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Sweden Vs. United States

The difference in sales processes in the ad network industry

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Abstract

In this thesis we present the management of the sales process within two different ad networks. An ad network is the middle man between an advertiser and a publisher. Since the companies are located in two different countries, Sweden and the United States, the focus will be on the cultural differences that might exist. The fact that the ad network, in order to connect the advertisers and the publishers, perform sales in two directions; both toward the advertiser as well as the publisher, the sales process plays a very important role. What techniques to use when approaching a client will depend on who the client is, and understanding its culture is a vital factor. Our results will enable an illustration of what the two companies can contribute to, and learn from each other.

What culture is can be defined in many ways, and the definition will differ from person to person, and from organisation to organisation. Culture is a combination of how people think, act, value and interpret the environment. When it comes to management, authors have stated that Sweden, in general, have flat organisations and wants to make everybody involved in the decision-making, while the United States, in general, are more hierarchical and that they are more action-oriented when it comes to making decisions.

Our research was mainly done through interviews at each company. In the United States the interviews were conducted with the sales division, while in Sweden they were conducted with the project managers, which is the corresponding division.

Similarities and dissimilarities were found between the two companies. They both had relatively flat organisations and an ad hoc structure. They had comparable approaching techniques, but they valued them differently. Informal activities were preferred when entertaining clients and long-term relationships is an essential part of the business. The company in the United States is more aggressive than the company in Sweden when it comes to approaching their clients. Our opinion is that they have found suitable techniques for their respective country, but that they still can take inspiration from each other.

As a conclusion, the differences were not as big as we did expect, so therefore, in this situation, there was no significant correlation between national culture and managing the sales process.

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1. Introduction

In this thesis we will present a comparison between a Swedish Ad Network company and an American Ad Network company. The focus will be on managing the sales process and the cultural differences that might exist. What is interesting here is to see if there is a high correlation between a company's sales process and its culture. This is interesting since each company may not be aware of approaching techniques and strategies of other companies, and hopefully be able to learn from one another. We will start the thesis by introducing the reader to the definition of the problem which will be answered throughout the paper. The reason why this research is concentrating on the management within the sales process is because we believe that cultural differences will be a distinguishing aspect within this area, for example as the sales personnel have the most contact with the clients from respective country.

1.1 Background

Most companies that are established are focused on maximizing their profits (Dicken, 2006). To achieve this goal, one of the most important processes is the sales process, because without sales the company will have no revenues.

The sales division within an Ad Network is a platform that connects advertisers to websites that are best suitable for hosting the client's advertisements, in terms of how to reach their targeting market in the most effective way. Ad Networks work in two different directions; they are the middle man between publishers and advertisers. Due to these factors the sales process plays a vital role in their business but to be able to perform sales you need to have numerous good communication skills, in terms of delivering the clients message in the most suitable way. Depending on the customer's target and goals the Ad Networks adjust their approaching techniques.

The business for ad networks, in Sweden and United States, has expanded in recent years. There are today many ad networks that have the opportunity to specialize and profile in different ways. One example of this is ad networks who have decided to niche themselves into reaching one specific target market. (Adam Chandler & Tiina Strandberg, 2011). The need for companies to hire ad networks has increased this due to the fact that companies need more guiding in terms of how to reach their target markets and how to set prices etc. (Tiina Strandberg, 2011). Today ad networks have higher demands on them which have contributed to eliminating those who cannot live up to those expectations (Linda Olsson, 2011).

The company in New York is named Martini Media Network with a client base that is reaching out to American households with an annual income of over 100.000 dollars. Martini Media Network concentrates on being a platform for companies with luxury brands that have these households as their final customer (Martini Media, 2011). The Swedish company, X is a global company that has, unlike Martini Media Network, a more general niche. To achieve the best possible success on the clients' behalf, it focuses on offering them the best advertising spots (Company X website, 2011). The fact that the companies do not have the exact same niche is a minor issue, as we focus the sales process and how it is managed.

1.2 Problem discussion

People are different when it comes to acting, thinking and reacting (Jordan T, 2002). Since organisations are created by people (Eriksson-Zetterquist, Kalling & Styhre, 2006), the organisations will in turn, differ from each other. Many of these differences are due to different cultures, a combination of corporate culture as well as national culture, since these influence each other and therefore go hand in hand. Due to the fact that we experienced many cultural differences between Sweden and United States in many ways during our visit in New York 2010, we wanted to consider these differences within the ad network business. When analysing two companies' sales processes in terms of management to each other, there will most likely be differences between them. What we wanted to study was in what way these differences took place and draw a conclusion on what both countries could learn from each other's cultures and processes respectively.

As a result of these facts we decided to combine the sales process, management and cultural differences into one problem definition. Hence, we chose a business in which sales is a crucial factor, mainly in the Ad Network business. We came in contact with Martini Media Network through networking while studying in the United States. Research was done regarding ad networks in Sweden and we therefore chose the most appropriate one for this study, which was Company X.

1.3 Problem definition

Since there are different cultures, companies will act in dissimilar ways, which might not be the best way for that specific company. By getting knowledge about the strategies used in another country, it can help the company to develop the most effective strategy for them in the sales process. Through this research we will be able to explore if there are any cultural

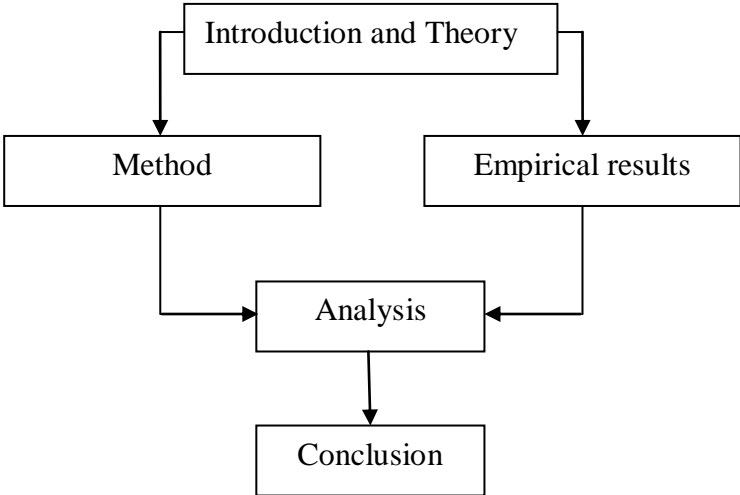
differences between Company X and Martini Media Network, and to what extent it affects their sales processes. By analysing and pointing out the differences, the companies will be able to learn from each other and perhaps become more diverse.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to get a better understanding on how sales processes within the Ad Network business can differ among companies and cultures. Our results will enable an illustration of what the two companies can contribute to, and learn from each other.

1.5 Disposition

To give the reader an easier comprehension of how the parts of the thesis are connected to each other, it will be structured in the following way:



2. Theory

Below we have presented theories that are central for our study. The theories that we have chosen touches the areas of different type of organising, what culture is as well as different views of culture. The final chapter of this section presents what different authors and scientists have said about chosen areas.

Organisations need to be adjustable to be able to survive the changing world. They need to be open for changes and be able to find their own niche to improve in. They need to be aware of the different organisation styles and find the style that is most suitable for that specific organisation. These organisation styles derive from different perspectives.

The structural perspective is focused on, through coordination and clear divisions, achieve arrayed goals for the company. Problems that occur because of structural flaws are fixed through analyses and restructuring. The political perspective can be described as a company that has coalitions of different groups with different interests, an agenda to follow and power as a central source. Problems that occur within a politically run organisation are being solved by implementing more rules (Bolman & Deal, 2005).

2.1 Culture

2.1.1 What is culture?

When culture is discussed the common question that often arises is; what is culture? The answer varies from person to person, from society to society and from organisation to organisation. Alvesson (1995) describes that *“the concept of culture seems to lend itself to very different understandings of its meaning”*. Since it is difficult to define, it is easy to misinterpret or to think that you know but you actually do not know. According to Smircich (1983), *“The culture concept has been borrowed from anthropology, where there is no consensus on its meaning”*. This statement synchronise with Alvesson (1995) that there are more than one way to define culture. Smircich (1983) refers to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who mean that culture is an aspect of human thoughts, how people think of the world. Smircich (1983) also presents her interpretation of Koch and Deetz (1981) where they explain the concept of perception as a cultural factor, which is how the people perceive and interpret the environment.

Another way of describing culture is through the symbolic perspective. This perspective states that symbols are something that is concrete and something that you can see. It helps to concretise and express the organisation's culture. There are three different types of symbols. Alvesson (1988) refers to the work of Dandridge et. Al (1980), and in turn interprets these three types of symbols as; action, verbal and material. Actions refer to meetings and behaviours while verbal symbols can be stories, jokes, expressions and slogans. Material symbols are more visual objects such as dress code, size of interior and architecture. These together fulfill an important function in organisations which are used by executives to lead the company into the right direction (Alvesson, 1988).

A company's design can for example be a symbol and an image (Bolman & Deal, 2005). An image is, according to Alvesson and Berg's (1988) interpretation of Olins (1978) and Bernstein (1984), how the external environment thinks of the company. Many companies build big offices to state power and success (Bolman & Deal, 2005). Another interpretation that Alvesson and Berg (1988) made on authors Berg (1984) and Berg & Gagliardi (1985) was the main difference between image and corporate culture. The image was seen as the impression the culture made on its environment. In order to send out the right message to stakeholders for example, the symbols exist in purpose of guiding the people so they know how to act (Weick, 1979).

Whether culture is distinct in organisations or more vague, it still exists and effects on how the people of the company thinks, feels, values and reacts on ideas, opinions and actions. Since this is often common for the entire group, it is a sign of culture. Executives of the companies always influence the culture since they point out what is important and how the principles of the company should be understood (Alvesson, 2001).

Alvesson interprets in his book, *Företagskultur och organisationssymbolism* (1988), the fact that *one* culture within a company has been criticized. He claims that many authors mean that it is difficult to identify one common culture for an entire company. He refers to his interpretation of Wilkins and Ouchi, 1983; Van Maanen och Barley, 1984; Alvesson and Sandkull, 1987.

2.2 Hofstede – cultural dimensions

The sociologist, Geert Hofstede, made a huge contribution when he implemented a research on culture dimensions effect on the working place. Hofstede defined culture as the unique programming of the brain that distinguishes the group members from others, and had its main focus within the work related places. He defined a dimension as an aspect of a culture measured in comparison to other cultures (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). This theory reflected on the general trends within different national cultures. The dimensions that he believed distinguishes the national cultures are; power distance index, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance index and long-term orientation. The latter dimension is, according to Delios and Beamish (2004), not as well studied and searched as the other dimensions and has only a limited amount of comparison measurements between countries. Therefore we have decided to exclude this dimension because of the lack of information.

2.2.1 Power distance index is a dimension of national culture which reflects on countries different answers on how to deal with people's differences. It is a measurement of the power distance between executives and their subordinates. It focuses on the inequality from a vertical, top to bottom, perspective. In this theory, power distance had its foundation on questions regarding how scared the employees are to show their executives their disagreements and on how the employees think about their executives' decision making style. The difference between these two levels is, according to Hofstede, a shared responsibility. Due to these facts, there can be many differences between countries.

2.2.2 Individualism, this dimension has its focus from the individual versus the group's role in society. A country with a high degree of individualism has an aspect that describes a society where everyone is supposed to do their own thing and fulfill their own needs. In this type of societies the individual alone has more responsibility. The majority of societies that exist are collectivistic which means that they concentrate on the group's interest instead of the individual. The individuals are integrated and a mutual loyalty between them exists. Societies that have the individualism as their concentration are not common.

2.2.3 Masculinity, this dimension has its focus on social and cultural factors when it comes to gender questions. Hofstede describes societies that are more masculine as where the gender roles are noticeably divided and where people, men that is, are independent, strong and focused on material success. In a society with a high degree of masculinity, people are more aggressive in terms of reaching goals and achieving success. The pressures on making career

are high and there are few women at chief positions. On the other hand Hofstede describes feminine societies where gender roles are somewhat equally divided and where both women and men are caring, uncertain and involved in the quality of life.

2.2.4 Uncertainty avoidance index, not knowing what will happen tomorrow or if you will be still alive ten years from now is a common uncertainty that many people feel. However an uncertainty that creates an intolerable anxiety is something that every person or society, in this matter, handles differently. Hofstede describes this uncertainty avoidance as how the group feels intimidated of uncertain and unknown situations. In countries where this uncertainty is high they are through rules, policies, structures and religion trying to keep the unknown from happening. These are made to avoid turbulence since people within these types of societies tend to be more emotional and easy to have strong reactions. Whereas in countries that have a low degree of uncertainty feel less need for structures, control and rules since they tend to be more open for the spontaneity. They are, unlike the uncertain people, more calm and do not usually show emotions (Bolman & Deal, 2005; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Hofstede, 2011).

Below there are two diagrams which show how each country's level of culture dimensions are divided. It also gives a good visual presentation of the differences between the two countries. On the third chart we present an easy comparison between the two selected countries.

2.2.5 Diagrams

The dimensions are from left:

Power distance (PDI)

Individualism (IDV)

Masculinity (MAS)

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)

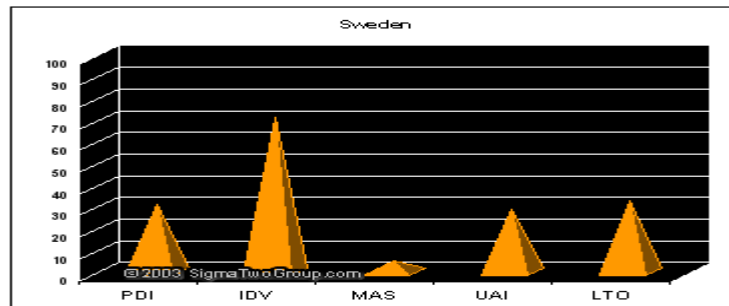


Diagram 1(geert-hofstede.com, 2011)

This chart shows the measurements of the different components in Sweden. The dominant dimension in this country is Individualism while Masculinity is the least significant dimension.

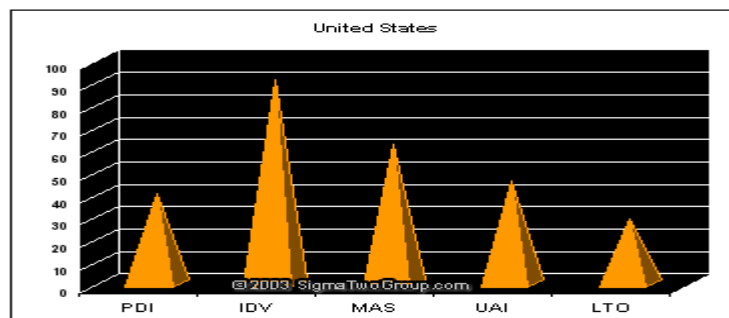


Diagram 2(geert-hofstede.com, 2011)

This chart shows the measurements of the different components in the United States. The dominant dimension in this country is Individualism and Masculinity. The other dimensions are approximately in the same level.

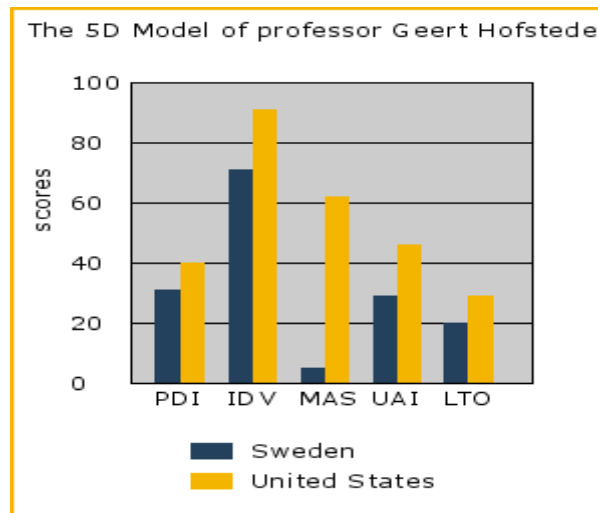


Diagram 3 (geert-hofstede.com, 2011)

In this chart we can easily see the comparison between the two countries. We can state that Individualism is high in both countries and that the biggest difference is in the dimension of Masculinity. The United States, according to Diagram 3, is stronger than Sweden within every dimension.

2.3 Sweden versus United States

As stated above, defining culture is difficult, especially since countries have different views of what culture is. As Hofstede has stated, there is no short cut to the business world when it comes to culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). What is meant by this statement is that a person or an organisation needs to understand the targeting market's culture in order to perform business successfully. To point out these differences and understandings in theory, the differences between a Swedish organisation and an American organisation are captured below.

According to Jönsson and Strannegård (2009), Swedish management can in general be summarized in a few main points; it consists of trust and delegation, conflicts are avoided and negotiation is preferred. They also state that people are not as good at analysing numbers as they are at expressing themselves verbally and that they often exaggerate the decision making in terms of making everybody involved and comfortable with the decision. For an organisation in Sweden it is equally important to motivate people, listen and lead them in the right direction as it is to be able to do more corporate tasks such as planning and coordinating. Businesses look at employees as being their most valuable resource and invest in them to make them more skilled and to be able to make the employees advance in the company. The organisations in Sweden are often very flat, and hierarchy is not a dominating factor.

Managers set clear goals and long-term visions for the organisation to reach but they are not as concerned about the methodologies used to achieve them (Hansson, 2011). Managers normally do not just tell the employees exactly how to achieve a goal/complete a task but it is often a mutual decision between the concerned parts. They function more as coaches instead of commander-in-chiefs (Management style, 2011). Teamwork is often preferable when it comes to decision making. Even though it is up to the manager to make the final decision, employees are often a part of the decision-making process and their opinions count. In general, people in Sweden are low to moderate risk-takers (Hansson, 2011). Managers in Sweden often believe in Theory Y, which is that people both want and can do a good job (Management style, 2011). Even though employees in Sweden are encouraged to give their opinions they are, on the other hand, very silent compared to, for example, Americans (Hansson, 2011).

There are various subcultures in the United States that contribute to the way organisation structures are viewed throughout several corporations. The structures in many American organisations can be based on a hierarchy and each level may hold different attributes that are responsible for making their rank of leadership effective. The United States business sector was built on ideas of bureaucracy in the 20th century. Corporate structures followed a tight-knit chain of command, and the hierarchal structure was built upon subordinates adhering to the rules, regulations, and operating procedures in their respective functional departments (American management style, 2011). Now, in the 21st century, most organisations in the US are using a flatter organisational structure. A flatter structure provides employees to feel empowered when it comes to providing input as a team. However, despite employees having the ability to provide input during a decision making process, there will always be an appointed leader in the group who is responsible for finalizing and approving all executive decisions (Being a manager in United States, 2011).

2.4 Brown - Organizational culture

According to Brown, the correlation between strategy and culture is high due to the fact that culture is central in order to be competitive in the market place. What defines a strategy? For the company to achieve its goals, it uses a strategy which is a type of plan that describes what needs to be done in order to reach the stated goals. It is formal, long-termed and implemented by the decision makers of the company, who often constitute the strategic apex. Another way of defining strategy, it can be more informal and a set of philosophies, instead of written

down manuals which allows more flexibilities in order to reach the stated goals. A combination of these two definitions is found in the majority of companies. Managers play a key role when determining a company's strategy since strategies are a web of decisions. Some strategical behaviour however, can just appear along the way without being specifically stated in the formal manual, for example due to gaining experience throughout the process.

Brown continues on by describing the role of culture and strategy within a company. They go hand in hand when forming the way the company makes decisions, interprets the environment and the way they behave from these interpretations. History of successful and unsuccessful actions is the foundation of present behaviour. Therefore, how they are "*judging, creating, justifying, affirming and sanctioning*" (Brown, 1995) is based on how they have done before. Hence, because the individuals and organisations are traditional and stick to what they know, this affects their adaptability to new ways of performance, which naturally makes organisations with different cultures follow different strategies. Since people are different and come from different backgrounds, the information considered important and how this will be interpreted will vary amongst them. The article distinct six different ways of how culture affects strategy; (1) *scanning behaviour*, that is, how a company collects data from its environment and secondly how they (2) *screen* which data that is important and which is not. The next step is the (3) *interpretation* of the data which will differ depending on company culture. American companies are considered to be more rational, action-oriented and not as conservative, which is often criticized by the eastern world, claiming this is a naive way to interpret the reality. Many European companies, however, are more traditional and declaring their actions through previous behaviour. When a company has gone through these three steps it is time to (4) *react* to the new information. This varies due to a company's national identity. In order to reach an (5) *agreement*, companies rely on the past as stated above, even if these assumptions are outdated. In the last step we can detect a possible (6) *conflict* between groups within an organisation since different subcultures may have different views on what direction to take based on what will give them the most value.

Since the culture can be a restrain for the companies, sometimes it is important to overcome these restrains in order to make necessary changes. Brown suggests four different options; (1) *ignoring the culture*, which is difficult if the company has already established a strong culture. Even though a company does not have a strong culture it can still not be ignored according to Alvesson (2001), who claims that culture will always exist regardless of if it is distinct or not. Another option is (2) *managing around the culture by changing the implementation plans*

since culture can be an obstacle to implementing necessary plans. Trying to (3) *fit the culture into coping with the strategy* is also an alternative; however it can be difficult and time-consuming to make these changes. The reverse possibility is trying to (4) *adapt the strategy to fit the culture*, but this works best in specific situations, such as mergers and acquisitions, where there often appears a complex cultural dilemma. Hofstede agrees with this option since he believes it is crucial to be adaptable to the different cultural dimensions of each country (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Brown continues on by presenting his view on the research of Miles and Snow (1978), where they argue, according to Brown, that the strategy of an organisation reflects its principal managerial culture and ideology. They propose three different types of organisations due to differences in their strategic behaviour; *defenders*, who develop their strategies from past experience, *prospectors*, who focus on current strategies and *analysers* who is a determinant of coming strategies.

In this article, Brown presents his understanding of the work of Denison (1990), and states that Denison distinguished, through his qualitative and quantitative research, four different factors of culture that have an influence on the effectiveness of a company; *involvement, consistency, adaptability and mission*. The involvement hypothesis explains how the level of participation within an organisation affects its effectiveness. Whether the involvement is structural and formal or spontaneous; it affects the effectiveness in a positive way. The consistency hypothesis enlightens the importance of reaching consensus within an organisation and how this can be done efficiently through a common set of beliefs, values and symbols. The theory of adaptability and mission in turn, enhance the high correlation between an organisation's performance and a suitable culture. The performance will therefore be better the more suitable the company culture is and hence there is no appropriate culture in general, since this depends on what environment the company operates in.

2.5 Summary

Culture is defined in many ways and is therefore difficult to distinguish. However it is still vital to be aware of cultural differences and how people interpret the environment, because is important for a company to understand how to approach their different target markets. As the authors presented above state, there are various differences between the cultures of Sweden and United States in how they perform business. Sweden is often described as a country where decisions are made together and that the organisations are flat. The United States on the

other hand are more hierarchal and action-oriented when it comes to making decisions. These differences were more common back in the days and the two countries are today however more similar.

3. Method

To enable the writing of the thesis we chose to dedicate the same amount of time to the two companies. Time was spent both in New York City, USA in order to gather information about Martini Media Network as well as in Gothenburg, Sweden in order to gather information about Company X. This thesis is outlined from a qualitative method where the empirical results consist of interviews and observations from the two companies.

3.1 Qualitative Methods

To be able to answer our problem definitions we have decided to apply qualitative methods to our research. This due to the fact that we are aiming to, through these interviews, try to get a deeper understanding of the two companies' cultures and sales processes. A qualitative method is an umbrella term for different types of social research and puts its main focus on interpretation and behaviour patterns. It concentrates on the words that the respondents use and how this person interprets his reality and with this information try to get a deeper understanding of the individual, the company and the environment (Troost, 2005).

We chose to conduct personal interviews with the sales personnel at each company. We chose to ask wide questions so that the respondent had the opportunity to talk about what he/she considered most important, instead of asking narrowed questions where the answers could be more limited. The advantages by using this method is, not only that the respondent has much freedom, but also that we as interviewers got a broader view of the problem definition since we received wider answers from each respondent. If we as interviewers felt that we needed more information about each subject we also had the opportunity to ask attendant questions, an advantage that not would have been there if the interviews instead were made by questionnaires. The disadvantages by using this method is that the respondent can occasionally answer the question in the way that he/she believes that the interviewers want it to be answered, and therefore let their answers be affected by that. Another disadvantage by using personal interviews is that if we as interviewers got into a subject that can be sensitive to the respondent to talk about, he/she might withhold information due to the fact that the form of the interview is personal and the respondent did not have a chance to be anonymous. Also if there is a significant amount of time between the interviews at each company, the respondents might have the opportunity to discuss the questions amongst them and through that affect each other's answers (Troost, 2005).

3.2 Semi-structured interviews

The main source of information was gathered through interviews. They were done in person, meaning we sat together face to face and had a dialog. The interviews were done through so called semi-structured interviews. This means that the interviewer had a complete list of the subjects that were discussed and questions to be answered. This is done to eliminate the interviewer from locking the respondent in a narrow subject but also to give the him/her the ability to develop his/hers own ideas and talk freely and detailed about the subjects and questions that are discussed. The answers are open so that the focus relies on how the respondent develops his/her own thoughts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Following the protocol for semi-structured interviews, we have also included some structured questions. This since we want to be specific in what we want to find out during the interviews. For every interview we have identical questions but they were developed during the interview session due to attendant questions. The questions that were used while doing the different interviews are attached as Appendix 1.

3.3 Selection of respondents

These interviews were done at two ad network companies, one Swedish, Company X and one American, Martini Media Network. This business was in general chosen because we wanted to analyse two companies that had most of their emphasis on their sales process. These two companies were also chosen because one of the companies is located in Sweden and one in America, so that we can capture possible cultural differences. We will only focus on interviewing the sales division or the corresponding division at each company regarding the sales process. Even though both companies have several offices we will only concentrate on the New York office for Martini Media Network and the Gothenburg office for company X. At Martini Media Network we interviewed four people and two people at company X. The reason to this is that at Martini Media Network they have a sales division where the sales personnel have different positions and we wanted to interview one at each position. Company X does not have a sales division, but they have a number of project managers that have the responsibility for sales.

These two companies provided us with each executive that we could be in touch with and that could guide us throughout the entire process. At Company X, the executive helped us find appropriate respondents while at Martini Media Network we had the opportunity to choose

whoever we wanted to interview. Our preferences on who we wanted to interview were one executive, to be able to discuss eligibilities and delegation with, and a couple of salespeople that are on the front line of making the deals with the clients. In this way we had the opportunity to talk with those who have the most physical contact with the clients, which are the sales personnel, but also got the opportunity to see if the goals and visions of sales were impregnated between the two levels.

3.4 Implementation

At Martini Media Network we interviewed three salespeople and one executive (Chief Revenue Officer, CRO). At Company X we decided to implement one interview with a project manager, which is the corresponding division in the Swedish company, and one interview with an executive (Customer Service Director, CSD). This in turn gave us a better picture, not only from the field's perspective, but from a higher authority level as well. In this way we had the opportunity to talk with those who have the most physical contact with the clients, which are the sales personnel, but also got the opportunity to see if the goals and visions of sales were impregnated between the two levels.

Prior to the interviews we had already done the background investigation, including basic information about the two companies in terms of location, products, services, mission and vision. Therefore we had knowledge about them before discussing what the key questions were to receive the best answers for our problem definition. We brainstormed and categorized our problem definitions and made a few questions for every category. Afterwards we sent them to our mentor to get feedback on what we could remove, add and change.

We encourage the respondents to talk freely about the subjects given in order to get their perspective on what information that was important. Both of us were present on every interview. However, we did not divide up the questions between us but rather took turns on who was interviewing and who was the note taker at each interview.

During the analysis it has been vital for us to be critical so that we could enable an interpretation of the information that was given in the best and justified way. To not leave out anything we decided to have a Dictaphone while doing the interview as well as taking notes about what was said. The disadvantage when it comes to recording respondents during interviews is that the respondent might feel restricted in his answers since he/she knows that it is all going to be word-for-word on tape, and therefore be afraid of saying something "wrong"

(Trost, 2005). Even though this could occur, we considered the disadvantages to be more, which is for example; the opportunity to listen to the tone of voice and choice of words after the interview and that the need is not as big to manically focus on putting everything into words, but can instead focus on the respondent (Trost, 2005). We did also adjust our dress code after the companies, this to obtain maximum visualized association with the respondents.

3.5 Observations

To capture the essence and culture of the two companies we made observations in each company. The interesting part in this was to get a better understanding of the two companies' atmosphere, unity, dress code, language, relationships and everything around that. Through these observations we wanted to explore the relationships from top to bottom, if the executives for example have an open door policy or not or if the entire company's spirit makes the employees feel that they belong to an exclusive group. This will capture what the Dictaphone does not.

3.6 The process of analysing

After the interviews had been conducted, the material was thoroughly studied and discussed. We did also study the chosen theories to find connections between the theories and the empirical results. We made short notes on all the findings that we wanted to discuss further in the analysis. Since we did not find a significant amount of differences between the sales processes, we focused more on the national cultural differences.

3.7 Criticism to the methods

3.7.1 Interviews

Since we did not know who all the respondents were in advance, the executives were given the questions before the time of the interviews. This gave them the opportunity to prepare their answers to the questions before the interviews to find out the answers that they did not already know which in turn gave the answers a better credibility. If they would have to answer the questions as they got them during the interview, they would not have the same opportunity to think about their answers, which could have been misleading.

3.7.2 The credibility of putting interviews into written text

Since there is a bigger challenge to prove credibility in qualitative than quantitative studies, it is important for the researcher to let, in turn, the person who is going to take part of the final

research, understand the credibility of the *questions*. It is valuable to be able to show the relevance and seriousness of the questions asked relatively to the problem stated. Here the reader is given the possibility to determine the credibility of the interview material himself/herself (Trost, 2005).

Since we did not have much knowledge about this business, the respondents were given an opportunity to talk freely about the given subject. This limited knowledge we had also contributed to that we were not able to push the respondents' answers into certain directions. The respondents' answers were documented both through a Dictaphone and through being written down. Even though we took turns on who was the secretary during the interviews, we used the same model when taking notes. In order to be sure that we had understood an answer correctly, we were able to contact the respondents after the interviews to ask them about their answers. The interviews were also made close to each other. At Martini Media Network all interviews were conducted on the same day, which resulted in that the respondents' different answers were not affected by the time aspect. At Company X the interviews were conducted just a few days apart.

The answers were discussed between us interviewers before put down into words, and if any disagreements took place, we had the benefit of going back to the information by listening to our recordings. In this way we were given a second chance to interpretation of the information and to reach a common conclusion.

A draft of the thesis has been discussed during two seminars, where co-students had the opportunity to give us feedback.

4. Material/Empirical results

The material gathered from the interviews in respective company will be merged and presented in a floating text. They are structured in the same way in order to make it easier for the reader to comprehend. This section will begin with an introduction of the different pricing models that an ad network can use and continues with a brief background of each company followed by the results from the interviews.

4.1 Pricing models

CPM, CPC, CPA, and CPL are all pricing models used for different types of internet marketing. The model used varies between affiliate marketing, contextual advertising, Search Engine Marketing (SEM), and display advertising. Below is a further presentation of the models.

CPM (Cost-per-mil) is common for display. This is a way for publishers to price inventory (impressions) to in turn sell to advertisers. If you consider inventory being sold at for example an eight dollar CPM, the charge is eight dollar for every 1,000 impressions.

CPC (Cost-Per-Click) is common in search such as Google AdWords. This pricing model charges for each click on an advertisement. If you consider inventory sold at a \$0.75 CPC, that means for each click the publisher receives on the ad unit they are showing for the advertiser, the advertiser will pay the publisher \$0.75, which is the inventory price.

CPL (Cost per Lead) and CPA (Cost per acquisition) are common pricing models for affiliate marketing, but are also used in display and search marketing. The idea here is that a publisher is only paid by the advertiser when the publisher delivers some sort of conversion from a user which benefits the advertiser. An example of a lead would be if you were working for Match.com, a dating website. Match.com says they will pay you five dollars for every interested / potential user you bring them. Then you go and set up a website called DateMe.com. You allow anyone who visits the site to sign up for info about joining DateMe.com, therefore you capture their email address. You then take these "leads", which may have cost you three dollars to obtain (after the cost of running DateMe.com) and you sell them to Match.com for five dollars therefore you make two dollars per lead. This is the idea behind affiliate marketing (Martini Media Network, Brian Ecclesine, 2011).

4.2 Empirical results

4.2.1 Company X

Background

Company X is a global ad network that was established a few decades ago. The company is focusing on both media communication and market research. They provide their clients with a whole range of different communication solutions, everything from advice and consultancy to presenting innovative solutions.

Company X, with its market share of approximately a fourth in Scandinavia, has around 75 employees divided into their offices in Sweden. Not only does the company provide communication solutions for their clients in the best possible way, but they also educate and inform them through seminars and events. Since Sweden is a relatively small market, the company does not have a specific niche, but instead embraces all types of different clients. They have several different business units in order to serve their clients' needs; one unit is focused on research and analysis, giving their clients the necessary knowledge about their target audience and how to best reach them. This research will answer questions about the target audience's demographics but also their needs, preferences, interests and what they think about a certain brand. The other business units are divided into serving specific types of clients.

Even though Company X is a global company with several offices all over the world, they are not restricted by national borders. A natural way for a global client to do business with Company X is to contact their local office within the country where it has its head quarter. If a global client with its main office in for example Spain wants to advertise to its global market, it starts by contacting Company X in Spain. If the client wants to reach out to its markets in Sweden, Finland and Denmark, Company X contacts its affiliates in these countries. The offices in each country use different approaches to suit their specific market. This is although not always the case since Company X in Spain can also perform most of the work while the affiliates in the other countries modify it to suit their markets.

Contact person

Our main contact was the Client Service Director (CSD), who is the manager for the project managers at the office in Gothenburg as well as another office in Sweden. This person has worked at the company for nine years and was previously a project manager, before appointed

this current position. Even though she is no longer a project manager she still plays a vital role in the sales process.

Impression

Company X is located at the largest mall in the centre of Gothenburg City. The building was occupied by several different companies. Before taking the elevator to the sixth floor, we saw green plants and a mirror in the main entrance at the bottom floor. When entering the office at Company X, we were met by a receptionist who welcomed us and accompanied us to the clothing hangers. In the entrance there were also pictures of all the employees working in Sweden. In the lounge there were modern furnitures and a big flat screen TV where visitors could sit and relax while waiting for their meeting. Other decorations on the walls were paintings. Visitors were offered something to drink. The premises were light and spacious where everyone had their own office but with an open door policy. The conference room had seats for approximately ten people and was equipped with a large video conference system. The atmosphere at the company was ad hoc and easy going. The employees at the office wore jeans and a shirt or a sweater but still looked clean and representative. The interactions between the employees, at all levels, were on a friendship basis. The premises, overall, were modern and well structured.

Organising Company X

During the interviews we learned that Company X is a relatively flat organisation. The project managers have the main responsibility for the clients and therefore possess much eligibility for making decisions. The project managers have an overall function as they are responsible for the clients. They are in charge of everything from planning and structuring the first meeting and putting the team together to produce drafts of customer agreements. The project manager explains that the project team divides the tasks amongst them since they all have different competences that the company wants to utilise. However the CEO and the CSD are also involved in the sales process regarding larger issues. Regarding other questions concerning the financial part, the economics department has a central role in making these decisions.

Project managers

The structure of Company X is designed in a way where the project managers are in charge of the entire process from the first contact with the client to closing the deal. This company does not have a specific division where the sales process takes place. Among their 20 employees in

the Gothenburg office, they have a corresponding division which consists of five project managers instead.

Sales process

While interviewing the respondents we got the information that there is no particular way in who makes the first contact. It is most cases Company X who makes the first contact but there are cases where the clients take initiative. According to the two respondents, Company X is striving towards being present at places where new contacts and possible clients can emerge. Many clients get in touch with Company X through the word of mouth, which could be through an already existing client promoting and recommending Company X, through networking. As cited from the CSD of the company “*it is important for an ad network to be engaged, proactive and caring in order to gain new clients*”. The CSD stated that to achieve this they need to be able to prove to the client that they have knowledge and the experience about their specific market and can show this through previous case studies. They also need to present an appropriate team and a resume of their experience. Depending on whom the client is in terms of business and background, Company X chooses the most suitable project manager to take care of the deal with regards to their experience and knowledge within that specific area. According to Company X the market is although a so called push market which means that the company drive out their services or products on to the customers (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders, 2008). One example is when Company X gets the knowledge of a prospective client who might be interested in their services. Due to this, Company X contacts the client in order to sell their services.

They also make “cold calls” which basically means that they contact random companies with the aim to book a meeting where they can present what the company has to offer. If the prospective client is not interested at the moment, Company X will not just leave it there, but contact them again after a certain amount of time. The CSD continues on by explaining that when approaching the client, Company X is very adaptable since they believe that as an international company it is essential for them to have this ability. Company X is aware of the national cultural differences between countries, therefore when visiting an office in another country, treatment of a client can differ. In Sweden, when addressing a client it is often done by first name.

The company does not have an official dress code but instead you have to dress properly depending on the situation. With new clients, the behaviour is more formal due to making the best possible first impression. Since one of Company X’s mottos is to perceive long-term

relationships it encourages a more friendly and comfortable relationship with their clients. In order to entertain and maintain the good relationships, Company X invites them to lunches, dinners, wine tasting, concerts and other social events. This is, described by the two respondents, as a part of a project manager's job and something that they would like to do more of. Even though the long-term relationships become friendly, the CSD of Company X points out, that it is always important to remember that it is a client you are dealing with. The most common way to keep in touch with clients is through email. Although if an issue appears the CSD considers it is important to discuss it through telephone since they put a high value in personal contact as well. *"The personal contact should never be underestimated"* (CSD).

Although this process of meeting completely new clients is essential for the success of the company. Once a deal has been closed, the relationship continues on despite the fact that a specific campaign is over. According to the CSD, historically, clients have not been putting as much emphasis on creativity as they do today. However the expectations on ad networks are higher today. This due to that the ad networks are involved in many processes for the client. Processes such as research regarding the market and advice cover a large area and therefore, the importance of being at the top as an ad network is a significant factor for the clients.

While conducting the interviews we found out that when Company X is going to develop a suggestion for a client it usually has a certain way to do that. The project manager explained that a model that is helpful when approaching the clients is ICP, Integrated Communications Planning. This is both a working procedure as well as a toolbox which guides the team in understanding the client's needs. ICP is a general step process for the entire corporate group but is adapted to suit the affiliates in different countries. The project manager discusses the client's starting-point together with the research team. The research team makes studies and analysis of the client and its targets. Company X and the client get a deeper understanding of the market it is involved with and the next step is where the specialists come in. The specialists do not necessary work at Company X but can instead be employees at publishers of the final ads. This can for example be TV channels, printing companies, event and PR companies as well as other digital media companies. The publishers that are affected by the client's needs are the ones that get involved in the process. However, not every client needs to go through the entire process; some has for example made the research on their own, and is requesting Company X's services from the next step in the process. The CSD mentions that since not all clients go through the entire process, every client's process differ due to these facts.

Pricing

The CSD enlightened us that there are different ways of conducting sales. One is the more traditional way where the client and the company gets in touch and reach an agreement. Another way, which according to the CSD, Company X wants to avoid, is called a pitch. A pitch is when several ad networks compete over who will get the client. The client gives a brief, which is short information of the company and what it wants to achieve, and the ad networks in turn develop different suggestions on how to reach those achievements. If there are any obscurities regarding the brief, Company X collect all of its questions and contact the client for further information. Finally it becomes almost like an auction where the client chooses the best alternative. What price Company X decides to propose depends on what they believe the competing ad networks will present. Another factor that also affects the proposed price is whether the client is a company within the public or the private sector. If it is in a public sector, Company X can then gather information regarding previous prices that they have paid. This will give them a picture of what price ranges they are willing to pay. When considering a company within the private sector on the other hand, Company X proposes its prices more according to their gut feeling and previous experience. The reason why Company X wants to avoid a pitch is because there is a significant amount of work involved and the possibilities of getting the client in the end are not optimal. What pricing model Company X uses of the CPM, CPC, CPL and CPA depends on what type of campaign that is requested and what Company X together with the client wants to accomplish.

Follow up

After the deal has been closed and the campaign is implemented, Company X follows up. It is important to evaluate the outcome of the campaign, for example how many viewers the client's website has had since the campaign started and the amount of customer satisfaction. The interviewers point out that through this, Company X can improve their services and approaching skills. If the client has not gone through the entire process, as stated above, Company X also tries to sell them the services which the client has not been using. Finally, as the respondents mentioned before, the deal sign is not a short-term deal but a long-term relationship and therefore the relationship consists even after a campaign is over and evaluated.

4.2.2 Martini Media Network

Background

Martini Media Network is an American ad network located in New York, Boston, Dallas, Los Angeles and San Francisco. They were founded in 2008 with the aim to through the best possible audience data and ad targeting technology connect advertisers, audience and media together. With their high level of competence within customised, clear and brand safe campaigns they are able to offer their clients what they need. Their primarily focus is to reach out to America's high income earners. They are currently reaching out to 25 percent of the internet population and 70 percent of the spending power. Therefore their main clients are luxury clients such as American Express, Porsche and Mercedes Benz. Martini Media Network is divided into several different divisions which are; executives, sales, administration, business development, marketing & creative, engineering and operations as well as N2N divisions. Each division has its vital role in sealing a deal. The sales personnel are the communicators who are in the front line of the company which are supported by all these other divisions in order to attain their clients' needs (Martini Media Network, 2010).

Contact-person

Our main contact was the Chief Revenue Officer (CRO), who is responsible for global sales, PR, marketing, creative, account management and research. This former Yahoo Executive is today in charge of the New York City office and plays a vital role in the sales process of Martini Media Network.

Impression

Martini Media Network is located in one of Manhattan's largest meeting squares, Union Square. We shared the elevator with a food delivery guy who was bringing food for an entire floor. Martini Media Network had recently moved from the eighth floor to the ninth floor and had a shared office space with another company within the media business. The entire building consisted of different types of companies. The first thing we noticed when entering the company were the white walls and a ping pong table where employees could play while brainstorming. While walking us to the conference room we were offered something to drink. There were two conference rooms with glass walls for an open feeling, one for approximately 15 people and one for around four. We conducted the interviews in the smaller room where we also had the best view. The CRO let us pick and choose whoever we wanted to interview.

The premises were spacious, light and had a great view over parts of Manhattan. Except from the conference rooms the offices consisted of one large room where everyone sat together. The interactions between the employees, at all levels, were on a friendship basis. The CRO spontaneously introduced us to a big client that was visiting the office. The employees wore jeans or chinos together with a jacket or a shirt. With the ping pong table in the middle of the room and the easy going attitude and dress code you got an ad hoc feeling of the company.

Organising Martini Media Network

The company is structured in a way where they have divided their clients into four different groups, which are called agencies. The sales personnel at Martini Media Network are divided into teams where each team is responsible for one of these agencies. Since it is extremely important to know the clients in order to give them what they need, it is vital for the sales personnel to know all agencies on all levels.

Martini Media Network is a very flat organisation and has therefore put much responsibility on each person. The CRO explained that the field have much eligibility to make their own decisions, and do not always have to check with higher authorities. However he did mention that it is necessary to make sure that the decisions that are made are possible, so that the sales personnel do not promise a client something that in the end cannot be pursued. An example is the importance of always looking at the balance of the company and if necessary resources are available.

All of the respondents explained that the dress code at Martini Media Network depends on if you are just going to be at the office the entire day or if you are going on a meeting with a client. The dress code is also adapted depending on who the client is and what dress code they have at their company. The only demand is to always look representative and professional.

Sales personnel

The sales personnel at Martini Media Network are considered communicators. All the respondents at Martini Media Network believe it is very important to have an open dialog with their clients so that they can learn about Martini Media Network as well as they can learn about the clients. In this way the client will get the opportunity to understand how they can incorporate Martini Media Network into their business. As stated in the interviews, when going on a meeting, the planning team, which consists of people from different divisions in the company such as sales and marketing, put together a presentation package as a proposal.

Sales process

The respondents stated that Martini Media Network does not have a specific model to follow within the sales process, but instead the process is more ad hoc. How to conduct sales depends on who the client is as well as the preferences of the sales person himself/herself. It depends on the branding message of the client, which is how it wishes to be portrayed, for example luxurious or young minded, and the sales personnel in turn adapt their techniques after that.

According to the account executive at Martini Media Network, there are many ways when it comes to contacting clients. Due to creating good relationships with the clients, the reputation is being built, and new contacts can come up through word of mouth, which basically means that clients recommend Martini Media Network to other prospective clients. All of the respondents stated that the relationship building is important because of the fact that the sales is an overall process, and the relationship do not just end after closing a deal, as it usually does when buying a product at a store for example. Another way the sales personnel at Martini Media Network meets new clients is to make so called “cold calls”. This means that a sales representative just calls a possible client with the goal of booking a meeting. When contacting clients through “cold calls”, as cited by the account executive, *“it is not just to call and leave a voicemail, since the client probably gets many calls like that every day”*. The sales personnel of Martini Media Network do research through specific websites, where they can find prospective clients to present their business to. The sales personnel all have different ways of how they approach the clients, not all of them do it the same way, but they instead have much of freedom to contact the clients in the way they believe is most effective. When already having a client, some of the respondents consider it better to send an email or a text message instead of calling. The account executive also pointed out that it is important to keep it short and concise as well as “call the action”. This basically means to get to the point and for example propose a meeting on a specific day at a specific time instead of just making a general approach and leave the ball at the client’s court. The idea is to, through these approaching techniques, push the client as little as possible and instead make them pull.

According to the CRO, the market is considered both a push and a pull market, but mostly a push market. On the pull side, clients can make an RFP, request for proposals, where several ad networks are contacted in order to present a deal. This means high degree of competition for the ad networks since the client in turn will pick the ad network that presents the best deal. The ad networks also have to push their services out to the clients. The account director

explains that it is vital to know the client's business and learn about their objectives to be able to present a good idea. The CRO pointed out that in this business it is very important to have good relationships with the clients, and Martini Media Network considers themselves to mainly have repurchase clients.

There are two ways of advertising, endemic advertising or non-demic. Endemic advertising is when for example a car company advertise at a website for cars, while non-demic advertising is when a car company advertise on another type of website that is not particularly for cars. However some publishers only run endemic ads, why it is essential for Martini Media Network to always be aware of this so that they can match the client and the publisher in the best possible way.

The respondents mentioned that when creating good relationships, even informal activities are important instead of just meeting at the office. Therefore Martini Media Network does many activities in order to entertain and treat their clients. Some activities that were discussed during the interviews were for example taking the clients out for dinner and drinks, concerts, sports games, manicures, going to barber shops, but also let them have custom made shoes and jeans.

Pricing

When presenting a deal it is according to the sales personnel vital to be consistent with pricing, especially within the different agencies. This is because if the clients talk to each other, it does not look good if they have a different pricing policy for different clients. The pricing however depends on factors such as size of the ad and how it will be shown. Martini Media Network uses display advertising and therefore uses the CPM price model.

Follow up

Finally, the account director describes that after the deal is closed and the campaign is over, Martini Media Network always follows up the outcome. They put together a report on how the campaign went, where they look at measurable metrics such as for example how many times the ad was being clicked or shown. It is also analysed however the goals where successfully reached and what improvements that can be made. All the respondents agreed that it is also important to have frequent contact with the client after the campaign is over. In the media business, people often switch jobs and work for another company. Therefore it is

necessary not to only have contact through work email, but also through personal emails and numbers as well.

4.2.3 Summary

Company X and Martini Media Network both have a flat organisation structure but the division within the sales process differ among the two. While Martini Media Network has a specific division for sales, Company X has project managers that have a more general role in the company. A central element for both of the companies is that customer relations is the key to a successful business. Both of the companies value informal activities, which are considered a part of the sales personnel's job. This is mainly a repurchase business and hence it is vital to follow up and stay in touch with the clients.

5. Analysis

To be a successful company it is crucial to understand the concept of culture. As Hofstede has stated; if an organisation is able to comprehend the targeting market's culture then the chances of making it becomes greater. Culture is always present no matter how strong it is since it always affects the way people think, feel and act (Alvesson 2001). According to the respondents, since ad networks biggest interest is in interacting and reaching out to other people, understanding culture is of major importance. The corporate culture is not the key here but rather the national culture since the people of that country are the final receivers of that service.

Martini Media Network and Company X did not have a distinct organisational culture that distinguished them from each other. Both companies had rather similar attitudes but there were also eminent dissimilarities. The easy going attitude, the casual dress code, team work and open door policy could be found in both organisations which in turn gave the impression of ad hoc structures. The fact that the offices of the two companies are located in main areas of each city designates what Alvesson's and Berg's (1988) interpretation of Berg (1984) and Berg & Gagliardi (1985) was; an image for the external environment. This central position, according to these authors, symbolises a strong message about the companies stating that they are where the action is. This represents success since the companies are able to afford large offices in the middle of the city where it is often more expensive. This in turn gives the impression to clients that the company is strong and stable which make the clients feel secure with the company and eager to hire them.

Another similarity that the two companies had was the approaching techniques in terms of "cold calls", attending networking events and entertaining clients. Even though they had the same techniques, the focus differed and therefore what technique was considered most effective. Martini Media Network put momentousness in networking events and entertaining both current and prospective clients. Company X put more effort on "cold calls" than Martini Media Network does. This is a sign of cultural differences; it is about finding the most suitable approaching technique for your targeting market. This might be a result of the fact that Swedes are more comfortable taking things step by step while Americans are more action oriented and therefore can be more offensive (Hansson & American Management style, 2011). This difference is supported by Hofstede's cultural dimension of Masculinity. According to Diagram 3 there are significant differences between Sweden and United States when it comes to Masculinity. The total scores are 100 and United States received just over 60

scores while Sweden received around five scores. A high score in Masculinity indicates a society where aggressiveness and power is central for success while a low score indicates a more equal and reserved society. The techniques that Martini Media Network focuses on are a more aggressive approach than Company X's focus which is more of a careful move. One example of this aggressiveness is their presence at networking events. This is a big part of the sales personnel's job assignment. Another strategy is to entertain both prospective and current clients, unlike Company X who prefers to entertain current clients. This aggressiveness versus carefulness is supported by the research made by Hofstede.

As Alvesson interpreted in his book *Företagskultur och organisationssymbolism* (1988) there are several cultures within an organisation. It can therefore not be stated that everybody within the same company are following one specific culture. This was explored at Martini Media Network since everyone was entitled to choose their own approaching techniques and some chose to be aggressive while others preferred the more careful move. As Brown stated in his book *Organizational culture* (1995), when defining strategy it can be more informal and a set of philosophies instead of written down manuals, which allows more flexibilities in order to reach the stated goals. This type of strategy, as seen above, was found in Martini Media Network since the sales personnel can choose their own approaching techniques. These aggressive approaches from Martini Media Network's side can be derived to the fact that they have a high score in Uncertainty avoidance index. This dimension describes a society that wants to prevent the unexpected from happening. Therefore they take charge in terms of efforts in getting clients. This is not a society that sits back and waits for the call, it makes the call. The lower score in Uncertainty avoidance index puts Sweden into a less aggressive position, which is supported by the fact that Swedes are more silent in general (Hansson, 2011). This was also noticed when comparing the two companies. When reviewing Martini Media Network's website they are proud to present what they have accomplished, what clients they have and what each employee has performed in his/her career. Company X on the other hand, has a more story telling website which gives a general view of what they can do and have accomplished, current clients and a description of the employees does not exist.

Another cultural dimension discussed by Hofstede is called Power distance index which is the distance between the executives and the subordinates. United States received a higher score, 40 out of 100, compared to Sweden who received a score of approximately 30. Since both countries did not have significant scores within this dimension, it designates that both countries are relatively low on power distance. This corresponds with the structure and

atmosphere that both companies had. Team work, eligibilities and attitude amongst the employees at all levels showed that the power distance was low in both companies. A factor that might contribute to the higher score for the United States could be the fact that an American company, such as Martini Media Network, is more divided into divisions. To make the sales process more structured, even the clients are divided into different agencies, each agency represented by a sales team. Company X however, is not as structured into divisions as Martini Media Network is. Another contributing factor might be that when making decisions in the United States in general, the subordinates are allowed to make input but the executives are the ones making the final decisions (Being a manager in United States, 2011). When considering the cultural dimension of individualism, both countries received a very high score, with United States as the most significant. This suits well with the structure in both companies since they both put major responsibility on each employee. The little difference that does exist between them might depend on the fact that Swedes are considered low to moderate risk takers and would rather share the risk with a group than being held responsible individually (Hansson, 2011).

Company X has not created a niche as Martini Media Network has. This due to the fact that the market in Sweden for ad networks is not big enough for the ad network companies to have a niche (Company X, CSD). Since Company X does not have a specific niche, they put emphasis on showing prospective clients their experience in the client's specific field. Case studies are the tools they use to prove their knowledge (Company X, CSD). This falls under the statement that Brown (1995) made about European countries being more traditional and relying on past experience. The interpretation made by Brown (1995) of Miles and Snow (1978) presents three categories of strategical behaviour where each behaviour indicates a certain period in time; past, present and future. Sweden is best described as a mixture between what Miles and Snow (1978) would call defenders and prospectors, which is a mixture between past experience and current strategies.

Martini Media Network, a luxury ad network, is not as attached to previous experience since their client base itself, describes their knowledge of the business. This suits perfectly with the generalization that Brown (1995) did about American companies being considered as more rational, action-oriented and not as conservative as other countries. In Miles and Snow's (1978) three categories, United States would be placed between prospectors and analysers, which is a mixture between current strategies and coming strategies.

Due to the fact that people are different and have different backgrounds they are, according to Brown (1995), reacting differently to the same situation. Managing a conflict, for example, is dealt in diverse ways depending on the national culture of the company. When a conflict appears in Martini Media Network, everyone tries to find a solution for the conflict but in the end just one person is held responsible. In Company X however, everyone involved in the conflict is, as a team, held responsible. Reflecting back to Brown's (1995) statement, this is applicable to these two companies. In both companies, the employees show a high degree of participation which is, according to the involvement hypothesis (Denison, 1990), a contributing factor to better effectiveness. It does not matter whether the involvement is structural or spontaneous, it will still have a positive effect on the effectiveness of the company (Denison, 1990). In Company X there are no clear divisions but the employees have a broader position in the company while in Martini Media Network, team work is essential but clear divisions are created to make it more structured.

A general interpretation for companies within the ad network business is that they consider the market being a push market rather than a pull. However Martini Media Network's understanding is that it can be both a push and a pull market. This can be a contributing factor for how needed Martini Media Network's niched services are on the market. Company X however, needs a more general approach to be able to stay on the market. According to the CSD of Company X, the market for ad networks is not as big in Sweden as it is in the United States, why it is harder for a Swedish ad network to niche itself. For example, the market for luxury brands is not significant at all in Sweden, why it would be completely ineffective for a Swedish ad network to niche itself in this direction. Word of mouth plays an important role for both Martini Media Network and Company X since their clientele consists mainly of repurchase clients. Long-term relationships are therefore a must within this industry, something that both companies highlight.

Another general factor for the ad network business is the way of presenting a deal to a client, which the Americans call a RFP and Swedes call a Pitch. Company X clearly stated that they wish to avoid Pitching due to uncertainty of getting the client while Martini Media Network did not put emphasis on what they felt about RFPs. The system with RFPs and pitches, where several ad networks present deals and the client can pick and choose whoever presents the best deal, makes the marketplace for ad networks highly competitive. This might be one factor why Martini Media Network has such a specific niche, to eliminate some competition. If a luxury brand for example, which Martini Media Network is focused on, wants to make a

deal with an ad network, they will probably choose the ad network specialized on their type of company instead of just a general ad network, since a specialized company will have more knowledge about their specific type of business. For Company X however, it might be more competition in one specific pitch, since it is harder for them to get niched in the Swedish market, and all the ad networks are relatively general in business.

Both companies have many similarities due to the fact that they are operating within the same industry, however since they are located in two different countries, dissimilarities cannot be avoided. As Alvesson (1995) indicated, culture varies from person to person, from society to society and from organisation to organisation. The performance will therefore be better the more suitable the strategy is to the company culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) and hence, Martini Media Network and Company X cannot operate in the exact same way.

6. Conclusion

Being able to compare the sales processes of two companies within the ad network industry, located in two different countries, has given us an insight on how a sales process within the same industry can differ. We were very keen on conducting this research since it was a completely new business to us. We experienced that the differences that exist are mostly due to national culture differences.

The differences that we thought we would find due to cultural differences were not significant since the two companies have similar ways of conducting sales and approaching clients. None of the companies had a specific manual to follow within the sales process and they both had an ad hoc structure. The approaching techniques were the same but due to cultural differences they put more weight on the techniques most suitable for respective national culture. Sweden is more careful while United States is more aggressive when it comes to conducting sales (Hansson, 2011; American management style, 2011 & Hofstede, 2005). Another factor which indicates a more forward approach at Martini Media Network is their big office space. When employees are sitting together, and not in separate rooms, they can definitely boost each other when working. If the sales personnel, for example, can watch each other work and really see their co-workers performance, they feel the pressure and the inspiration to achieve the same success as them. If the sales personnel instead would be sitting in separate rooms, they would not get the same kick, and they would also be able to “conk” more since they do not have all eyes on them.

We felt that Martini Media Network send out the message that they are confident and secure of themselves, something that is a great signal to clients. Their branding message says that they have knowledge and know what they are talking about. Showing reference clients at the website, together with a description of every employee’s performance, indicated this kind of confidence. Something that we also experienced, when conducting interviews at Martini Media Network, we were able to pick and choose whoever we wanted to interview, and the executive even introduced us to a big client visiting the office. Martini Media Network did not even ask us to make them anonymous in this thesis. We also believe that Company X gives out great signals to their clients, showing that they are successful. The central location combined with the modern premises, the big flat screen TV in the lounge and the visual conference system, represents a winning company. As a client visiting their office, welcomed by a friendly receptionist, we would feel that this is a company to do business with. Both

companies therefore send out a confident branding message, but in slightly different ways. Since Americans in general are more aggressive than Swedes, who are more silent (Hansson, 2011; American management style, 2011 & Hofstede, 2005), this can depend on the fact that the Americans have it easier to express themselves verbally and show off what they can do, which is a part of their national culture. In Sweden, on the other hand, people try not to show off, since this is considered rude, and that might be why Company X instead of telling others about their success, show their success.

No process is flawless since there can always be improvements and companies can always learn from each other. Our opinion is that both companies' techniques are suitable for each respective country but Company X and Martini Media Network can take inspiration from each other. We believe that Company X could become more successful if they put more emphasis on being more creative and think outside the box in terms of entertaining their clients in a non-traditional way, for example attend cooking lessons together or treat the client with something memorable that will distinguish them from other ad networks in Sweden and make them unique as well as put some more emphasis on prospective clients. On the other hand Martini Media Network could take inspiration from Company X and broaden their targets. To be a niched company makes you an expert within that field and helps creating clear goals for a company, but in the same time it can also make you limited as a company. To niche a company within a certain area may be the most appropriate decision for that specific company, but imagine if the targeted market experiences a major decline in demand, then it is more difficult for a niched company to survive. Company X does not have the same limitations since they are able to spread their risks on different markets. Therefore if one market diminishes, they still have other targeted markets to rely on. To match the luxury brand image that Martini Media Network possesses, they can invest more on their visual appearance, for example regarding their office. To maintain a good image, and to give the impression of a successful company, it is vital to have a professional and representative office (Bolman & Deal, 2005; Alvesson & Berg, 1988). "*Saying nothing...sometimes says the most*" (Emily Dickinson, 2011). What is meant by this quote is that having an office that is not visually ultimate for the client's eyes, can sometimes eliminate the opportunity of getting hired.

No matter what the situation is, culture will always be a factor. Hence, as a conclusion, we can see that in this particular situation there is no significant correlation between the two companies' sales processes and their cultures.

6.1 Continued research

When conducting this research, we experienced that there were no major differences between Martini Media Network in the United States, and Company X in Sweden. This can be a result of the fact that the ad network industry is ad hoc in general, and that most companies work in the same way. However, if we would have the possibility to make a more detailed research about the ad networks, for example if we would be able to follow the entire sales process live, we would most certainly find more differences between the two companies sales processes. When considering other industries, for example within banking, we believe that the differences would be more significant, this because businesses such as commercial banks are in general more hierarchical, and have more manuals to follow. Commercial banks have many traditions, but the traditions can vary from country to country. Here we would see more differences regarding culture and ways of performing business. One thing that we noticed, when visiting New York City, USA, is that the system differed between the US banks and the Swedish banks. For example, when a new client wants to open an account, the process in the US takes much longer than it does in Sweden. This due to the fact that the bankers in the US does not have as much authority as the bankers in Sweden, and therefore have to ask a higher executive before making decisions. Another industry that could have more notable differences could be the retail industry, for example shoe stores or clothing stores. In America they are in general more service minded and are not afraid to aggressively bombard their customers with different options and special deals while in Sweden the shop assistants are more careful with their approach towards the customers.

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8. Appendix 1

8.1 Questions for interviews

-Who makes the first contact?

First sales – Sales calls, word of mouth etc. Basically, how do you get in touch with the client?

In how many cases does the client contact you first? Repurchase clients?

Push or a pull market?

-Delegation – Who is doing what?

Is the same person handling the entire process from first contact to closing the deal? If yes, does this person have a team to rely on?

-Authorities – Who makes the decisions?

What eligibilities does the field have?

What decisions can they make on their own and what decisions do they have to ask higher authorities about?

-Approaching the client – Strategies and techniques?

Informal meetings – entertaining the clients?

Dress code and addressing client?

General contacts – email, phone, regular meetings etc.

Negotiation – Price? How do you present the proposal?

-Steps in the process – ad hoc or following a specific model?

If ad hoc – how will you know that the work will be done?

If specific model – How does it look? Doesn't this restrict the field?

Which steps are necessary?

-After math's – how do you follow up?

After the deal is closed how do you follow up and keep contact with the client?

Continued sales?

Do you ever contact a client after a specific time period or do you let them contact you?