutual understanding of the culture and an interest toward other culture's differences helps to create better business relations. Long-term cooperation, getting to know each other, by compromising and with intermediate hand are solutions in order to have a better communication.

A third research question was *how to enhance the cooperation of Finns and Tunisians?*

Firstly respect toward the other culture is vital when working in a foreign culture. By knowing the important facts of the history and the characters and heroes of the foreign culture the business partner shows genuine interest towards the culture. Also they show that they have taken valuable time to know the culture better. In addition this shows also that they are seriously doing business with the foreign business partners.

As there were mentioned that quality of the goods can sometimes create misunderstandings. The suggestion is to go through together with both parties what are the conditions for each quality of the goods. Keeping timetable and trying do work on time are aspects which can keep the relationship better with the Finns. Then again flexibility and understanding are ways to keep relationship good with Tunisians.

One responded that diplomacy and adaptation are the keys to maintain good business cooperation. Transactions in mutual interests are a way to enhance relationship and to get to know each other. Trying to stay as professional as possible was stated to be a way to maintain good business relationship. Also there was stated that Tunisians' realistic prospect of the business situation is really important from the point of view of business. Particularly this means that giving empty promises should be minimized. Also characters Finns wish from Tunisians are accuracy and realism.

According to the findings, the way to develop the business relations and cooperation is that there should be more communication to the Finns and on the other hand Tunisians should practice more listening. It would be also good to conduct trainings on the Finnish civilization to know the country better and vice versa.

Although there can be found several reports on how to manage cross-cultural business communication and enhance the cooperation at the end the best way to really learn is to explore the foreign culture by independently. However, studies made on cross-cultural communication are a great way to start to learn about the other culture. Although when there is a need for more profound knowledge of the foreign culture it has to be experienced by oneself. *A Year in Tunisia* book written by Helena Ferchichi tells about her experience living in South-Tunisia in the middle of the Tunisians citizens. This is one the best ways to experience any culture especially if one wants to get to know the traditions.

8.2 Further research and self evaluation

Since this was the first research made on the cultural differences between Finns and Tunisians further research is recommended to do. Since the nonverbal communication is one of the biggest communication difference between Finns and Tunisian it could

have more research. As the communication is big part of the cross-cultural negotiations there could be more detailed research on the negotiation manners. Since there is a big difference among Finnish and Tunisian business women there could be study based on their differences. Moreover, research on specific cross-cultural negotiation styles should be done in order to identify deeply the cross-cultural communication process.

As mentioned earlier that there are no cultural dimension scores for Tunisia in Hofstede's and in Trompenaars' studies. However, the scores for Tunisia are advised to do since although a small country it is as important as any other Arab country and therefore it should have the cultural dimensions scores as well.

There could have been more participants in the research especially from Tunisia. Although there were less Tunisians compared to Finns who answered to the questionnaires the author believes that the responses are accurate since the same issues and cultural differences came up in both questionnaires. Also the research could have been made by having personal interviews with more questions and more participants. In this way the researcher could have gotten even more accurate responses. Also in the personal interview the author could have been compared in reality the use of nonverbal communication between Finns and Tunisians.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire for Finnish businesses

1. Gender?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been working with the Tunisians?
4. How many times have you visited Tunisia?
5. What are the challenges related to the business culture you met with Tunisians?
6. How do you have handled these cultural problems?
7. What is the biggest difference between Finnish and Tunisian cultures?
8. Have you noticed any positive habits in Tunisians?
9. What would you like to develop from the cultural point of view between Finns and Tunisians?
10. How do you maintain a business relationship with Tunisians?
11. Are there any similarities between Finnish and the Tunisian business cultures?
12. How the Finnish and the Tunisian communication could be improved?

Questionnaire for Tunisian businesses

1. Gender?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been working with Finns?
4. How many times have you visited in Finland?
5. What are the challenges related to the business culture you met with Tunisians?
6. How do you have handled these cultural problems?
7. What is the biggest difference between Finnish and Tunisian cultures?
8. Have you noticed any positive habits in Finns?
9. What would you like to develop from the cultural point of view between Finns and Tunisians?
10. How do you maintain a business relationship with Finn?
11. Are there any similarities between Finnish and the Tunisian business cultures?
12. How the Finnish and the Tunisian communication could be improved?

Questionnaire of Finnish and Tunisian culture

1. Gender?
2. How old are you?
3. How much do you have experience of the Tunisian culture?
4. Have you experienced any problems as a Finn in Tunisian culture?
5. What is the biggest difference between the Finnish and the Tunisian culture?
6. Have you met any positive sights in Tunisian culture?
7. How the communication could be improved between Finns and the Tunisians?