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**EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL AWARENESS ON WINTER  
TOURISM SERVICE SUPPLY IN ROVANIEMI**

**A quantitative analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Aim of the research was to look at cultural awareness level of middle and top managers within Bennett scale as well as behavioural aspects done within the companies to suit cultural differences. Cultural awareness is defined as noticing cultural differences and adapting own behaviour to suit cross-cultural situations more mindfully. It is proved to increase customer satisfaction and decrease potential conflicts in cross-cultural communication situations. Within Rovaniemi, Lapland, there are a lot of tourism service supplying operators that operate with multicultural customers daily making this topic significant.

This quantitative research was conducted in spring 2023 with questionnaire including metacognitive and behavioural questions on 5-point-Likert scale as well as open and close ended demographic questions. Data was analysed using SSPS program, and analysis conducted through using different combinations of the questionnaire parts. Questionnaire was sent to 61 potential managers as well as general company emails from 26 companies identified with suitable characteristics for the research. From that 33 answers were received.

The results indicated that respondents showed to be on middle and top levels of Bennett scale minimization, acceptance and adaptation, and majority saw the worth to change operations towards more culturally suitable for multicultural customers. Research found there to be statistically significant correlation between factors representing cultural awareness and influence of cultural differences on business. Also, there was no statistically significant difference of Bennett scale levels between respondents of different age. Based on these results improvement possibilities and further training on cross-cultural matters was suggested.

This research contributes to the discussion of subject and adds to yet quite limited study pool about cultural awareness. In practical sense, the research raises awareness on importance of understanding cultural differences, offers knowledge to operate more culturally suitable in cross-cultural situations and gives concrete advice on what tourism service supplying companies can do to improve their customer service for multicultural customers.

**Keywords:** cultural awareness, cultural differences, multicultural customer base, cross-cultural management, cross-cultural communication, Bennett model

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Aim & purpose**

Tourism service suppliers in Rovaniemi deal with international customers from different cultures daily. Despite working in tourism industry, or maybe due to it, there can be some prejudice towards other cultures due to high cultural variety (Malik, Madappa, & Chitranshi, 2017). This kind of work can make workers more culturally aware due to experience they gain or lower it by having them mix bad customer experience with views of other cultures. Without a right knowledge on the matters and training to turn that knowledge into customer service skills it is hard to improve, and lack of expertise can cause conflicts and further complicate service situations, possibly even be harmful for the success of the company (Koc, 2021b). On the other hand, some companies may have taken it their mission to adapt to different cultural backgrounds of their customers they are serving and use that as a company asset, which in long run can lead to more profitable business (Uusitalo, 2009, p. 9).

This research is aiming to find out if tourism service supply companies operating tours during winter season in Rovaniemi are aware of these cultural differences affecting how they supply services and how they have tackled obstacles that may come with those. This skillset to correctly observe cultural differences and being able to change one's own behaviour in required way related to it is called cultural awareness. Top and middle managers of selected companies will be interviewed to assess their level of cultural awareness and both actions already taken or openness to be taken within the company. These will provide useful information of the current state of Rovaniemi's tourism service supplying companies as well as pinpoints for improvement. There will be applied assumption that all service companies wishing to succeed are aiming for good customer service as best of their ability. Companies that offer good customer service succeed as customers will not choose bad service again and it can become costly for the company (Pitkänen, 2006, p. 7).

As people are faced with different culture, they may encounter unfamiliar ways to operate which can create culture shock (Hofstede, 2001, p. 423). If these situations are not managed, conflicts are bound to rise. As a company it is their duty as a good service provider to prepare on such situation and handle them promptly. Cultural awareness offers a way to recognize such situations and react in a culturally suitable way. All cultures are not the same and yet learning all different values and behavioural ways is not realistic. This research additionally aims to help understand the basic concepts of being more culturally mindful and add helpful cultural

knowledge. Theories about assessing cultural awareness level through likely behaving and reacting ways based on Bennet model (Bennet, 1986), different cultural behaviours in cross-cultural situations by Lewis model (Lewis, 2006) and underlying factors affecting one's culture on iceberg model (Weaver, 1986 based on Hall, 1976) are introduced.

This research can help local tourism service supplying companies to assess their company based on the research data and use that knowledge as advantage to improve their business. This research will also raise awareness on intercultural communication and why it is important to take cultural differences into consideration in cross-culturally working companies. If any company would wish to alter their practices based on this research, they may use the results for improving customer service towards more culturally aware.

## **1.2 Relevance of research**

There are some previous studies about cultural awareness within tourism but mainly these are focused on solely one cultural group, like Chinese visitors (Linnanen, 2018) or French visitors (Prevost, 2022) in Finland. They offer great insight on how differences between cultures can cause hard to understand situations if the reasons for people behaving in such way is not known. Both studies also offer guidance on solutions how better handle risen differences between the said cultures, like managing usage of gestures (Prevost, 2022) or how using knowledge of culture's values can assess in avoiding conflicts (Linnanen, 2018). Furthermore, there are some studies about cultural sensitivity towards indigenous people of tourism destination like Sámi (Saari & al., 2020). This research aims to look at cultures and cultural differences in cross-cultural service situations in general with more emphasis of workers' cultural awareness skills. Some pointers for interactions between specific cultures can be given based on respondents' nationality, but other focus on certain cultures is not used. Therefore, academically this research can provide useful information related to adapting to cultural differences within tour operators no matter the culture of their main customer base.

Some theories and references used within theoretical framework are written long time ago, however, redeemed suitable to use within this research as those same theories are considered to be important in more current literature as well as some previous research based on them voice good points. Addition to these, newer studies found are also used for a wider range of studies to create more comprehensive reference pool. What makes this research even more important is the fact that there are quite few studies made specifically on cultural awareness despite it being important topic in ever globalizing world. Many businesses are faced with culturally



different customers and challenges that come with it. Still to this day cultural training is not part of many workers' training for the job, despite knowing that serving multicultural customers is a major part of their daily tasks. Due to studying tourism research with minor in Languages and Cultures, there is a high interest on raising awareness of this topic by researcher. By conducting research that determines to find out the current state of Rovaniemi's tourism service supplying companies' managers' cultural awareness, this research will work as wake up call for the companies in region to take notice of their current ways and offer an easy starting point for further development.

### **1.3 Rovaniemi as destination**

Focused research area is Rovaniemi. It is the biggest province of Finland situated in north by the arctic circle, also serving as capital of Lapland (Visit Finland<sub>1</sub>). Since Rovaniemi is marketed as "official hometown of Santa Claus" it attracts a lot of tourists (Visit Rovaniemi<sub>1</sub>). Majority of tourists visit in winter season due to not only Christmas and Santa Claus, who is anyway available for visit all year round, but also many offered activities like snowmobiling, husky and reindeer rides and skiing depend on snow in winters. In winter season 2022-23 there were 559 841 registered overnight stays in Rovaniemi, majority who were visitors from abroad (House of Lapland<sub>1</sub>). Therefore, research is narrowed to focus on mainly looking at companies operating during winter season.

In 2019 before traveling habits changed due to Covid-19 pandemic, biggest nationalities traveling to Lapland were British, French, Germans and Chinese (House of Lapland<sub>2</sub>). The grand amount of tourists visiting Rovaniemi makes it a good spot for tourism service offering companies. Due to its size, both by companies and multicultural visitors, it also makes it a favourable destination to conduct research about cultural awareness of those service operating companies and how they have opted their services to suit multicultural customers. Furthermore, using whole Lapland as sample would be too wide for this research' purposes so opting solely for Rovaniemi is wise. Later on results may be used as starting point for possible changes in other destinations in Lapland or as base to conduct further research benefiting tourism industry more widely.

### **1.4 Research questions and hypotheses**

As a base of it all this research is looking at tourism services supplying companies taking culture of their multicultural customer base into consideration as part of good customer service when serving them. This can be divided into two sub-questions for further examination:

- a) How do tourism service supplying companies in Rovaniemi show signs of cultural awareness in metacognitive level?

Metacognitive level is part of cognitive process and the way of controlling and understanding knowledge (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015, p. 4). In this research this means things like do managers from companies know what cultural awareness is and how it could be utilised in tourism sector. In addition, it looks at what is interviewed managers' own personal view of different cultures, cultural differences and significance of those. So basically, their views on the matter which could therefore affects their active thoughts and actions.

And,

- b) What kind of concrete actions do tourism service supplying companies in Rovaniemi do to accommodate to cultural differences in behavioural level?

Behavioural level means the way one behaves in a certain situation, so the concrete actions that can be observed by others (Maze, 2019, pp. 6-7). These may be affected by different things such as their cognitive thinking, environment and other people. For this research meaning how managers are utilizing the metacognitive knowledge in action, and if companies are taking concrete actions on accommodating cultural differences within their operations.

These are the research questions that formed need for this research and are the base of it. It was felt important to divide them in two as metacognitive views and actual behaviour can vary greatly from one another and yet both significantly affect companies' customer service. As research is conducted as quantitative research additional hypothesis were created to view what collected data can tell about these aspects. Hypothesis were created based on research questions and theories of the field.

For hypothesis of the research four of the following were chosen. These factors were kept in mind while creating questionnaire and will be looked at during the analysis phase together with responds.

- 1) Based on their cultural views over 75% of respondents belong to Bennett scale's lower levels *denial* and *defence*.
- 2) Over 50% of respondents do not see the worth to change operations to better serve customers from different cultures.
- 3) There is a statistically significant correlation among vast majority of factors representing cultural awareness and factors representing the influence of cultural differences on business.

- 4) Younger managers are more culturally aware due to them showing higher levels of Bennett scale.

These hypotheses were found to be most suited for the research. Bennett scale (Bennett, 1986) is used as a scale to set the current level of managers' cultural awareness, and it is expected to be low due to training and needed conversation seeming to currently be missing on cultural matters. Whether age influences level of cultural awareness is also wanted to look at due to world having become more globalized in past years (Ott & al., 2016) which could enhance younger managers' cultural awareness having grown up and started working in different kind of environment as their predecessors.

When it comes to businesses quite often there is a hesitance or even resistance on making changes on operations, may it be due to costs, fear of unknown or hassle of it all (Hopkins, 2016, pp. 281-283) – this makes hypotheses 2 relevant. Hypotheses 3 is aimed to respondents' views about differences between cultures and if they correlate with respondents' views about their cultural awareness.

## **1.5 Structure of thesis**

At the very beginning there are cover page, abstract and table of content to showcase reader a small summary of the research as well as easy find for each part. Also, information like key words and university this research is conducted through can be found there. In the beginning there is also a table of figures, graphs and tables added due to this research including many of those.

The thesis is structured by first introducing aims and background information about the research topic as well as research questions and hypothesis for the work. Second part will go through theoretical framework with further explanation on key theoretical models and literature review. Third part will explain used methodology and introduce questionnaire shortly. Also, ethical views on conducting the research are within third part. Fourth part holds results for all three parts of the questionnaire, and fifth will conduct analysis on these results to view hypotheses. Analysis will hold a part for retaining or rejecting each hypothesis. Sixth part will add further discussion on aspects further wanted to go through but not quite fit for analysis or on results risen from the analysis. Seventh part holds conclusions and further study possibilities as well as parting words for reader. At the very end of thesis can be found used references and appendix, including questionnaire and more detailed explanation of it.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

There are multiple theories and models on how to operate more culturally suitable within cross-cultural situations and yet using knowledge from them in everyday life situations requires learning and skill development. Terms of cultural knowledge, in sense of intercultural communication rather than anthropological knowledge, were first introduced after the second world war as a diplomatic help over borders (Pilhofer, 2011, pp. 40-41), and yet nowadays in ever more globalised world truly understanding them becomes even more important in everyday life and business operations. These include understanding different cultures and their ways, values affecting communication between members of different cultures as well as understanding one's own cultural ways and controlling their impulsive reactions to others. In tourism work stakes are high to serve customers coming from multiple different cultures while offering good customer service for all of them. As a leader of operations managers play major role in the input of cultural knowledge and skills within the work. Following chapters cover these topics based on studies and other literature. Theoretical models are also introduced; main theory for this research Bennett's model (Bennett, 2014) and secondary Lewis' model (Lewis, 2006) as well as other theories from the field such as hidden cultural factors represented with Iceberg model (Weaver, 1986 based on Hall, 1976), Hofstede's 6-dimensional model (Hofstede, 2011), Trompenaars' 7-dimensional model (Trompenaars, 1998) and 4 stages of learning process (Broadwell, 1969).

### **2.1 Cultural awareness**

When talking about culture, it is important to know the topic related to what we are talking about. By word "culture" it can be meant so many things; national culture, art, sports, different groups within the bigger nation and so on. Originally the term comes from Latin "colere" meaning ways in which people permanently habited a certain area (Kupiainen & Sevänen, 2013, p. 7; Mäkilouko, 2003, p. 17). In this research culture is looked as national culture, meaning values and behaviours of groups of people from same areas and background. Based on this view culture can be defined for instance as "the collective programming of the mind" (Hofstede insights) or "the learned and shared values, beliefs and behaviours of a group of people" (Bennet, 1986). These are by far not the only definitions for culture, but one key point theorists have agreed through times is that cultural traits are not something one is born with but instead something one learns from people around them, may it be their parents, teachers or peers (Koc, 2021b; Alitolppa-Niitamo, 1993, pp. 18-19). This makes culture a similar way of living for

people from same community or nation. As there are not only many nations but even further more communities in the world, it comes as a no surprise that there are many different cultures. Despite cultures being different they are not in different value, and one cannot be said to be better than the other, even if it would be easy to see one's own as the best one (Kirsi Tanner, 2002, p. 48). In past years culture has become one of the most used terms in research and its usage has increased in social sciences (Kupiainen & Sevänen, 2013, p. 9).

When meeting a person there are some aspects we can see from their culture based on their behaviour and appearance, however, there are also a lot of things that are invisible before getting to know the person better. This phenomenon is illustrated by iceberg model in Figure 1 where some aspects are visible above the sea level and some invisible under it. Generally, credit for the theory behind iceberg model is attributed to Hall (1976) with explanations of “hidden dimensions of culture”, however, illustrating these ideas with visuals of an iceberg was first introduced by Weaver (1986). Even if norms, values, beliefs and assumptions are not visible, they affect individual's behaviour, even without them being consciously aware of it. Having self-awareness that these hidden factors not only affect our own mind and behaviour, but also having awareness that they exist for other people, as well as knowledge of them for other cultures can help one to better operate in multicultural situations.

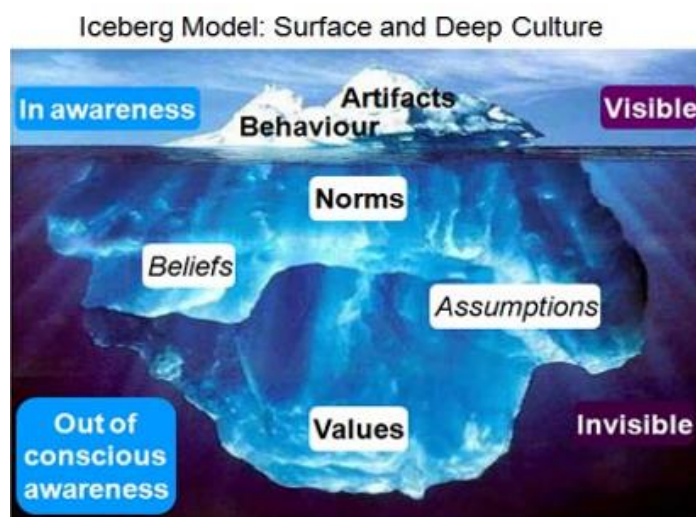


Figure 1. Iceberg Model (source: <https://www.diploweb.com/Understanding-culture-and-managing.html>)

Before in ancient times, as people likely lived and died in the same place they were born, it was rare for one to get sense of other cultural ways. In today's world with wide traveling, internet,

exchanges and possibilities to work abroad it is rarer not to face other cultures or even live in multicultural environment. As two people from other cultures may have different beliefs, values and behaviour, conflicts may arise (Trux, 2000, p. 108). This is where cultural awareness comes in hand. Cultural awareness is someone being aware of both their own cultural identity and accepting other cultures as they are (UCD, 2022). In this sense culture includes values, beliefs and behaviour. It can also be said to “be a process or desire to adapt to another country or culture that is different from its own culture” (Zhang & al., 2018). Through cultural awareness people can become more aware and adapting to cultural differences. One person cannot know and be prepared for all situations thrown in their way, but by learning essential information, one can develop their “cultural literacy” meaning the ability to read multicultural situations (Abu-Hanna, 2012, p. 81). There are also other terms related to being aware of other people’s culture like cultural sensitivity or cultural competence, and all of these are ways to more mindfully tackle cultural diversity. Chosen term to use in this research is cultural awareness.

Poor cultural awareness can be due to lack of own awareness, knowledge, skills or simply caring. Therefore, training to be better in cultural awareness should always be started from assessing one’s current views of culture of their own and of others (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005, pp. 50-51). How do I feel when working with a person from other culture and why so? Is there a reason these views and feelings rise within me? Are they based on a fact or that one incident that happened one time? It is normal that we feel afraid of what we do not understand, and this can cause unnecessary prejudice – sometimes even without us realizing (Kivinummi & Alatupa, 2016, pp. 25-26). Quite often they are related to stereotypes and judging different cultures through those. Stereotypes are often quite simplified picture of other cultures emphasising on one view of other culture, often not a correct one (Houghton et al., 2013). Stereotypes can be either, and both, harmful or useful. If stereotypes are based on incorrect information and causing discrimination on a certain ethnicity, they can be plenty harmful. If on the other hand information is correct and is used for instance to enhance service or safety for the group’s benefit, it could rather be argued to be an advantage (Houghton et al., 2013, p. 159). There was a study made by sociologies Petri Ruuska and Jarno Valkoinen (2008, as cited in Löytty, 2011, pp. 94-97) about safari guides in Lapland and how they use stereotypes in their work. The key finding was that the empirical knowledge guides have gained through their work was able to help by turning stereotypes about customers’ nationalities into use when forecasting coming safari and planning own actions within it. However, in a recent study about Dunning Kruger effect in tourism industry, Koc (2021b) found that without proper training only

experience in intercultural situations is not enough to increase worker's cultural awareness, and it may even be harmful in the sense that workers' can become overly confident of their skills without putting in the effort to actually improve them. May it be either way, the biggest problem with stereotypes is that once they are formed they are often easier to be reinforced than updated or revoked no matter if the person from that culture acts "accordingly" or not (Hopkins, 2016, pp. 18-19). If let us say stereotypically Finnish people are being reserved when meeting new people and Spanish more extrovert, even if there would be a very social Finnish person and shy Spanish meeting, those people would not change the stereotypical image, whereas if the roles were reversed it would likely enhance the stereotype. This is a common human behaviour that in psychology is called "first impression bias", meaning the impression person gets from others being the most dominant one and harder to change later on (Hirshleifer & al., 2021), as well as "confirmation bias", meaning looking for information that supports one's pre-existing view of things (Peters, 2022).

When a person better understands one's own culture and that of others, it will be easier to be aware of affect this has on multicultural situations. Cultural awareness will aid to be more mindful of cultural differences and better ways to perform in those situations avoiding unnecessary conflicts. As nowadays it is almost impossible to operate in non-multicultural environment, and safari companies in Rovaniemi most definitely work with people from different cultures, cultural awareness can be argued to be extremely important. Through times there have been multiple people studying ways to understand different cultures and being more aware of their differences such as Weaver (1986) based on Hall (1976) with his iceberg model, Lewis (2006) with his pyramid model grouping cultures together by similarities, Hofstede (2011) analysing cultures through 6 different dimensions, Trompenaars (1998) by his 7 dimension model and Bennet (2014) by his Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) to set person's cultural awareness level. These all have affected the field, and theories and studies within it, with their work. Theories chosen to use on the analysis of this research are Bennett scale and Lewis' cultural model as they suit best for the looked factors.

## **2.2 Significance of tourism industry**

Tourism is an important industry. In Finland tourism was 2,7% of GDP in year 2019 making it bigger than for instance food industry and almost as big as lumber industry (Mara). Revenues created within tourism in year 2019 in Finland were 16,3 billion (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö). Some areas are greatly dependent on tourism and the benefits it can offer for an area or

community as tourism creates jobs and offers possibilities for new business opportunities. This is significant especially for remote areas from where people otherwise would be forced to move out due to not having income possibilities, for instance in municipality of Muonio 84% of workers are within service sector, major of which in tourism (Pitkänen & al., 2017, p. 103). Some areas in Lapland fall into this category where especially during major tourism seasons number of inhabitants can increase compared to offseason. Keeping with the example of Muonio one third of wages related to tourism industry was paid for workers coming outside of the municipality, and it needs to be taken into account that this data does not even include hired workers which seasonal workers greatly are (Pitkänen & al., 2017, p. 105). Before 2020 tourism industry showed no signs of stopping, but after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 demand by foreign travellers in Lapland decreased by 27% and local tourism increased 11% (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö<sub>2</sub>). Currently levels are slowly starting to get back to similar readings as prior pandemic.

Tourism is, however, not all fun and holidays as there are also downsides created by the impacts of tourism. In 2019 tourism industry employed 154 000 people (Matkailu- ja ravintolapalvelut [MaRa].), but especially in Lapland the work is shadowed by high seasonality. Whereas there is work during main season, many tourism companies are not able to offer same amount of work, if any, during offseason as well as problems for locals as some services close down for off-season (Visit Lapland, 2020). In addition, local people are not always pleased with the tourist masses coming to their home (Hernandez-Maskivker & al., 2021). There have been incidents where tourists, enjoying their holiday, are not mindful of the noise they make or where they walk on roads that is harmful for those living there and trying to go about their everyday life. Offseason time, however, provides a break for locals being able to focus on activities they want to do free from masses (Kajan, 2014). Furthermore, if sustainability of tourism and carrying capacity of areas is not considered within tourism operations, in worst case scenario tourism operations can ruin the entire area, may it be its ecosystem, authenticity or appeal for locals (Holden, 2016, pp. 8-12).

Working within tourism industry can be argued to be demanding job as customer servants need to be able to serve multiple different cultures, customers whose values and behaviour can significantly vary from each other, while creating engaging experiences and assuring customer safety and satisfaction within those. Customer service jobs in general are said to be one of the most stressful jobs out there (Marckwort & Marckwort, 2011, p. 9), and the variety cultural differences bring into customer segments only adds to that. As a base in any job hiring suitable



workers and efficiently training them in required tasks is crucial for success (Ton, 2014; Koc, 2021b). As per the demands of the job, for tourism industry this need to include hiring people open for and interested in multicultural interactions and through training making sure prior to actual work starting they are equipped to operate within cross-cultural situations and have suitable tools to navigate avoiding conflicts that may arise.

Therefore, it is crucial for companies to have good cultural awareness to be able to observe cross-cultural interactions and modify own behaviour to appropriately adapt to required situations. People in leading roles, such as managers, come into even more significance as being the decision makers in the company choosing to guide and equip the company with required knowledge. Koc (2021b) found in his study that solely working within multicultural environment is not enough to increase one's ability to perform culturally aware in intercultural situations, but training on it is needed. It is company's responsibility to assure that employees' level of cultural competence is maintained. In the same study (Koc, 2021b) it was found that employees that have gained good cultural awareness are able to offer better customer service for multicultural customers and on the other hand lack of needed skills to handle cultural situations can increase their stress levels.

### **2.3 Cross-cultural management**

Cross-cultural management is “--the study of management in a cross-cultural context” (Thomas, 2020). It is talked about cross-cultural when the interaction happens between different cultural groups and management needs to be related to communication styles across cultures. Teams with people from multiple different cultures have great possibility for success, however, whether they do or underperform depends on both on knowledge and good management (French, 2015, pp.3-6). The need for managing over national and cultural boundaries has increased making this topic important (Bird & Mendenhall, 2016, pp.115-126). Same as with cultural awareness there seems to be also other terms for cross-cultural management depending a bit about the intended use of them, as shown by Räsänen and San (2005, p. 90) that leaned on many authors (Bennett, 1993; Gastiglioni, 2003; Kealey, 1990; Pedersen, 1994; Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992; Sue & Sue): “The competence required in intercultural encounters has been defined in different terms such as intercultural/cross-cultural/multicultural competence, efficacy, expertise or cultural sensitivity, responsiveness or awareness”.

Such management is needed if either customers or employees come from different cultural backgrounds. Within tourism service supplying companies in Rovaniemi it is quite often both

cases, and in business setting the goal is to make the interactions between people from different backgrounds working as smooth as possible. Successful cross-cultural encounters start with accepting the differences there are between cultures and facing them with openness and ideally with the helpful aid of cultural knowledge. Tanner (2002, pp. 51-53) points out that if our intentions are to teach others to our ways, we have already failed. Only by respecting differences and adapting to work within those can we find success in cross-cultural situation. Common mistake is to believe all people fundamentally being the same and therefore thinking there would not be any communication problems (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 1993, pp. 155-156; Trux, 2000, p. 108). Communication always has at least two people; sender and receiver. What may cause issues without meaning so is that both people are always looking at the topic from their own personal perspective, and from two views the same situation may look very different. This is a cognitive bias, so to say “similar-to-me effect”, when person prefers others looking like and thinking similarly to them (Zahed & Ardabili, 2017), and therefore in intercultural situation could contextualized other’s behaviour to have the same meaning within their culture as it does in one’s own. The message is best received if both parties are active and try their best (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 1993, p. 158). However, in a situation between customer and customer servant working with tourists it could be argued that more effort is expected from worker’s side. A tourist that has left to travel is likely to have some interest on learning about ways of their host-country and have smooth customer encounters for better holiday feeling. As a business to ensure better customer service and more satisfied customers, it is up to workers to come meet them halfway by being aware of the differences between cultures and how those could be taken into account in customer service environment. As already established it is not possible for one person to know everything about all cultures and always be prepared to every possible customer service situation. However, it is a lot easier for customer servant to excel in these situations if they possess the knowledge and skills for the situation as well as right attitude (Marckwort & Marckwort, 2011, p. 13). In cross-cultural situations this means it is easier to serve the multicultural customer base when workers are knowledgeable in different cultural aspects and how to pursue to accommodate best outcome.

Pauliina Linnanen (2018) from University of Lapland has made a master thesis of the topic looking at *Understanding cross-cultural service encounters between Finnish hotel employees and Chinese guests: the perception of hotel managers in Helsinki and Rovaniemi*. Linnanen(2018) studied the service differences in China and Finland and assessed certain ways Finnish hotels can improve cross-cultural communication between Chinese guests and Finnish

staff by understanding different cultural aspects. End goal based on this would be to provide better customer service as it benefits both customer and the company. Three main questions looked at Linnanen's (2018) research had to do with cultural differences between Finnish hotel employees and Chinese guests, how these differences reflected in service encounters and how are Chinese cultural differences considered in Finnish hotel services. Even though her research focused on hotels, the topic of viewing and handling cultural differences in providing services is within similar focus on this research. As a result, it was found that on top of obvious language barriers there were also some other cultural obstacles found creating friction in the customer service situations. For instance, Finnish employees were egalitarians seeing that all customers should be viewed and served as equal, and special treatment for Chinese to adapt to their cultural differences could be seen as favouritism. Also, there was judgement for Chinese customers' behaviour seen as they had been, for instance, smoking in the rooms. For Finnish mindset this is no-no due to there being clear rules forbidding it, however as Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension explains, Finnish people have higher tendency on this aspect meaning they follow rules strictly and expect others to do so as well. As Chinese have lower uncertainty avoidance, they are more likely to see rules as merely guidelines and therefore end up smoking in areas where it is prohibited. For company to take cultural differences into consideration in such a situation and underlining monetary punishment for smoking may help to decrease such conflicts. Despite being relatively new research from 2018, it was done prior Covid-19 pandemic so some aspects may not be as relevant currently. For instance, in latest winter season December of 2021 there were only 1100 of Chinese customers staying in registered accommodations in Rovaniemi compared to for instance December of 2019, when the amount was still growing, and 6800 Chinese stayed in registered accommodations in Rovaniemi (Visit Rovaniemi, 2022). Pandemic created a huge difference between customer groups visiting Finnish Lapland. In Linnanen's (2018) thesis the importance of employees' and managers' cross-cultural training was found as outcome, and as further research conducting similar research on other cultures as well as studying customers' point of view was suggested.

As culture is something that is learned, as established before, traits from other cultures and ways to co-operate in multicultural environment can be learned too. This is backed by Linnanen's(2018) finding about importance of cross-cultural training for tourism workers. Connerley and Pedersen (2005, pp. 50-51) found that key to successful training are awareness, knowledge and skills and specifically so in that order, if skills are tried to be taught prior having awareness and right knowledge training would likely fail due to participants not understanding

if they are succeeding and vice versa if awareness is the only taught point participants would grow sick and tired of theory without seeing concrete results that come with skills. Why there then still are companies that do not offer such training for their employees or managers? Often lack of training is explained by time limitations or lack of necessary resources, what this causes is problems occurring when the skills would already have been needed (Lahti, 2014, p. 157).

Effects of cross-cultural management training in form of courses of the topic were studied by Eisenberg and al. (2013) from different universities and business schools. They wanted to see if these courses would have a positive effect on study subjects' cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence, or CQ for short, means “ -- individuals' capabilities to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse setting” (Earley & Ang, 2003 as cited in Eisenberg & al., 2013). In their research they gave 289 respondents, all students from a chosen university of Austria, a survey to answer first time in the beginning of cross-cultural management course and second one at the end of it. The survey assessed students' CQ in four dimensions metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural based on their responses. As a result, they found that the course had in fact increased students' overall CQ, especially in its metacognitive and cognitive aspects. Based on the study, for behavioural dimension CCM course did not have notable affect, it can be said that despite being a good start for increasing awareness and knowledge, skills still need to be learned in other way, for instance at work putting these learned factors in use.

## **2.4 Cultural differences**

Within this thesis term cultural differences will be mentioned multiple times as they are a significant element of the research. Cultures have different beliefs, values and behavioural ways compared to each other. What may first come to mind are different language, manners and traditions, however, there are other more subtle differences that one might not think straight away as cultural differences but ones that affect greatly cross-cultural situations. The following chapter will go through all kinds of ways these differences come forth and therefore define what is meant by cultural differences in this context. Mainly cultural differences, outside of the three mentioned above, can be further divided into four different groups: use of time, use of (personal) space, verbal and non-verbal communication. These will be introduced further below.

Use of time differs greatly in east and west, furthermore from country to country. Take a look at for instance Europe; there are big differences already with neighbouring countries like precise Swiss and laid-back Italy. If people are expecting others from other cultures to behave the same

as them, they are likely to grow frustrated when it does not happen. If for instance there is party that starts at 6pm, the Swiss would arrive during that time, Italian would not view the time set in stone and would likely come later than that. If it was the Swiss organizing the party they could grow angry for other to be late, if it was organized by Italian they could be surprised, and possibly annoyed, for Swiss to come “too early” and host might not be prepared for that. This type of interaction related to time can tell more about the culture, for instance if it is low or high context culture, meaning was what was said, meeting at 6pm, the absolute truth or were there other factors or assumes behind it (Gore, 2007, p. 71). Neither is trying to cause the other to anger on purpose or complicate the communication, they are simply looking at the situation through their own cultural glasses. These differences come through cultural views of for instance “time is money” with cultures with people of action, and cultures that value indulgent and their views of best way to spend time is joining the company of others (Lewis, 2006, pp. 53-62). This has also influenced the language through talking about time with words like “wasting”, “spending” or “saving”.

In addition, whether we are part of linear active cultures, as Lewis (2006) sees them, we view time monochronic and focus on doing one thing at the time. These kinds of people also are more likely to focus on present tasks and not be bothered by the past. For instance, German-speaking clusters are like this. Cultures that are multi-active, like southern European cultures, are polychronic and prefer doing more things at the same time. They are not fussed about strict schedules. Most Asian cultures, that are reactive, views of past are important for instance for making decisions. What needs to be remembered is that these ways are not better or worse, they are only different and serve the people within their culture.

Use of space, or more specifically use of personal space cannot be mentioned without mentioning Finnish people. It is quite commonly known that Finns like their personal space and someone coming too close can be viewed as invasive. Looked from other perspective Finnish person leaving the hand distance for let us say Spanish and not greeting with cheek kisses that are part of that culture, can be viewed as rude. Also, in some cultures it is common to touch one another when talking and it signifies different things, in others it is not appropriate (Kivinummi & Alatupa, 2016, p. 27). This kind of culturally dictated use of space is called proxemic behaviour meaning “how much space we maintain when communicating with other people” (Gore, 2017, pp. 78-80).

Verbal communication means communicating through words. It is not only about what we say but also how we say it. Tone can play a big part in communication as through underlining mentions it can change the whole meaning of what is said. Even bigger than verbal communication is however non-verbal communication. As Gore (2007, pp. 81-89) puts it non-verbal communication is communication without words but not necessarily without sound and “*we cannot NOT communicate*, that is, we communicate all the time whether we want to or not or whether we are aware of it or not”. Non-verbal communication is a wide topic and only a fraction will be brought forward here. For easier understanding it can be further divided into roughly three categories: kinetics, haptics and physical appearance.

Kinetics is everything involving the body. This includes things like facial expression, eye contact, gestures, posture and involuntary movement. A lot is said through our bodies, for instance in class if we sit straight or lay over our desk or if our hands are folded across chest, we are leaning our head to our hand or hands are crossed already says a lot about our study motivation, let alone yawning. In some cultures, like many European looking someone into eyes communicates openness and honesty whereas in many Asian cultures avoiding eye contact is a sign of respect (Kivinummi & Alatupa, 2016, p. 27). About some people it is said they can be read like “an open book” this is due to their thoughts and emotions showing as facial expressions that are then easy “to read” by their counterpart as non-verbal cues. Often these things are something we are not aware of doing, or affecting our cross-cultural communication, unless we know the meaning of them and pay constant attention.

Haptics goes to similar category with proximity and using space as it means use of physical contact. How do we greet others, through a handshake, bowing without touch or by cheek kisses. What is important to note is that within studies these common ways of cultures mean when meeting new people, of course in each culture people close to us like family and friends fall into different category of how close we let them.

Physical appearance includes many things from how we dress, how much make-up we have, what kind of jewellery, status symbols or if we have piercings and tattoos. Even use of headphones in certain situations sends a message to those around us. Physical appearance is an important form of non-verbal communication as it affects the first impressions other person gets from you before any words are changed or contact happened. These impressions can be quite damning and stay strongly on someone’s mind even after formally meeting the other person. There are cultural differences on what is appropriate physical appearance like dressing in

situations, for instance Swedish businessman might opt for more casual look with pairing jeans with blazer whereas American businessman from wall street with dress-pants could see this as unprofessional or not caring. Signs and symbols can express one's opinions and attitude through for instance in their clothes, but it can also mean the use of hand signs. For instance, Italians have almost another language they speak using their hands, and yet those are crucial part of their verbal communication to company it with non-verbal signs, up to the point that some Italians are failing to speak without using also their hands. Use of smells could also be put into this category, as in Finland many public places are set as non- or low-smell zones so visiting these from other countries where using a lot of perfume is viewed as sign on status could be viewed as impassive.

These are by far not the only differences there are between cultures but those that are likely to come forth in customer service situation of safari companies. Further differences between cultures have been studied for instance by Hofstede (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, pp. 53-298) with his 6-dimensional model. For easier learning of basic behavioural aspects of other cultures to be prepared and respectful of those can be learned for instance through books about do's and don'ts of other countries, where this "silent language" of people's non-verbal communication and what is considered the right ways in which culture and what ways to avoid in those are introduced (Axtell, 1998).

## **2.5 Value of managers**

Culture affects the decision making of managers, employees and customers; not only does it influence the current situation of customer service but also pre- and post-purchase phases (Koc, 2021a). Therefore, tourism company's major strength when serving international customers can be intercultural sensitivity of staff. This means staff's ability to understand both customers' and employees' cultures and behave accordingly. As this is something that shows and affects in each tourism situations, it's very important for managers to be aware of them and train both their employees and themselves continuously on cross-cultural knowledge, abilities and skills (Koc, 2021a, p. 48).

On the other hand, Lahti (2014, pp. 214-215) talks in her book about multicultural work environment that what comes to cultural knowledge and training of managers, they might not have any better idea of it than the next employee. As managers are the main influencers of work community, they need to obtain necessary know-how. Having this kind of extra pressure and responsibilities might feel unfair but it needs to be remembered that it comes as a part of their

work title. Managers have great power on teaching and showing their employees the working ways of the company. The way managers do this has also significance as the words and tones used with others have a habit of affecting the views of the listener (Marckwort & Marckwort, 2011, p. 31). So even the way how managers talk about different nationalities and cultural differences to their employees can affect creating prejudice in their minds. If the manager is however well established in cultural awareness, they would know how to talk about cultural differences in the means that are necessary for offering good service without causing biased outlook. In a moment of change and development the company managers have an important leadership role to inspire employees towards the new ways, and ideally this development would start to happen already before the acute need for it (Korhonen & Bergman, 2019, pp. 13-15).

What makes manager a good leader for a company has been studied through GLOBE – project. GLOBE stands for Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness and within it a project team of 170 researchers studying 18,000 managers from 62 different countries through 7 years (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005, pp. 45-47). They found nine dimensions that are significant when looking at factors making a good manager. Four of these overlap with Hofstede's dimensions uncertainty avoidance, power distance, institutional collectivism vs. individualism and in-group collectivism, and five are different: assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, humane orientation and gender differentiation. However, these are not ultimatums on what makes the best leader but rather how people have viewed good leaders, and it is good to keep in mind that the managerial style that is working well in certain country might not be as affective in another (Grove, 2005). These dimensions help to, for instance, train leaders to match the cultural needs of company.

For multicultural companies it is important that leaders are able to modify their style of leadership based on the required situation (Mäkilouko, 2003, pp. 68-72). This is not only on situations where employees come from different cultures but also with multicultural customer base as to keep good relations with operators from different cultures and serve everyday customers well. Some well-known leadership styles are either being people or task oriented based on if workforce or timetable and costs are more important. To prepare for cross-cultural situation people-oriented style could be, for instance, ensuring employees are equipped with cultural knowledge needed in the work to avoid them being caught in conflicts that decrease both their mood and customers'. Task oriented leadership focuses more on getting things done and does not see it worth the additional costs to train employees on cultural matters. Another leadership style is involving employees in decision-making, which can produce further



knowledge of everyday situations and possible issues they face. This kind of style can help to make educated changes within the company for better customer service. Using different leadership styles situation-appropriately can increase team member's satisfaction and commitment for the company which especially in seasonal work like tourism in Lapland can come in handy to have experienced workers return each year. Mäkilouko (2003, p. 72) also points out that "unfortunately most companies use very little or none of the theoretical knowledge and rely solely on experience". Although experience is good and more experienced leaders can possess traits that make them more convincing, without keeping updated on current knowledge it is hard to make educated business decisions. Connerley and Pedersen (2005) remind that "developing multicultural awareness is a primary prevention strategy for leaders who want to interpret the meanings of cultural similarities and differences accurately". Leaders have a great impact on company's performance which makes it significant whether the leader is good or not.

Importance of managers and their contribute is also lifted up by Milton Bennet (2016) in *Value of Cultural Diversity*, where he looks at working in multicultural groups and taking cultural diversity into consideration from different angles. In his text, leadership was found as an important factor on companies to turn differences from complications into assets. Instead of expecting all people involved, both workers and tourist, to have good cultural awareness to excel in each encounter, if group leaders do, the whole service may work better. As Bennet(2016) puts it: "in general, leadership appears to be the key to deriving the value of diversity". Therefore, it can be argued that looking at tourism service providers' managerial level, as this research is aiming to do, is more beneficial when looking at cross-culture in company level rather than each individual employee.

## **2.6 Bennett Model**

As a main theoretical model in this research Milton Bennett's (1986, 2016) linear model, also called as development model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), will be used. It was originally developed in 1986 and has since been updated multiple times to better fit current state of world. The model shows different stages of experience of difference and can be used as a help to determine the state of cultural awareness. These stages are different ways people either view or can react to cultural differences around them (Organizing engagement). It consists of six different stages, and those can be seen from Figure 2. These six stages can be further divided into ethnocentrism on the lower levels of cultural acceptance and ethnorelativism on the higher

levels. In ethnocentricity levels of denial, defence and minimization person is holding onto their own cultural identity, and on ethnorelativism levels of acceptance, adaptation and integration person understands there being different cultures in the world and each of their importance to culture's own members (Organizing Engagement). Within this research Part 1 of questionnaire was created with Bennett's model in mind to show results of respondents' current state of cultural awareness within the scale.

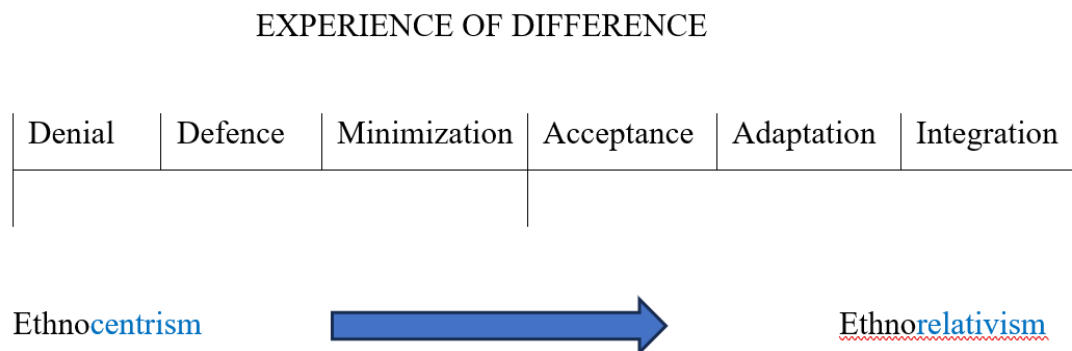


Figure 2. Bennett model

According to Bennett (1986, 1998, 2004, 2017) in the model, the first step is called *denial*. In this person is not acknowledging other cultures' value but thinks theirs is the sole truth to be seen and may even argue that there are no cultural differences to begin with. Quite often these kinds of people are not interested in other cultures and/or have not been exposed to multicultural environments, they might even intentionally avoid contact with different cultures. Their views can be quite naïve with possible hurtful stereotypes or supporting unjust policies. Bennett(2017) explains that people within denial state may go even as far as not viewing those with different cultural ways as less human and justify other's behaviour with them not being intelligent or it being personal characteristic or part of physical ability. People in denial stage do not necessarily mean bad with their views or behaviour caused due to it, but often do not see anything wrong with their ways or are aware of other paths. As an example, what people in denial state could say are "live and let live, that's what I say" and "as long as we speak the same language, there's no problem" (Bennett, 1993).

Second step is called *defence* (Bennett, 1986, 1998, 2004, 2017). In this person does acknowledge there being differences between cultures but keeps own as superior way. It's common for these people to have strong stereotypical views of other cultures and view world through us/them-mindset. They may even blame cultural differences for things that they are not

happy with in society. As the name implies, they are defending their own beliefs, sometimes even in hostile way. Ways to justify own culture being better can include complaining tourist immigrants taking all their jobs or tourists all best travel spots. An example what people in defence state may say are “my culture should be a model for the rest of the world”, “boy, could we teach these people a lot of stuff” and “I wish I could give up my own cultural background and really be one of these people” (Bennett, 1993).

Third is called *minimization*. According to Bennett (1986, 1998, 2004, 2017), in this person does acknowledge differences and has somewhat positive view about them but is more likely to underline all people being human with same basic needs. Quite often this kind of person has self-view of being tolerant and knowing about different cultures but still views their own cultural ways as universal norm. Shielding behind claims like “we are all human” takes away from the importance of cultural differences and is argued by emphasising similarities over differences (Bennett, 1993). Quite often this is used as a way to calm own mind as not being against other cultures without wanting to make the effort to actually learn about them, admitting own biases towards other cultures and adaptation to more respectful ways. One of the most famous minimization examples is using slogan “all lives matter” within the black lives matter movement (Organizing engagement). Examples of what people in minimization stage might say are “the key to getting along in any culture is to just be yourself – authentic and honest!”, “customs differ, of course, but when you really get to know them they’re pretty much like us” and “technology is bringing cultural uniformity to the developed world” (Bennett, 1993).

Fourth step is called *acceptance*. In this person accepts there being different cultures around the world and their own being just one of many. They are gaining understanding that people’s values, actions and ways of seeing the world are all affected by culture. According to Bennett(1986, 1998, 2004, 2017) they are often keen to learn more about still unknown cultures for them and not to rely on stereotypes. This may look like seeking out to hang out with people from different cultures or work/study in multicultural environments. It is important to note that despite this they do not need to like or agree with all different customs, only to recognize and accept the differences. Examples of what people in acceptance stage might say “the more difference the better – it’s boring if everyone is the same”, “ the more cultures you know about, the better comparisons you can make” and “when studying abroad, every student needs to be aware of relevant cultural differences” (Bennett, 1993).

Fifth step is called *adaptation* (Bennett, 1986, 1998, 2004, 2017). In this person is able to see outside their own culture and even change their own behaviour to adapt to other cultures. This does not, however, mean that one should change their own cultural ways or loose own cultural identity, but it only adds as enrichment to one's own culture. This requires cultural intelligence to develop one's intercultural communication skills and to be able to act outside one's own culture. Once mastered it gives a new way to authentically interact with people from different cultures with an appreciation for their ways. In best scenario two people within this stage can share their cultural values, beliefs and traditions within mutual respect. Examples of what people in adaptation stage may say are "to solve this dispute, I'm going to have to change my approach" and "I can maintain my values and also behave culturally appropriate ways" (Bennett, 1993).

Sixth step is called *integration*. In this person can easily switch between different cultural views and integrate them within their life, according to Bennett (1986, 1998, 2004, 2017). One is not only "acting" anymore but views and values are starting to emerge as part of one's own cultural views, at least in the situations that they are most suited to be used. The person within this stage is able to operate within more than one culture and adapt their ways in culturally intelligent way. Usually for this stage to happen a person would need to live longer periods of time in a certain culture and accept that as part of their own cultural identity. This demonstrates high level of intercultural sensitivity. Examples of what people in integration stage might say are "Whatever the situation, I can usually look at it from a variety of cultural points of views", "in an intercultural world, everyone needs to have an intercultural mindset" and "my decision-making skills are enhanced by having multiple frames of reference" (Bennett, 1993).

The way these stages work is that ones the issues from previous are solved, person can move into the next one. Usually, it is considered being a one-way-street, at least once person has reached ethnorelativism. However, on ethnocentrism level one may fall also backwards, especially common it is from minimization back to defence, if their opinions about cultural differences culminate more negative (Bennett, 2017). The model is not meant for analysing nations or cultures themselves but instead individuals or organizations and cultural awareness within them (Bennett, 2014). On top of creating the model, Bennett is also the founder of The Intercultural Communication Institute (ICI) since 1986 and Intercultural Development Research Institute (IDRI) in 2006 which aim to spread knowledge and educate people on intercultural matters as well as generate funding on further research of the topic (IDRIInstitute).

Critically Bennett model can be viewed through changes of times; are lower levels like denial that leans on views of living in monoculture still valid in the future as countries and communities are becoming more multicultural through immigration? One key element of denial state is separating from other cultures by creating conditions of isolation which might not be possible to do in future (or already in some countries) which would swift denial state to be less significant in the model. Despite Bennett model having been updated since first creations of it, this critic would bring forward the importance of redoing it also in future to accurately match on current times. Also, important to remember is that Bennett's model is more about how people view and react to cultural differences, not actually about what differences there are between cultures or moral views on their superiority.

## **2.7 Lewis model**

Another theory this research will use is Lewis model (Lewis, 2006, pp. 27-52). According to the model all cultures can be divided into three main categories based on their characteristics: linear-active, multi-active and reactive. These categories give an understanding how different cultures likely will behave in certain situation and what kind of values they might have. Cultural types based on Lewis model can be seen from Figure 3 below. As rarely one culture would behave strictly within one group the dots in the model show the scale in which cultures set related to each other. These scales can help to see better how far different cultures' likely behaviours are from each other and which ones are closer to same.

This theory (Lewis, 2006) is relevant to current study as companies knowing to which category their customers fall and knowing their own cultures will help them to accommodate services for maximized customer satisfaction. In addition, some conflicts or cultural shock can be assisted when understood how different in behaviour and in which ways customers are compared to for instance, linear active-reactive Finland. Sample companies' employees might come from different cultures themselves so that needs to also be taken into account and could give some indications on where extensive training on cultural awareness is more needed based on possible conflicts arising from wider differences.

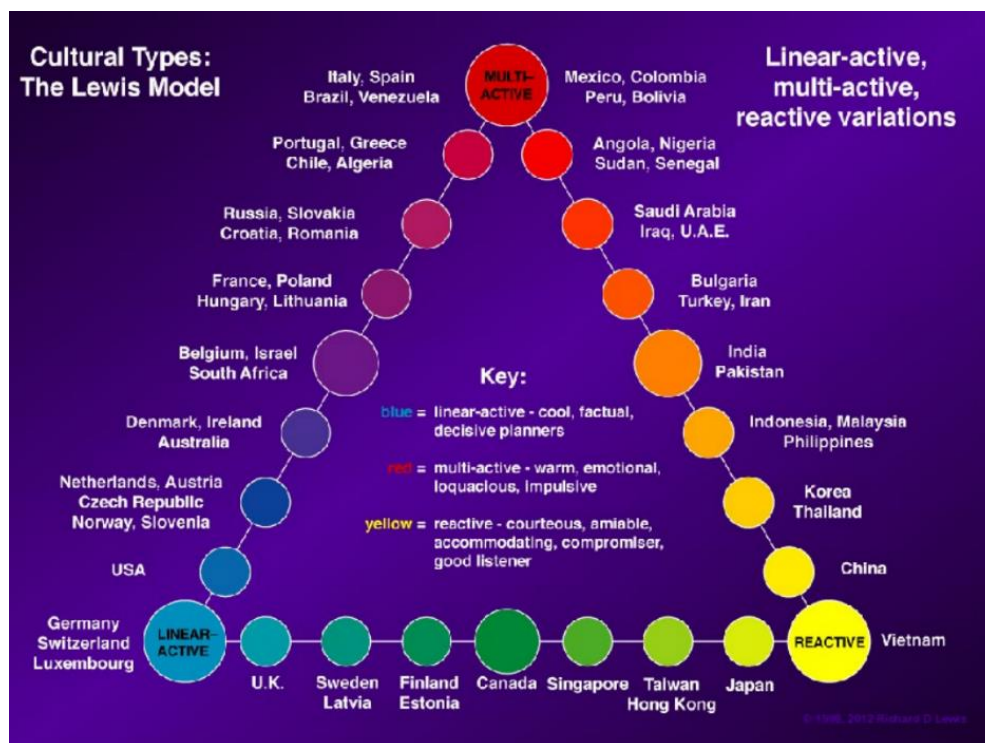


Figure 3. Lewis model (source: <http://www.crossculture.com/about-us/the-model> based on Richard D. Lewis)

Based on Lewis model (2006), linear active cultures are cool, factual and decisive planners. For instance, most Germanic cultures like Germany, Switzerland and Luxembourg fall within this category as well as regions like North America, northern Europe and Scandinavia belong to this. Cultures belonging to this group are job-oriented, planners, using limited body language and directs speech and sometimes impatient. They are very task oriented and proceeding linearly with only one task at a time. When people from linear model plan something it keeps, and they are likely to keep their social and professional life separate. In safari setting the benefit of linear people is that they respect authorities and are likely to stick to set times and guidelines, disadvantage from guides point of view is that as they are unlikely to give power to their feelings or show excessive facial expressions and gestures making it harder to grasp their feelings and co-live enthusiasm. Guide should not give up making the group excited and keep their interest or feel like they have failed to do so.

Multi-active cultures are warm, emotional and impulsive, as Lewis (2006) explains them. For instance, Hispanic America falls within this category. These cultures are talkative, emotional and displaying their feelings, people-oriented and often impatient. They enjoy being in groups and taking care of many things at the same time, often also social and professional lives are

intervened. Making plans is not so set in stone with multi-active people and they may bend the rules or truths compared to linear views. Often use strong gestures and facial expressions. In safari context the advantage is they bring happy and energetic feeling creating good holiday spirits that may expand to the rest of the group, disadvantage is that they can be unpunctual or quickly changing plans all together.

Reactive cultures are courteous, compromisers and good listeners. According to Lewis (2006), for instance, Asian countries like Vietnam, Japan and China fall into this category. These cultures are characteristically polite and using indirect speech, being patient and very people oriented. For people in reactive group behaviourally it is more important to listen first and only then act based on what they make from what was heard. From European countries Finland is the only country leaning slightly towards reactive side, mainly due to communication perspective. In safari context an advantage with these people would be that they rarely show aggression and listen on instructions, however, too much of unnecessary words can cause distrust and there will not be coming much feedback from people in reactive group. Within these cultures it is often considered very bad to “loose face” meaning getting embarrassed, which is something the guide should be aware not to do and reactive customers might not for instance say if they do not understand something due to not losing face creating possible safety hazards.

Often cultures are not exactly one of these, but instead falling in between, having mixture of multiple traits, such as Finland being in the middle of linear active and reactive traits. Taking these differences into consideration may help to reduce conflicts and enhance understanding of other cultures’ different ways of behaviour. They should however not be used as harmfully stereotyping people from different cultures or as absolute truths of cultural groups.

Instead of cultural dimensional models that can be criticized through data differentiating based on questions with what data is collected, Lewis’ model is more stable due to grounding model on communication ways and societal values that are not as easily affected by way of analysing. This is, however, not to say that Lewis’ data is absolute truth without contradicting factors. As the study is based on respondents’ self-assessment the data is affected by how respondents understood questions. For instance, intercultural communication teacher Jörn Severidt (personal communication, September 27, 2023) from Lapland University points out that asking questions including adjectives like “long” or “short” when asking about preference of pause length within speaking, are subjective terms on what the respondent views as that in the context.

So, for instance, what deliberate German from linear-active part of Lewis model might view as short pause can be already very long from the point of view by impulsive Spanish from multi-active part.

## **2.8 Other theoretical models**

Bennett's cultural sensitivity model (1986) and Lewis' pyramid model of cultural differences (2006) are not the only theoretical models explaining different aspects of cultures, although the most important ones for this research' purposes. The founding father of intercultural communication, so to say, is thought to be Edward T. Hall (1914-2009) as he was the first to start conducting research on culture outside of anthropological viewpoint (Pilhofer, 2011, p. 40). His main points are that there are aspects within the culture that affect each cross-cultural encounter without those necessary being easy to see, also called "silent culture", and he divides cultures into monochronic and polychronic as well as including views of polychronic cultures often also being high context cultures and monochronic low context cultures (Hall, 1989). Hall(1989, p. 150) explains this as polychronic cultures, like Mediterranean, tend to do multiple things at the same time whereas monochronic cultures focus on doing one thing at the same time. With low context cultures, like Nordics, what is said means exactly that whereas with high context cultures there might be more that one needs to know about the situation or beliefs to fully understand what is said. These two ways of operating rarely mix well as low context monochronic operating person would see high context polychronic ways as chaotic breaking the system and vice versa low context monochronic ways can be seen uptight and inconsiderate of placing priority of tasks getting done over social interactions. Lewis (2006) actually based his work on Hall's (1989) with monochronic being linear-active and synchronic being multi-reactive but added third group of reactive to include wider categorisation to better represent behavioural differences culturally different people explicit.

Later on, in the 90s, Hofstede (2001) and Trompenaars (1998) created their research bringing fourth cultural dimensional models. These models categorize different dimensions about cultures related to things like how people within that culture react to authority or time management that can help to understand what underlying factors make people behave in certain situations the way they do and why so.

Hofstede's (2010) 6 dimensions are power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and indulgence vs. restraint. Originally his model included only the first four dimensions, long term orientation and



indulgence vs. restraint were added later on as an outcome of further research. Power distance means the hierarchical differences within the culture, for instance in a company can anyone go and talk to the boss or only those also in higher positions. Individualism vs. collectivism is related to views of which is more important “I” or “we”. Does the reputation person has affect only them or also their family or other members of inner circle? Also, can the person cut ties like leave their family if they are not happy or are they bound by cultural expectations and pressure. Masculinity vs. feminine is as one could think by the name about traditional roles for men and women in the culture but not only that. It is also about how competitive the society is and if relationships or achievements are more important in life. Uncertainty avoidance shows how well people can handle uncertainty. One example of how this can show is for instance using good luck charms. It is also tied to need of sticking to plans or being comfortable with quick changes. Long term orientation is about views of time, is the time right now more important or is everything viewed as a part of bigger picture but also about culture being open for changes. Indulgence vs. restraint is about if there are societal concepts which govern people’s behaviour. This includes things like the importance of leisure, gender roles, freedom of speech and moral discipline.

Trompenaars’ (1998) model has 7 dimensions: universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. communitarianism, neutral vs. affective, ascription vs. achievement, specific vs. diffuse, time orientation and internal vs. external control. Universalism vs. particularism is basically about truth and honesty, does a person tell things exactly as they are or bend the truth for their or their friend’s benefit. In high universalism cultures everything is done by the book and in particularism each situation needs to be looked as its own. Individualism vs. communitarianism means the value of people around a person. If for instance religious community can be switched or job quit, or which is more important relatives or friends. Neutral vs. affective determines in a culture how emotions can be shown in public or within business settings. There is a big difference between these in both north and south Europe and America. Ascription vs. achievement shows who is respected in the culture, does one have to earn their position or are some given based on for instance gender or age. Specific vs. diffuse is about importance of status, for instance in specific cultures teacher is a teacher and commands authority only in a specific setting like teaching a class versus in diffuse cultures the respect status needs to be shown always, no matter the setting. Use of time being monochronic or synchronic relates to if people in those cultures prefer doing one or multiple tasks at the same time and how significant timetables and exact times are for culture. Internal vs. external control relates to whether person

feels they have control over their own life or if it is set by a higher force and can be influenced through prayers and lucky charms.

Within both Hofstede's and Trompenaars dimensional models there can be seen similarities on dimensional factors like significance of group or individual actions and possible belief of help from higher forces. Furthermore, views of time, same as with Hall (1989) can be seen from both models. These dimensions were created by wide surveys conducted on business setting, so the situations looked related to these models are when interacting with new people of certain cultures or in business setting, not with one's family or close friends as behaviour in those contexts can vary from cultural overalls. The models have been criticized, also by each other as Hofstede claimed Trompenaars dishonestly used his ideas simply for monetary purposes instead of conducting own research and Trompenaars defending by explaining differences between them as for instance, seeing culture more circular than Hofstede's linear views (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997). Other criticism has to do with for instance seeing whole nation behaving and thinking similarly without taking sub-cultures into consideration (Jones, 2007, p. 5). General issue with dimensional models is that the results show what was asked, meaning that slightly different wording in the question would offer very different results. Therefore, when viewing the results and using the models, it is important to understand what the research to create them asked from respondents. Also, as with any study done through questionnaire both the wording of questions and honesty of respondents affect the results. People tend to rate their own knowledge and skills higher, especially if their actual level is lower which can affect results with self-assessing questionnaires (Koc, 2021b). Furthermore, what is crucial to remember with these models is that they describe cultural differences instead of cultures and exact figures should not be looked too diligently, instead if some cultures show higher tendencies on certain dimensions than others.

Learning cultural knowledge is not only about cultural learning, however, but actually learning in general. In Broadwell's (1969) 4 stages learning model learning is categorized in

- 1) Unconscious incompetence
- 2) Conscious incompetence
- 3) Conscious competence
- 4) Unconscious competence

In the lower levels of incompetence first the person is unconscious, so not even aware that they are incompetent in the learning, possibly due to lack of knowledge and skills. In second point

of conscious incompetence person is aware of their lack of knowledge and skills. This state is crucial as in that the person after realizing or being made aware of their incompetence can start to acquire required knowledge. In third conscious competence person has started to gain required knowledge and can start to fully learn by turning that knowledge into skills, they are consciously aware of the learning process they are doing. Once the knowledge has been learned and turned into skills person feels comfortable using and adapting to situations on hand, they can be said to have reached fourth state of unconscious competence where the skills are happening automatically. The key for learning, may it be about cultural differences or other things in life, is first to be aware of the state where one is and then after making the effort to work towards learning more knowledge and enhancing skills to move on to next levels of learning.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Methodology part covers five sections going through the way research was conducted, quantitative research as a research method, questionnaire, analysis process and ethics of research. In first part overall process of research is explained including data collection, chosen target group and identified sample size. Then in second part use of quantitative research method will be explained as well as reasoning for using it for this study in social sciences. Third part shortly explains the created questionnaire and thought process behind it. Full questionnaire with all statements and more detailed explanations for each can be seen in appendix. Fourth part tells methodology of analysis and how it is going to be done. And finally, fifth part goes through the ethics of research.

#### **3.1 Research process**

Based on literature review base knowledge on the subject was gathered and educated hypothesis formed. Initial topic rose from the interest of researcher's minor within cultural studies, which also offers some existing knowledge of the topic. Area of Rovaniemi was chosen due to there being many tourism companies potential for this research as well as it serving as a main location for the studies. Chosen topic is not yet researched that much and shows great potential of being very important for the future development of tourism businesses, therefore, making it current and interesting matter.

Data was collected through a questionnaire. As a ready-made questionnaire fit for the purpose of this research was not found, it was created by researcher. To guarantee academic trustworthiness of this and that all questions would be understood by the respondents in the same way as they were intended, test run was needed to be applied prior actual data collection period. First set of questions were provided to three tourism employees working within safari companies in Rovaniemi, one of which was a middle manager. By term "safari companies" is meant companies within Lapland that offer their customers tours to go snowmobiling, reindeer and husky rides and other such activities. These employees were presented with the statements planned to use in the questionnaire and asked to write in their own words of each one how they understood it. The answers were then compared together as well as to researcher's own written answers to make sure that all matched. In few cases where there were misunderstandings, wording of the questions was changed. These changes included minor word changes like instead of saying that "people coming to Lapland are motivated by same things" switching it to more appropriate term of "having the same pull factors" and instead of talking about "money" saying

“financial investment”. In addition, term cultural cluster was decided to explain within the statement for better understanding of it for respondents to be able to answer the statement.

As the research was conducted on top and middle managers of identified companies, it is good to discuss what value managers have on companies and how they affect employees’ cultural awareness. It is studied that diversity, may it be within mixed working group or multicultural customer base, can be in benefit for the company only if it is taken care of culturally aware and with excellent management (Lahti, 2014, p. 55). Therefore, managers were chosen to study the cultural awareness of those in the company who deal with how ideas and views are represented for the new employees, possibly making decisions about operations and leading the rest of the crew. Based on the theoretical research they have an impact on employees and are, therefore, the most important players in the company to view the current situation of cultural awareness as well as start changes if needed, with a more say on matters than an average employee. Also, for the current research it was not thought to be useful to interview only the very top of the company, such as owners or CEOs due to them not necessary having major touchpoint on the day-to-day operations and it likely leaving gathered data limited.

A sample of 26 safari offering companies from Rovaniemi region were identified based on characteristics suitable for this research. Companies were chosen with help of list from Visit Rovaniemi’s website on activity providing companies in Rovaniemi, as viewed in research period of autumn 2022 (Visit Rovaniemi<sup>2</sup>). Some cropping was done due to two chosen research limitations: geographical location of companies and their offered operations. As research was wanted to focus on Rovaniemi, cropping based on actual location of company, like leaving out ones operating in Kemi or Ranua even though there are transportations from Rovaniemi to there, was done. Also, companies offering safaris or multiple activities were chosen instead of having every husky and reindeer operator that may also be used by other safari companies. Within the identified companies, questionnaire was sent to all top and middle managers whose emails were represented in company’s website and to general company emails if specific ones were not found. All together 61 emails were sent out.

Questionnaire was sent out with a short covering note informing possible participants about the research project, researcher and ethical issues such as anonymity and towards what and how their answers will be used. Base of this email can be seen as appendix. First messages with questionnaire to potential respondents were sent 17th April 2023 and research period eventually closed 31st May, 2023. During this time two reminder emails were sent. As with the anonymity

there was no way of knowing who had already responded so reminder emails were worded also as a thank you to those that knew themselves having already responded. In case a respondent decided themselves to respond to the email saying they had filled the questionnaire, their email address was dropped out of next reminder email to respect their time and effort. In addition, company of Lapland Safaris and any of its managers were not included on the first rounds of research due to them knowing researcher as previous employee and therefore making sure answers would be a fair representation of also other companies. They were added into the mix in the beginning of May. Eventually questionnaire reached all together 33 answers.

After data collection analysis process started. As questionnaire was sent altogether to 61 potential respondent emails and got 33 answer, the answering rate is 54%. As answer rate of at least half was targeted, this was redeemed suitable amount to proceed with the research. Also, as the amount includes potential respondents of 26 different safari companies in Rovaniemi, including companies of all size, the sampling is wide. Answers are used to see the current situation related to cultural awareness of Rovaniemi's safari companies and to draw possible conclusions on answering hypotheses.

### **3.2 Quantitative research method**

Quantitative research is a research method where collected data is analysed statistically (Weaver & Lawton, 2014, pp. 362-364). Quite often social sciences research are made as qualitative research to rather receive descriptive data with interviewees personal view than numeric data, however for this research and its limitations chosen research method is quantitative. Data collection is done via a structured questionnaire including questions from both methodological and behavioural point of view of the topic as well as respondents' demographics. Questionnaire uses 5-point-Likert-scale which is a common quantitative way to study respondents' opinions on certain statements (Erätuuli, Leino & Yli-Luoma, 1996, pp. 45-46).

As for any research there were few limitations and obstacles during the data collection and analysis period which needed to be taken into consideration. Within tourism field winter season in Rovaniemi can be quite busy (Visit Rovaniemi<sup>3</sup>), so quantitative research with questionnaire was opted instead of qualitative research with interviews. Idea of one-on-one semi-structured interviews was considered as it would give interviewees' opinions and ideas in more free format, however, to maximize the answer rate as well as being considered of respondents' time, a quickly filled questionnaire was decided upon as best practice.

Timing, when data was being collected, was crucial as during high peaks of tourism season managers are very busy and unlikely to have time to answer any questionnaires. On addition, there were some time and location limitations from researcher's point of view during the planned data collection period further enhancing leaning towards this decision. Since the goal was to get as many answers as possible on questionnaire to provide larger and thus more reliable database for the research, there was no use to conduct data collection earlier when top and middle managers are too busy with workload to answer it. If done later, season would already be over and there possibly either being lower levels of motivation to answer a questionnaire or even no people working to answer it. Therefore, best possible time for data collection was redeemed to be towards the end of the season but prior its end, around late March or early April.

### **3.3 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consists of three different parts. Part 1 has fifteen statements and Part 2 ten, both to be answered in 5-point Likert scale of 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neither disagree nor agree, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree. Actual numbers are not shown in the questionnaire, only text about agreeing, but these amounts are used in analysis and additionally help to understand when talking about statement having higher, meaning more answers in agree and strongly agree, or lower, more answers in disagree or strongly disagree, score. Part 3 includes seven questions about general demographics and background as well as one open box for additional comments and free word. These demographic questions help to see, for instance, whether respondent is middle or top manager and how long they have worked for the company. All questions are formed with easily understandable language, and not using academic words like "metacognitive" even though it will be one looked factor from research point of view. In addition, it is thought out that questions are not directly questions about research hypotheses but instead separate set of questions helping to reach conclusion on those. This is called differentiation of questions: what are research hypotheses, what questions are needed for the data and what are actual questionnaire questions. Despite being in Finland questionnaire will only be offered in English, as all companies work to provide service for international customers it can be assumed they understand English. Therefore, language test for different language questionnaires is not needed.

Part 1 of questionnaire is about metacognitive side, meaning respondents' views on cultural awareness. This part is created based on Bennett scale (1986) and can help to determine the cultural awareness level of respondents. There are 2-3 statements from denial, defence,

minimization, acceptance and adaptation parts of the scale. Highest level of integration is not looked. Statements are created by researcher based on literature on Bennett, for instance material on what people on each stage might say (Bennett, 1993). These statements are related to what respondents' views are on stereotypes, their customers' culture and reasons to travel as well as their company's operations. Higher score on each of these statement does not necessarily mean they are more in that certain level, as meanings of higher and lower score are dependent on the statement. There are also two general statements about how respondents view their own and their company's cultural awareness not related to Bennett scale but also wanted the view, and a statement to see if respondents understand what cross-cultural communication means as that is significant for understanding the topic. In case middle and top managers of the companies do not understand the meaning of the term "cross-cultural communication" nor what it may do for their business, the change in the company practices needs to start from there prior discussing other beneficial improvements that could be done to improve it. For instance, in a great Ted talk by Doug Lansky (October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019) about "How to save tourism from itself?" there was a mention of research done about sustainable tourism where 69% of the respondents said that sustainable tourism is important and yet in the same research 75% said that they do not know what sustainable tourism is. Therefore, it can be argued that change starts with understanding the problem. These responds would help to determine hypothesis 1) *Based on their cultural views over 75% of respondents belong to Bennett scale's lower levels denial and defence*, 2) *Over 50% of respondents do not see the worth to change operations to better serve customers from different cultures together with part 2*, 3) *There is a statistically significant correlation among vast majority of factors representing cultural awareness and factors representing the influence of cultural differences on business with part 2* and 4) *Younger managers are more culturally aware due to them showing higher levels of Bennett scale together with part 3 of questionnaire*.

Part 2 is about behavioural side, meaning actions taken within the company. Statements include topics like if there are any changes done within the company, or if operations different based on customers from different cultures and feedback collection practices within the company. As all companies have had to adapt to exceptional conditions caused by Covid-19 pandemic and that is not factor wanted to look at, it was mentioned respondents can exclude these from their answers. However, if there have been some changes respondents feel are going to stick as well-tried practices despite their origin, it is up to their judgement if they wish to include those. Furthermore, these statements and answers on them are not absolute truths done in the



companies, only respondents' views about them. If a respondent is for some reason not sure about taken actions, Likert-scale offers a neutral answering option with 3 neither disagree nor agree. These statements are helping to determine hypotheses 2) *Over 50% of respondents do not see the worth to change operations to better serve customers from different cultures* together with part 1.

Part 3 includes questions related to respondents' demographics and background information. These questions help to put other answers in perspective related to for instance what age group or nationality or in which position of company respondents are. Questions include basic demographics such as age, gender and nationality, where nationality and age are open questions and gender includes options for woman, man, non-binary and prefer not to say giving an option for each of these mandatory marked questions to not specify exactly if respondents do not feel comfortable with it. Depending on the results of respondents' answers it might be interesting to do further analysis for instance based on views of different nationalities. Background information questions included current position status in the company, how long they have worked for the company and company size both in high season and off-season. As many companies in Lapland tourism hire more workers for high season in winter, the company size is bound to grow during this time (House of Lapland<sup>3</sup>). Therefore, it was found important to include these two company size questions for easier pick of the correct size based on employees. As most questions in the questionnaire are closed questions with statements or mandatory questions in part 3, there is a voluntary open box added at the end where respondents can include further comments, discussion or questions of the topic if they wish to.

### **3.4 Methodology of analysis**

Analysing data is a means of collecting information and interpreting ways to understand it (Eräutuuli, Leino & Yli-Luoma, 1994). Once data is collected it is important to refer back to research hypotheses and think about validity of collected data. Did enough people answer on questionnaire to create reliable data source for the research to be able to draw conclusions? When working with the data work needs to be systematic reflecting on the way of reading data, not only to look at points researcher was expecting but to focus on what new was found out based on it. Also, literature review comes in hand when analysing data as previous materials should be brought to dialog with the found material.

Tools used in actual analysis and creating necessary graphs for visual representation are SSPS statistical analysis software and excel. Style of methodology analysis is factor analysis. As

cultural awareness is not something that can be directly said one person to have or not or accuracy defined based on people, the questionnaire needed to ask questions about respondents' metacognitive views and behavioural actions to come to conclusion of it, it is a factor analysis way of research (Nummenmaa, 2021, p. 652). Knowledge on respondents' cultural awareness can only be collected indirectly, since people can have a certain latent trait, like cultural awareness, that causes detectable trades that can be seen and analysed based on respondents' answers, which is common in research of social sciences (Tietoarkisto<sub>1</sub>). More specifically, used analysis method is confirming factor analysis. This is type of factor analysis where the researcher already has knowledge of the topic based on theory and hypothesis are created based on that. In this research great help are existing theories like Bennett scale (Bennett, 1986) and Lewis model (Lewis, 2006) that can be used to further analyse the scale of respondents' answers. This knowledge was used in creating the hypothesis, making the used questionnaire and will be exploited in analysis phase. The outcome of the analysis will prove how well the expectations of material factors and therefore research hypotheses are met (Tietoarkisto<sub>2</sub>). To analyse hypothesis 3) *There is a statistically significant correlation among vast majority of factors representing cultural awareness and factors representing the influence of cultural differences on business* correlation analysis between different statements is used and t-test to analyse hypothesis 4) *Younger managers are more culturally aware due to them showing higher levels of Bennett scale.*

### **3.5 Ethics**

In order to create responsible research that harms no other researchers, interviewees, companies or researcher themselves, research ethics need to be taken into consideration through the whole process of research. This includes planning and making the research, data collection, analysis and presentation and reporting the research. Despite any findings point of the research is not to harm any participating companies or tourism service provider sector within Rovaniemi.

As research will include a questionnaire for collecting data, things like voluntary participation and anonymity will need to be taken into consideration. All participants need to be made aware of their rights of not being obligated to answer the questionnaire if they do not wish to do so. Questionnaire will be done completely anonymously so even the researcher won't know who answered and what. This will give an oversight of bigger picture rather than individual answers. This will also eliminate the possibility that someone's answers could be used against them if information were to end up in wrong hands. This, however, also makes it impossible to draw

someone's answer out once questionnaire is filled as there is no way of knowing certainly which one it is.

Researcher (me) has worked with one tourism service supplying company in Rovaniemi (Lapland Safaris) as well as been in work related contact with their suppliers, and heard stories from other companies from friends and colleagues; those experiences should not affect the research too much to be considered biased but instead actively trying to stay as objective as possible. Furthermore, when discussing different cultural traits those should be based on academic research, e.g. theories by Bennett (2014) and Lewis (2006), rather than own thoughts, and staying objective also in this matter. It is understood that despite this total objectivity is not possible as a human.

Anticipating possible scenarios how person and answers could be matched, researcher should not be in another contact with the requested interviewees other than official research-based information to not hear someone having or having not answered the questionnaire and be able to draw a line between a person and answer. This also includes not looking at answers prior whole pool being gathered. These actions will help eliminate conflict of interest as researcher cannot favour any companies despite having worked in one of them. In addition, interviewee database should not be narrowed too small or forming company specific questions that could give away any interviewee's identity. All possible interviewees need to be well informed on for what and how their answers are going to be used within the research, this information can be included in the cover letter of questionnaire. This cover letter can be found as appendix. Providing such information will create transparency regarding the research. As researched subject is not a sensitive topic, research permits and preliminary ethical review are not necessary. Furthermore, as in any research there should be respect towards others' work by citing their publications appropriately and not plagiarising anyone's work.

## 4. RESULTS

In the following segments respondents' answers to all statements and questions will be represented. Answers of strongly disagree are replaced by number 1, disagree by 2, neither disagree nor agree by 3, agree by 4 and strongly agree by 5. As some answer choices are not chosen by any respondents in some questions these are not shown in the graphs. There is not yet analysis in this part, solely showing the simple results of the questionnaire.

### 4.1 Part 1 Metacognitive statements

First statement "*I see myself as culturally aware*" is mainly agreed by majority of respondents as can be seen from Figure 4. Amount of 72,7% of the respondents say they agree with the statement and 18,2% that they strongly agree with it. Neither disagree nor agree is answered by 9,1%. There are no respondents that would disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. Average score is 4,09.

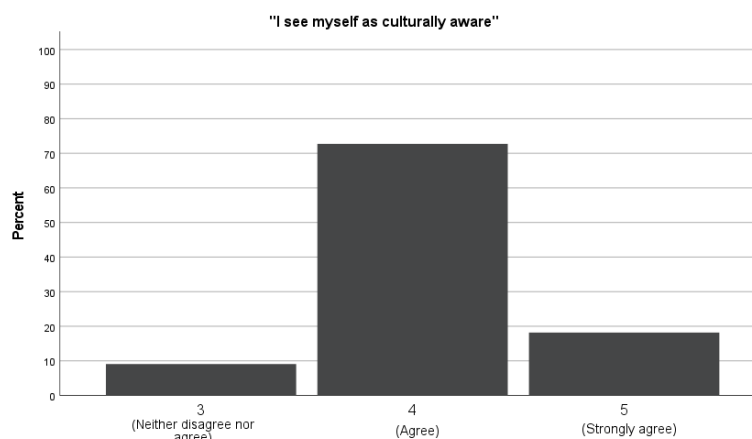


Figure 4. Statement 1 from part 1 of the questionnaire

Second statement "*I understand what cross-cultural communication means and what it can do to my business*" creates more separation in answers, as can be seen from Figure 5. Still the fast majority, 66,7%, falls to agree. As there are 9,1% responding they disagree and 3,0% strongly disagreeing with understanding what cross-cultural communication means, it shows there are still managers not fully understanding value of cross-cultural communication. Average score is 3,82.

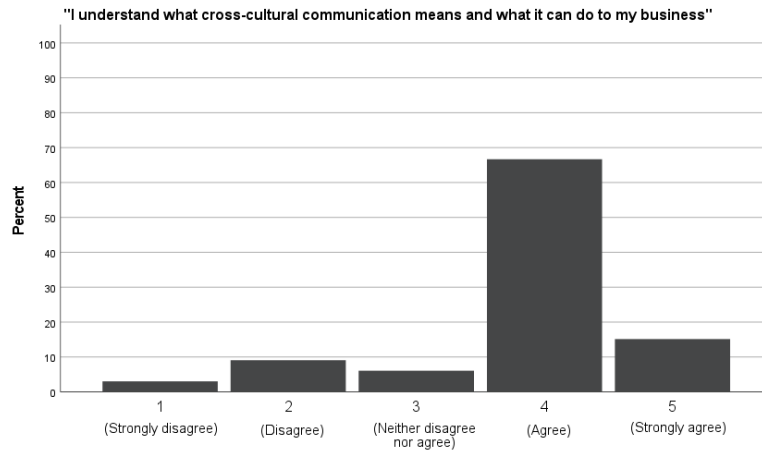


Figure 5. Statement 2 from part 1 of questionnaire

Third statement says “*Customers visiting another country are coming to experience the country’s way of life, not to live their own*” as can be seen from Figure 6. On this, answers mainly divide between neither disagree nor agree and agree with both nearly at 39,4% each. Respondents strongly agreeing are 18,2%. No one answers strongly disagree and only 3% disagree. The higher the score respondents have from this statement, more in defence part of Bennett scale they are. Average score by all answers is 3,73.

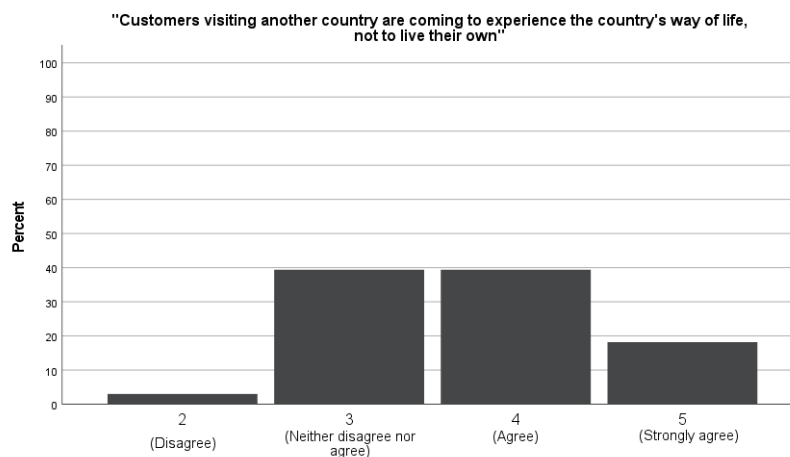


Figure 6. Statement 3 from part 1 of questionnaire

Fourth statement is “*all people within certain culture act the same*” as can be seen from Figure 7 below. All respondents answer on lower categories on this question, mainly to disagree with 57,6%. Strongly disagree answers are by 24,2% and 18,2% neither disagree nor agree. Average score is 1,94. The higher score respondents have from this statement, more in the denial part of Bennett scale they are.

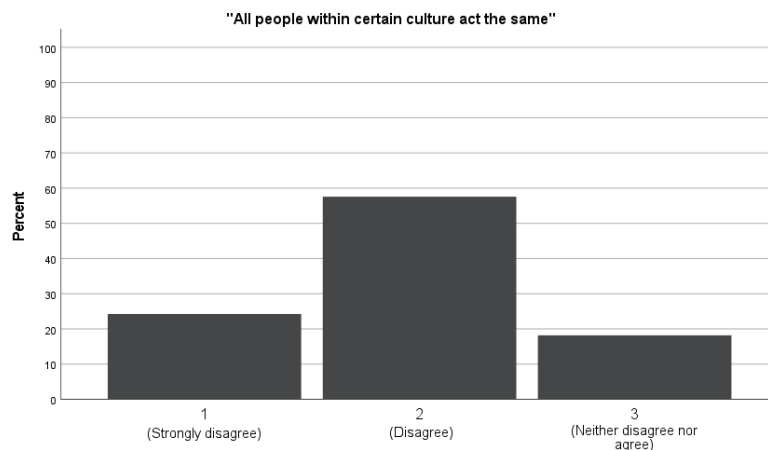


Figure 7. Statement 4 from part 1 of questionnaire

Statement five is “*knowing stereotypes about cultures can help to improve serving customer better*” and can be seen from Figure 8. Majority of answers is on agree with 57,6%, however, there are still significant amount of answers also in neither disagree nor agree with 18,2% and strongly agree with 21,2%. Only 3,0% disagreed. Average score for this statement is 3,97. The higher score respondents have from this, more in denial part of Bennett scale they are.

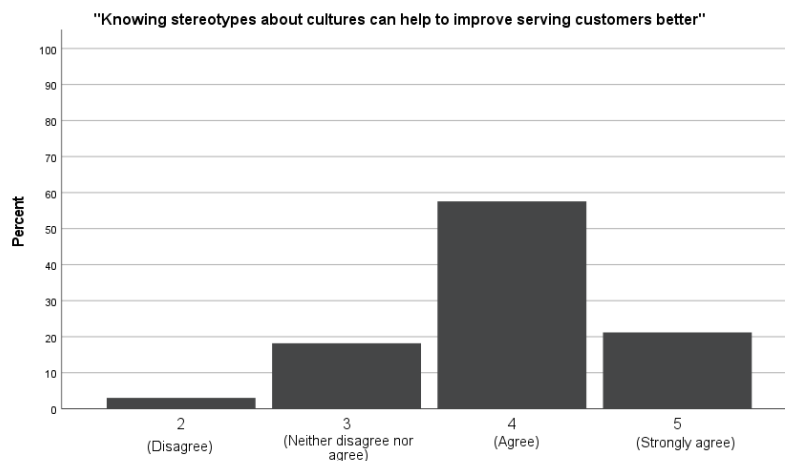


Figure 8. Statement 5 from part 1 of questionnaire

In statement 6 it says “*it is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences*” and respondents’ answers on this can be seen from Figure 9. Of respondents 60,6% say that they agree with additional 21,2% strongly agreeing. So, it can be seen there is a want to offer suitable operations for international customers as well as openness for change. From respondents 15,2% neither disagree nor agree and only 3,0% disagree with the statement. No

one strongly disagrees. Therefore, average score of the statement is 4,00. The lower score respondents have from this, the more in denial part of Bennett scale they are.

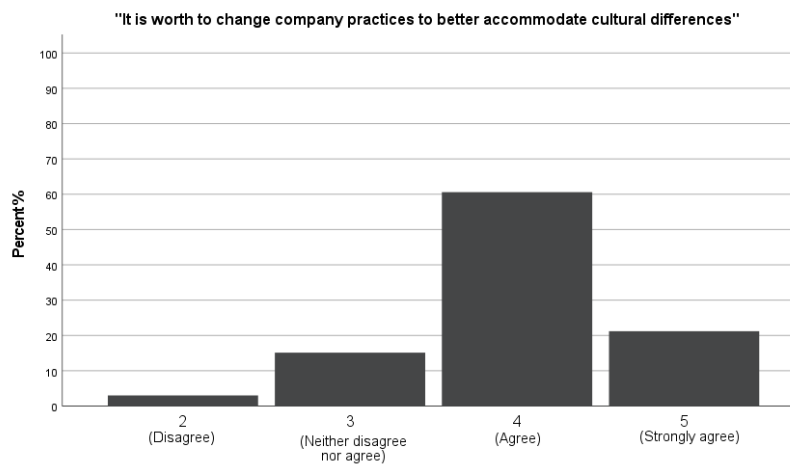


Figure 9. Statement 6 from part 1 of questionnaire

Statement 7 says *“our customer’s culture differs much from Finnish culture”* and results can be seen from Figure 10 below. Mainly respondents agree with the statement with 39,4% answering agree and 36,4% strongly agreeing. Under fifth of respondents with 18,2% neither disagree nor agree and 6,1% disagree. No one strongly disagrees. Even though most agree that their customer’s culture differs from Finnish culture, not all view that it would absolutely do so with strongly agree. Average score is 4,06. The lower score respondents have from this, the more in defence part of Bennett scale they are.

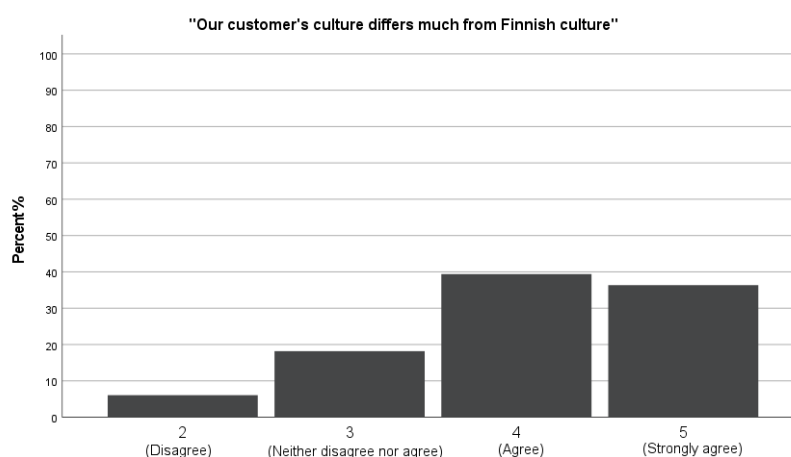


Figure 10. Statement 7 from part 1 of questionnaire

Statement 8 says “*no matter the cultural differences, after all we are all human*” and answers can be seen from Figure 11. This statement spreads answers as all options are answered. However, still majority can be seen at agree with 24,2% and strongly agree with 63,6%. Both on disagree or neither disagree nor agree are answered with 3,0%, and strongly disagree with 6,1%. Average score is 4,36. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in minimization part of Bennett scale they are.

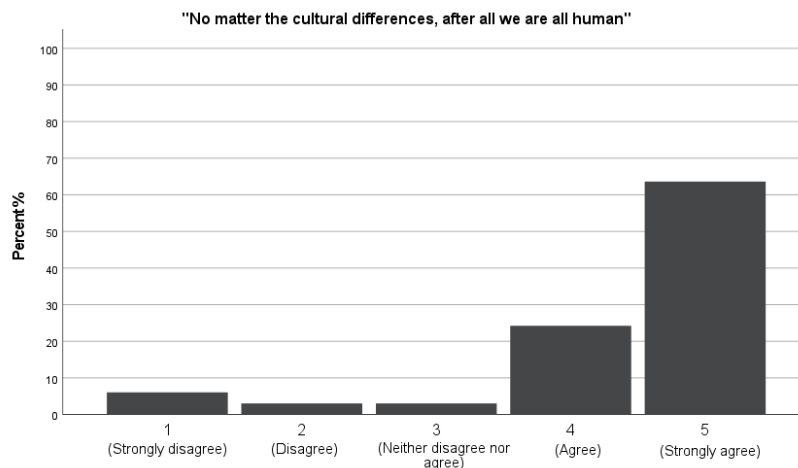


Figure 11. Statement 8 from part 1 of questionnaire

Ninth statement is “*technology is bringing cultural uniformity to the developed world*” and answers can be seen from Figure 12. Over half with 54,5% agree with the statement and additional 15,2% strongly agree. Disagreeing from respondents are 12,1% and neither disagree nor agree 18,2%. No on strongly disagrees, making the average score 3,73. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in minimization part of Bennett scale they are.



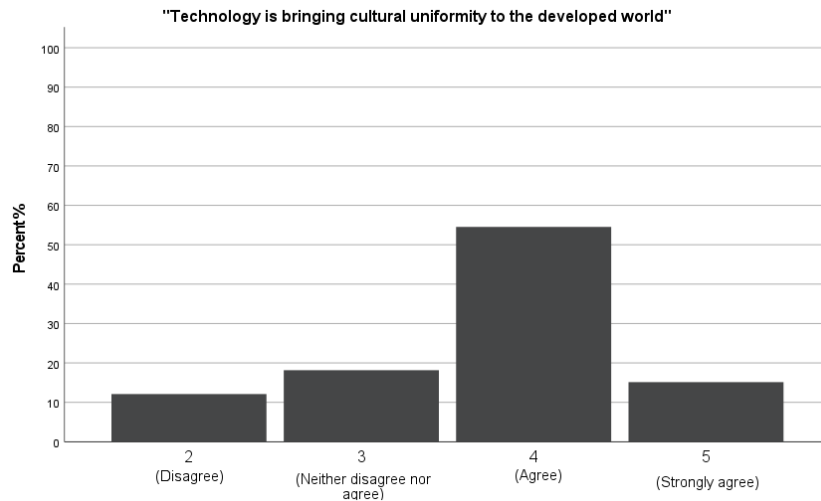


Figure 12. Statement 9 from part 1 of questionnaire.

Tenth statement is “*having multicultural workforce is better fit to serve multicultural customer base*” and answers can be seen from Figure 13. Mostly respondents agree with the statement with 54,5% answering agree and 27,3% strongly agree. A bit less than fifth of respondents with 18,2% neither disagree nor agree. No one disagrees or strongly disagrees with the statement. Average score is 4,09. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in acceptance part of Bennett scale they are.

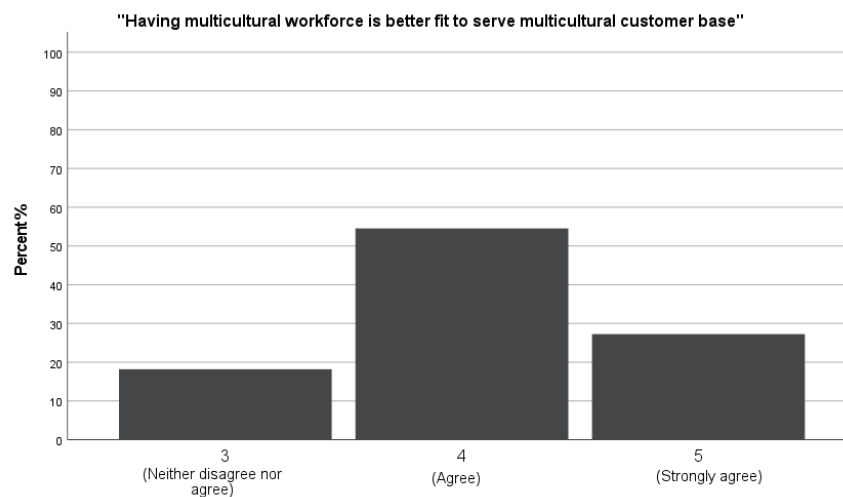


Figure 13. Statement 10 from part 1 of questionnaire.

Eleventh statement states “*no matter what their culture, people coming to Lapland have same pull factors and reasons to visit Lapland*”. Its answers can be seen from Figure 14 below. All answer choices got some answers and even main opinion were divided between agree with 42,4% of answers and disagree with 36,4%. Neither disagree nor agree is 12,1% of respondents

and way less had chosen extremities with 6,1% strongly agree and 3,0% strongly disagree. Therefore, average score for the statement is 3,12. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in minimization part of Bennett scale they are.

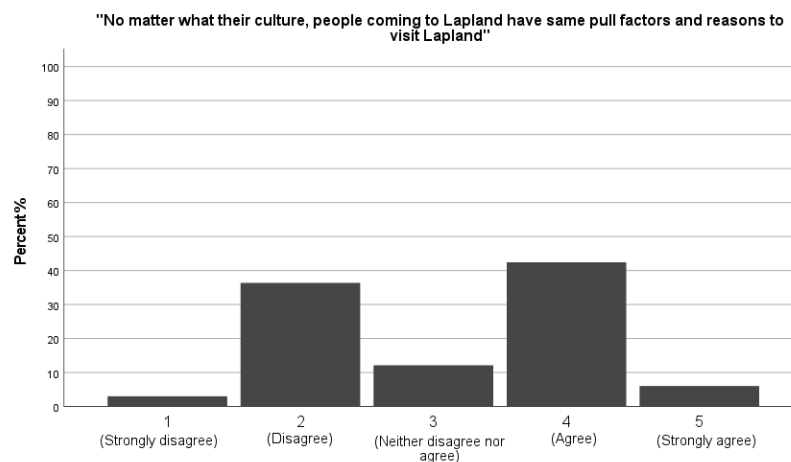


Figure 14. Statement 11 from part 1 of questionnaire.

Twelfth statement is "*stereotypes can create dangerously false assumptions on cultures*" as can be seen from Figure 15. Majority of respondents agree with the statement as 57,6% answer agree and 24,2% strongly agree. By 12,1% answered neither disagree nor agree and 3,0% each answered disagree and strongly disagree. From the results it can be seen that still mainly all respondents working within the same field in similar positions agree on their answers. Average score is 3,97. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in adaptation part of Bennett scale they are.

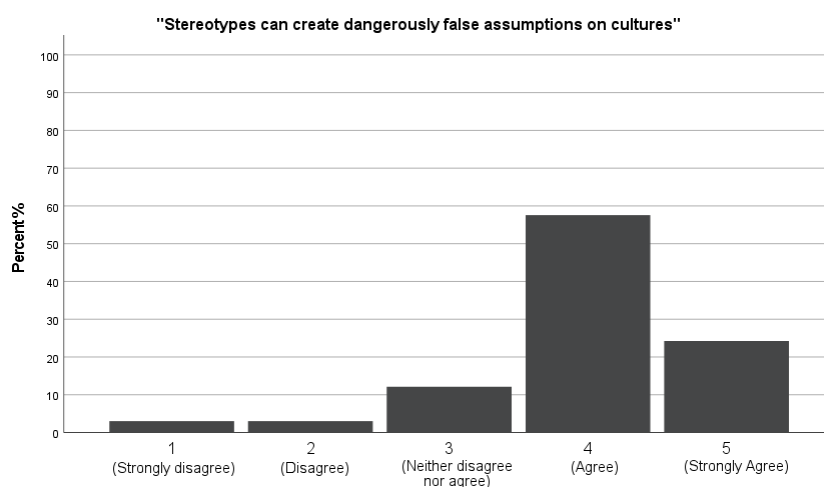


Figure 15. Statement 12 from part 1 of questionnaire.

Statement thirteen is “*customers are coming to Lapland to experience Lappish way of life not to live their own*” as can be seen from Figure 16. Majority of answers is divided between agree and neither disagree nor agree both with same score 42,4% of answers. Only 6,1% goes for strongly agree and 9,1% for disagree. No one strongly disagrees and average score is 3,45. The higher the score respondents have from this, the more in defence part of Bennett scale they are.

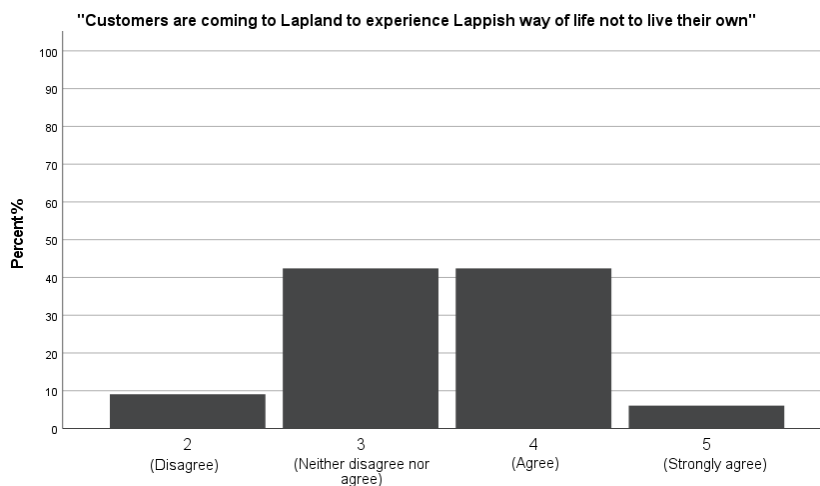


Figure 16. Statement 13 from part 1 of questionnaire.

Statement fourteen is “*there is a good cultural awareness within our company*” and answers can be seen from Figure 17 below. Same as with statement one of respondents view of their own cultural awareness, majority agree with this statement. Vast majority with 63,6% of respondents answer agree and additional 27,3% strongly agree. Only 6,1% answer neither disagree nor agree and 3,0% with disagree. As this is a bit less in agree and also some in disagree compared to statement 1, respondents seem to have higher views regarding of cultural awareness of themselves than their company. This could be considered good that they could then bring that knowledge and help company with it and yet poses a question what is standing in the way that this might not yet be the case, or it may be bias look of evaluating oneself higher as Koc (2021b) mentioned in his study. Average score of this statement is 4,15. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in acceptance part of Bennett scale they are.

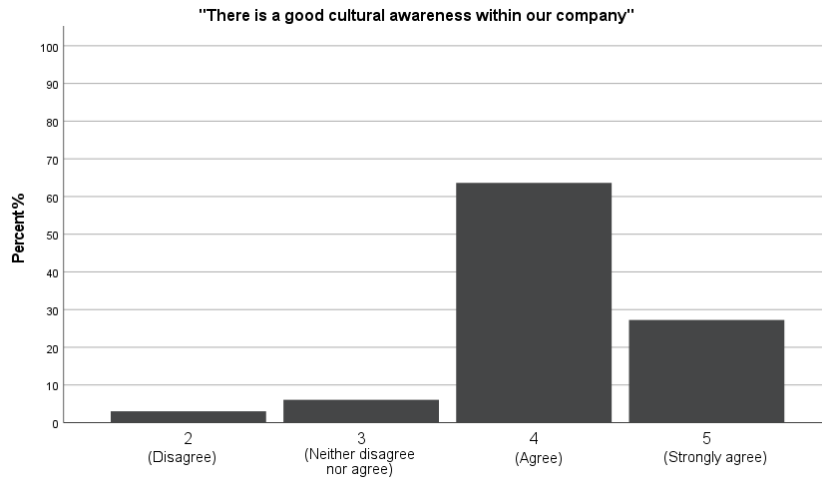


Figure 17. Statement 14 from part 1 of questionnaire.

Final statement of part 1, statement fifteen is “*cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business*”. Answers for this can be seen from Figure 18 below. For this all respondents agree unanimously with 42,4% saying agree and 57,6% strongly agreeing. Average score is therefore, 4,58. This could have been expected as all respondents work within tourism with international customers from different cultural backgrounds and supports exactly why this research about current state of Rovaniemi’s safari companies’ cultural awareness is important as to benefit Rovaniemi’s tourism industry and their customer service. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in adaptation part of Bennett scale they are.

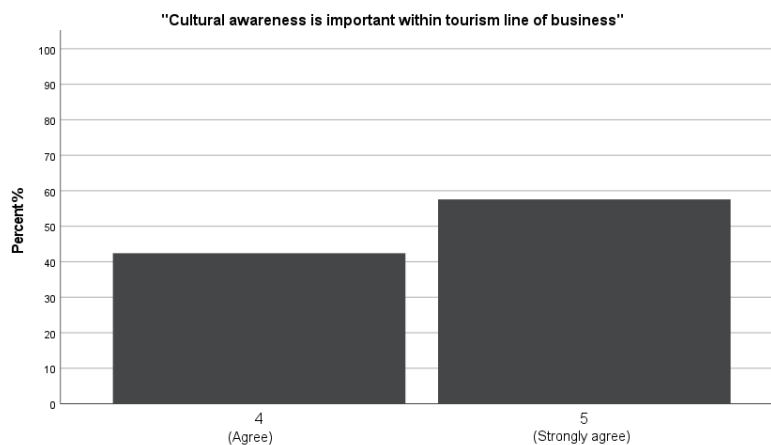


Figure 18. Statement 15 from part 1 of questionnaire.

## 4.2 Part 2 Behavioural statements

For behavioural side in part 2 of the questionnaire respondents answered about what has been done related to cultural awareness within their company, based on best of their knowledge as well as views on what could be done.

First statement says “*There has been changes made in the company within past 10 years to better suit multicultural customer base (excl. changes specifically due to Covid-19 pandemic)*”, as can be seen from Figure 19 below. From respondents 60,6% agree and 30,3% strongly agree that some changes have been done. Span of 10 years is a long time during which number of overnight stays by foreign visitors has almost doubled in Lapland, so changes to better accommodate them are likely being made (Visit Finland<sub>2</sub>). Fewer respondents with 9,1% neither disagree nor agree with the statement. Average score of the statement is 4,21. What kind of changes companies have done was not further specified.

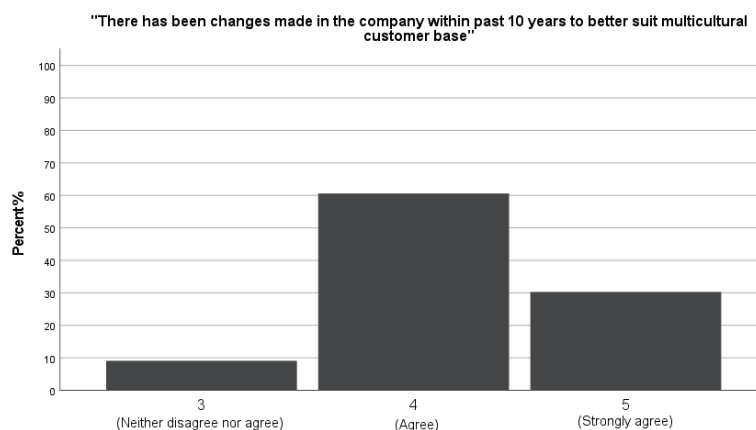


Figure 19. Statement 1 from part 2 of questionnaire

Statement 2 says “*our service differentiates based on customer’s culture*” and results can be seen from Figure 20. This question creates a bit more division on answers as almost half answer agreeing with 48,5% but yet 21,2% disagree and 18,2% neither disagree nor agree. Fewer with 9,1% answer strongly agree and 3,0% strongly disagree. Average score is 3,39. Based on these answers some respondents work in companies where same operations are offered to each customer without adjustive changes no matter their cultural background.

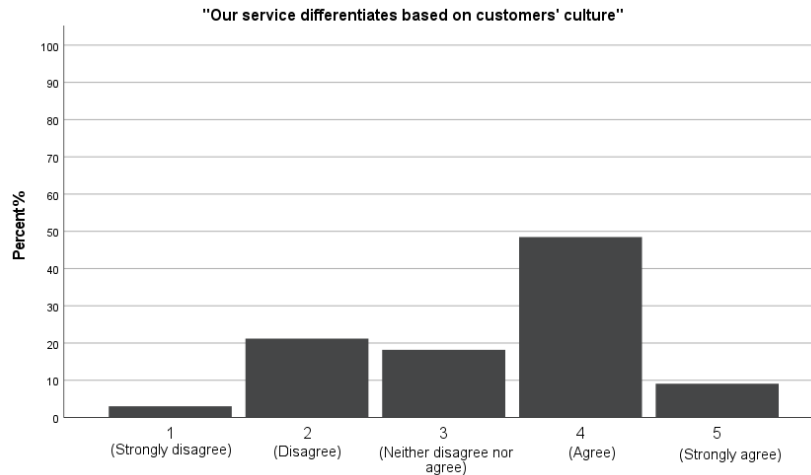


Figure 20. Statement 2 from part 2 of questionnaire

Statement 3 is *"I would like to modify current operations to better suit customers from other countries"* as can be seen from Figure 21. These results show standard deviation with extremities getting less answers and middle ground more. In the middle 39,4% neither disagree nor agree with the statement. Both agree and disagree have 24,2% of respondents with it and 6,1% each strongly agree and strongly disagree. This divides the respondent group in equal amount on sides of agreeing and disagreeing with the statement making average score 3,00. Those agreeing likely have seen some room for improvement what comes to cultural adjustment of the operations seeing potential in such cultural aware company behaviour. For those disagreeing it cannot be said whether they would not see it necessary due to not personally seeing need to it or if company is already operating culturally aware. Group of neither disagree nor agree might not have thought about this in their role or have opinion on it.

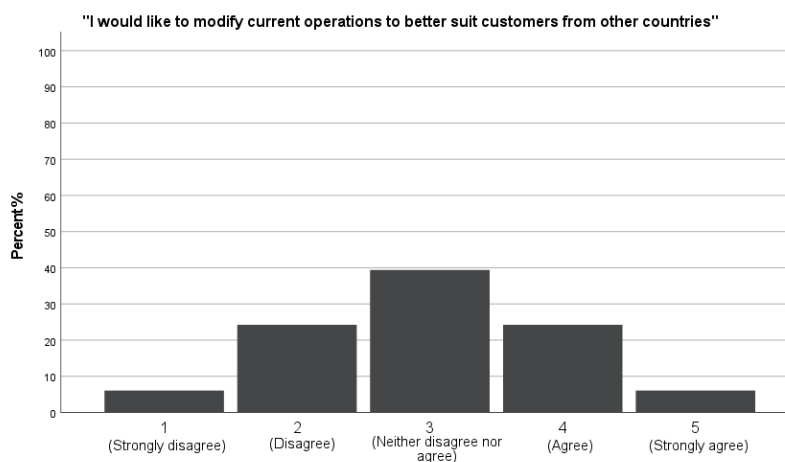


Figure 21. Statement 3 from part 2 of questionnaire

Statement 4 is “*customer’s culture is taken into consideration when collecting feedback*” and answers can be seen from Figure 22. Also, in this statement there can be seen less of extremities with only 3,0% each on strongly agree and strongly disagree. From respondents 42,4% agree with the statement, 30,3% disagree and 21,2% neither disagree nor agree with it. Average score is 3,12. It would seem that some companies are taking their customers’ culture into consideration when they collect their feedback, some not. The statement does not bring forth weather this is something asked in for instance feedback questionnaire or if they consider it for instance through which form or time the feedback is being collected. Respondents answering neither disagree nor agree raise a further question if these middle and top managers are not aware of how the feedback is collected in their company or if it is considered only occasionally in some cases.

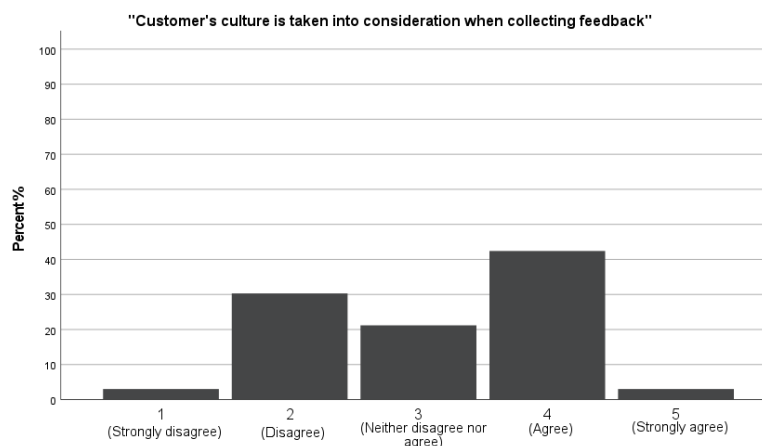


Figure 22. Statement 4 from part 2 of questionnaire

Statement 5 says “*customer’s culture is taken into consideration when making modifications based on the feedback*” and can be seen from Figure 23 below. A bit over half with 51,5% agreed with the statement and 6,1% strongly agreed. A bit over fifth with 21,2% disagree and 3,0% strongly disagree. Respondents neither disagreeing nor agreeing with it are 18,2%, and average score is 3,36. More people agree with taking customer’s culture into consideration when making modifications based on the feedback than in statement 4 taking it into consideration when collecting feedback so it could be said that they find it still important that it would have been a collected knowledge to know it when making modifications.

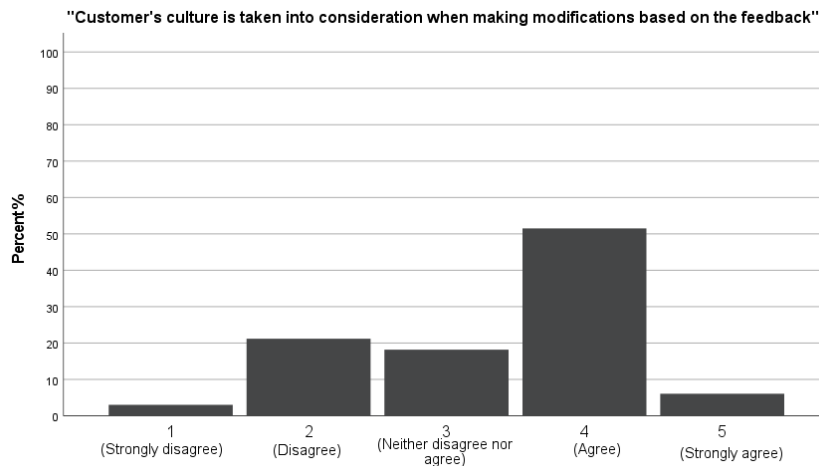


Figure 23. Statement 5 from part 2 of questionnaire.

Statement 6 is “*training staff on intercultural matters, such as importance of understanding other cultures, is important*” as can be seen from Figure 24. On this statement respondents are more unified with 48,5% agreeing and 42,4% strongly agreeing. Only 9,1% neither disagree nor agree with the statement. No one disagrees or strongly disagrees. Average score is 4,33.

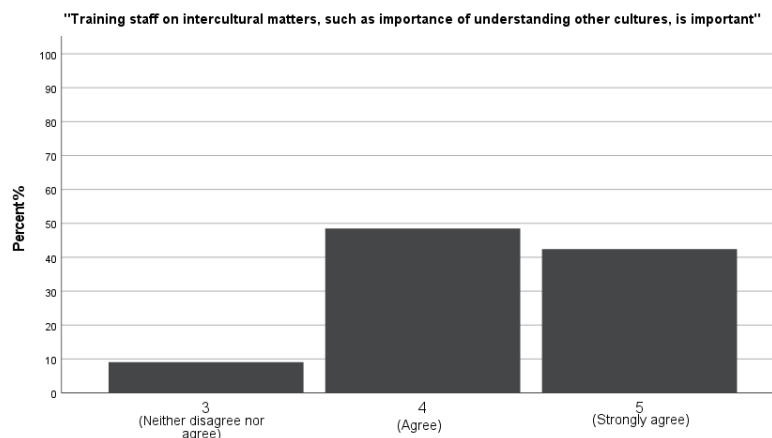


Figure 24. Statement 6 from part 2 of questionnaire

Statement 7 is “*customer servants should modify their behaviour based on customer’s nationality (e.g. eye contact, talking style, gestures, body language)*” and results can be seen from Figure 25. Examples of such behaviour changes were felt important to specify what kind of they could be so respondents have a similar idea what kind of changes are meant. Over half with 54,5% agree and additional 6,1% strongly agree with the statement. Other options can be seen in declining pattern with 21,2% neither disagreeing or agreeing, 15,2% disagreeing and



3,0% strongly disagreeing. It can be said that mainly respondents agree with the statement. Average score is 3,45.

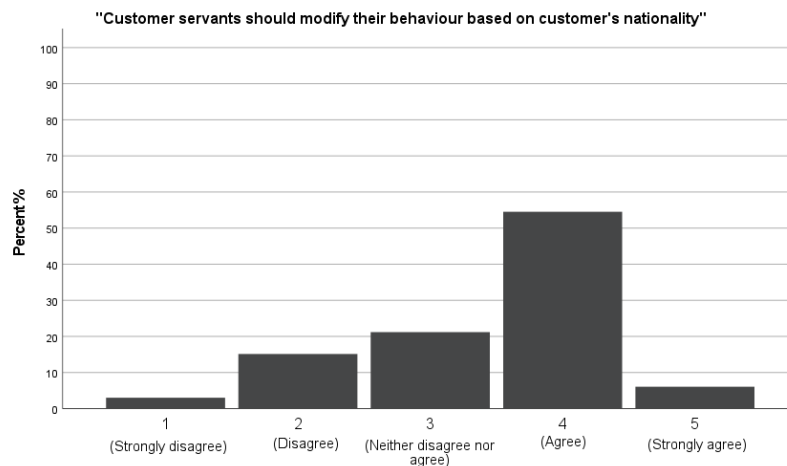


Figure 25. Statement 7 from part 2 of questionnaire

Statement 8 says "*it is worth of financial investment to train customer servants on cultural awareness*" and results can be seen from Figure 26. As it is a financial matter it is no surprise to see some division between answers. Majority with 63,6% agree with the statement and yet 18,2% strongly disagree and additional 6,1% disagree. In sight of all statements in the research strong disagreement has been the least seen answers, and yet there are multiple respondents strongly expressing their opinion on this. In fact, this is the most strongly disagree answers gotten in whole questionnaire. It would be interesting to see further if this is due to them having previously financially invested in training and not seen the benefits of it or if they are by principle against using money for something of which' benefits they are not fully aware yet. Additional 12,1% neither disagree nor agree and no one strongly agreed. However, it can be seen a majority of agreeing with it being worth to train employees in this matter. This is also backed by research arguing that trained customer servants are able to offer better service for multicultural customers by having better knowledge within their work (Hart & al., 2019; Koc, 2021b). Average score is 3,21.

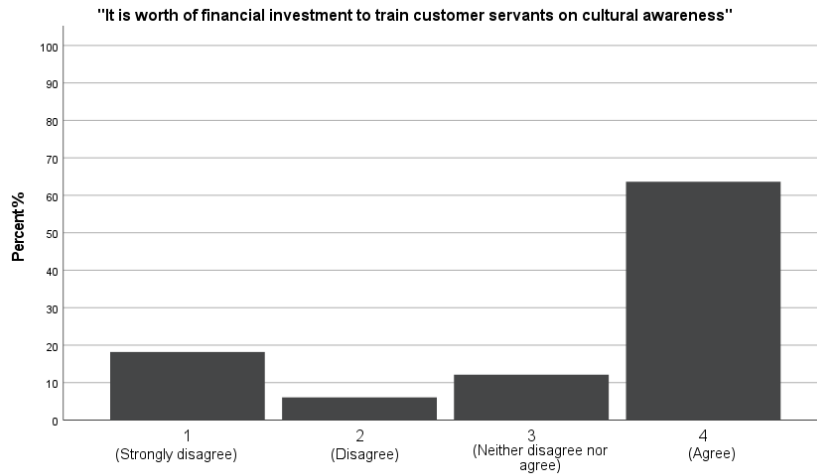


Figure 26. Statement 8 from part 2 of questionnaire.

Statement 9 says “*people working within tourism industry should have previous experience within multicultural environments*” and can be seen from Figure 27. Under half with 45,5% agree, 21,2% each both disagree and neither disagree nor agree and 12,1% strongly disagree with the statement. Overall, 33,3% of respondents answered with lower scores and therefore view it is not necessary if people in tourism industry, working with multicultural customer base, should have previous experience with multicultural environments. As it is proven that working, studying or staying longer period of time in multicultural environment can increase one’s motivational cultural intelligence and thus make them more able to work within multicultural customer base, it is surprising that this is not seen as an asset of for instance future employees (Snodgrass, Ghahremani & Hass, 2023). Average score in this statement is 3,00.

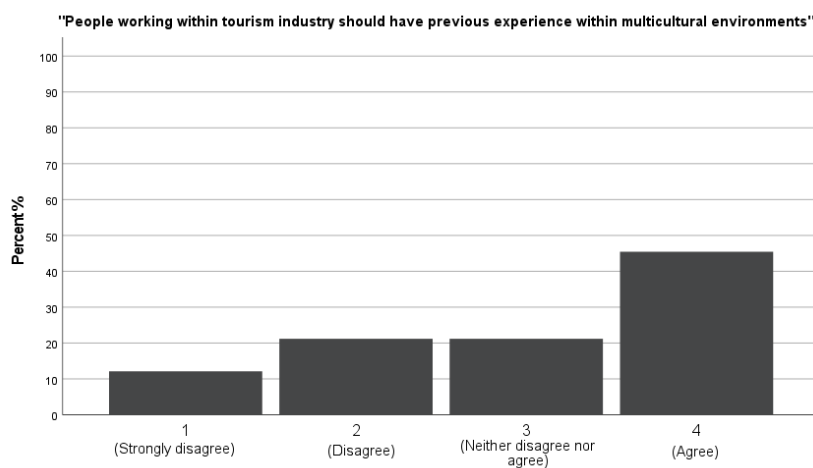


Figure 27. Statement 9 from part 2 of questionnaire

Statement 10 says “*companies should target their operation on certain cultural clusters (=groups of culturally similar individuals) to create better customer service*” and results for this can be seen from Figure 28. From respondents 36,4% agree with the statement and 21,2% neither disagree nor agree, as well as 27,3% disagree and 12,1% strongly disagree. Also, 3% chose not to answer the question. Average score is 2,84.

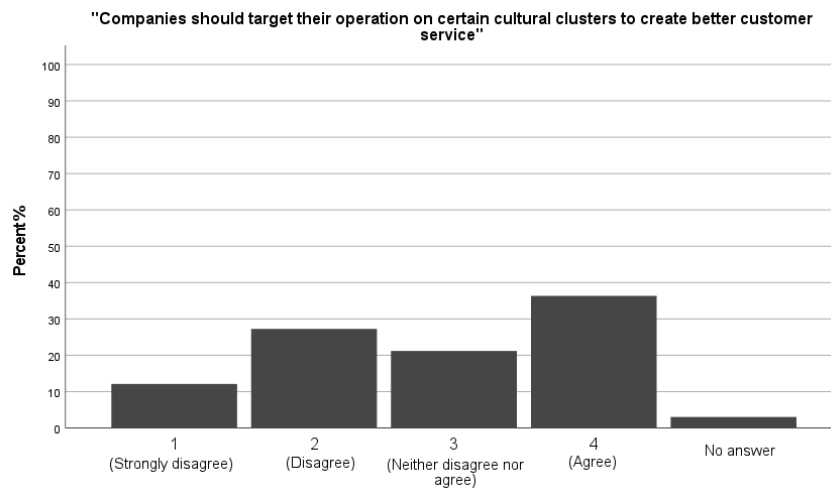


Figure 28. Statement 10 from part 2 of questionnaire

### 4.3 Part 3 Demographics

In part 3 demographics are asked. First question is about nationality of respondents as can be seen in Figure 29 below. As no surprise with all companies being in Rovaniemi, Finland 75,8% of the respondents are Finnish. In questionnaire it was specified with ready given answering choices if people are Sámi, but no respondents chose that option. Other represented nationalities on answers are Belgian, Brazilian, British, Dutch, French and Italian.

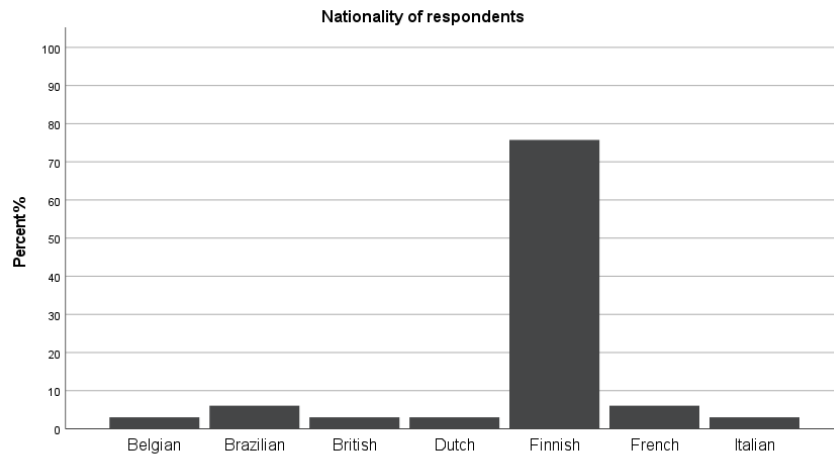


Figure 29. Question 1 from part 3 of questionnaire

Second question is about how old respondents are and results can be seen from Figure 30. As respondents were allowed to answer their age with an open box there were a lot of different responses and for easier understanding purposes these are grouped into smaller categories in below graph. Majority of respondents are 30-34 and 35-39 with 25,0% of answers each. Second biggest group is 45-49 -year-olds with 15,6% and third 25-29 and 40-44 -year-olds with 12,5% each. Respondents of older age are 9,4%. In addition, there are about 3,0% of responds that have to be determined invalid due to them not offering exact enough response to be grouped in any of the groups accurately. As sample group of respondents are middle and top managers it makes sense that they would be more towards middle age with chance to have required work experience as well as time to have built their career within the industry.

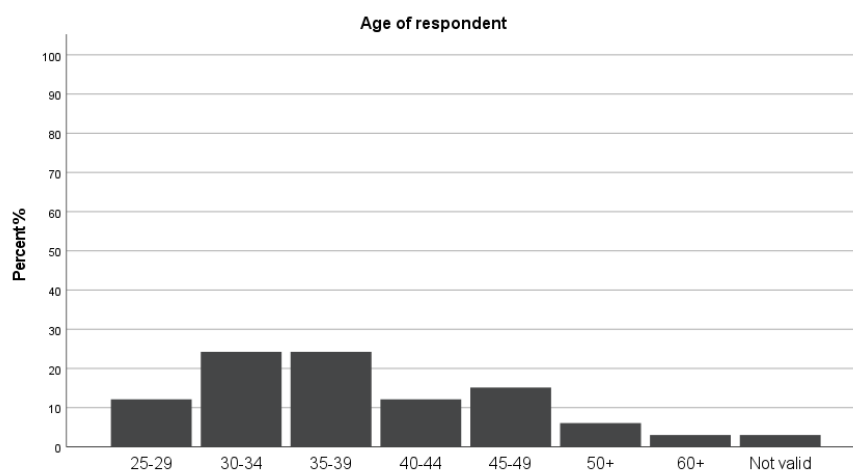


Figure 30. Question 2 from part 3 of questionnaire.

Third question is about gender of respondents. There are ready made options in this question with female, male, non-binary and prefer not to say. Respondents' answers can be seen from below Figure 31. Majority of respondents with 57,6% are male, 39,4% female and 3,0% prefer not to say. From this data it cannot be drawn conclusions that more of research's sample group of companies' middle and top managers would be male, division can also come from who decided to answer it.

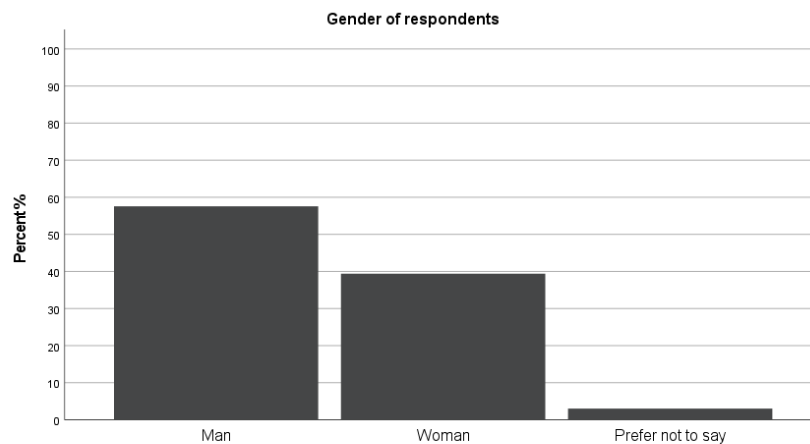


Figure 31. Question 3 from part 3 of questionnaire

Fourth question is about respondent's current position in status. Options for this are top manager, middle managers and other, if respondents wanted to add something else. Answers can be seen from below Figure 32. Most respondents are middle managers with 60,6% of answers. Top managers are 30,3% of the respondents. Other respondents are under 3,0% each founder, sole worker of the company and other.

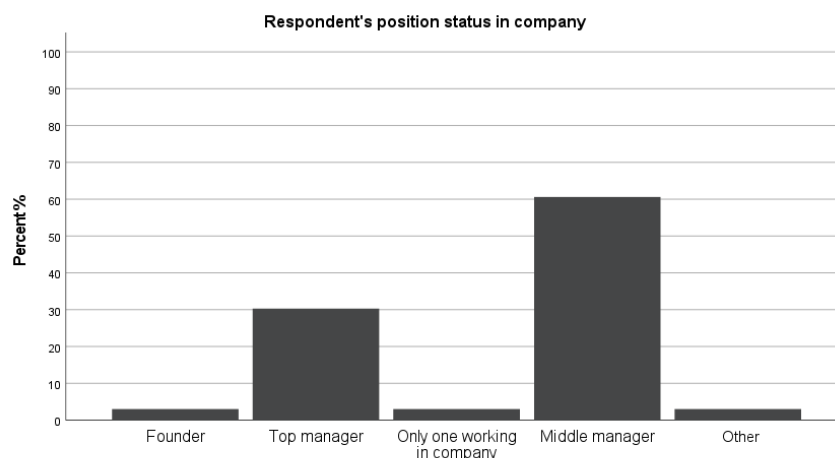


Figure 32. Question 4 from part 3 of questionnaire.

Fifth question is how long respondents have worked for the company as can be seen from Figure 33. Also, for this questionnaire has an open box answer possibilities so answers are very wide. For this graph answers have been grouped together for an easier view. Major group is 1-2 years with 24,2% of answers, second biggest 10+ years with 21,2%, third 6-9 years with 18,2% and fourth 3-5 years with 12,1%. All other groups are under 10% of answers each. Also, 3,0% had to be determined as invalid answers due to them not telling straight enough how long of a time they mean.

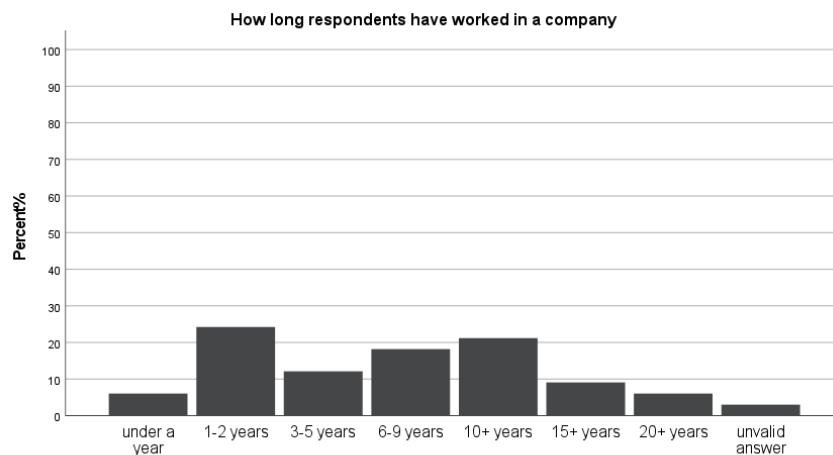


Figure 33. Question 5 from part 3 of questionnaire.

Sixth question is about how big the company respondents are working for in average, so overall on average all year round. Results for this can be seen from Figure 34. Biggest response is very large with 33,3% of answers. Medium size reaches as second with 21,2% and number three is small with 18,2%. Large is answered by 15,1% and micro companies are only 12,1%.

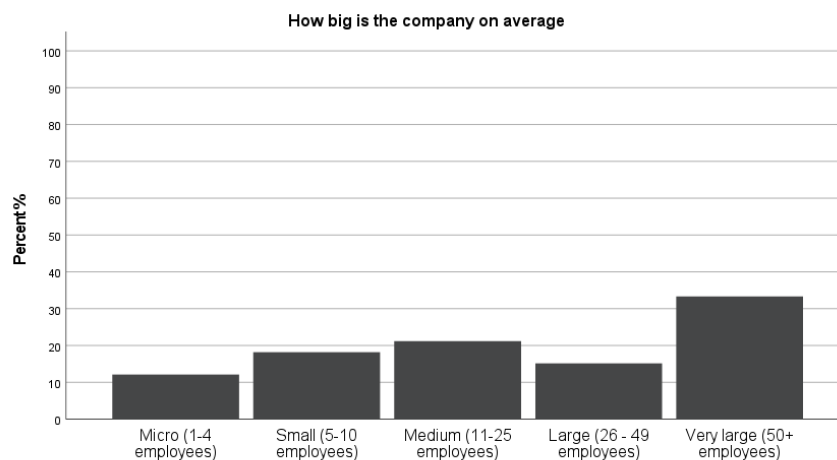


Figure 34. Question 6 from part 3 of questionnaire.

Seventh question is how big the company is during peak season as can be seen from Figure 35. Answer choices on this are the same as in previous question. On this question more answers are on very large with 66,7% of answers. Respondents answered 24,2% of their companies are medium sized in peak season. Very few with only 6,1% are micro, 3,0% large and there are no small companies on peak seasons. It makes sense that in peak seasons when there are more customers there would also be more employees working making the company size temporary bigger.

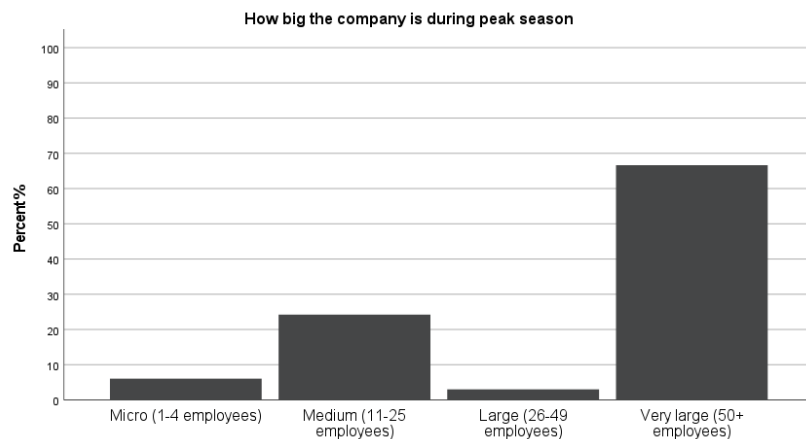


Figure 35. Question 7 from part 3 of questionnaire.

As an eight question there is an open box with a possibility to leave an open word with anything else respondents wanted to ask or say. Few interesting comments were left about explaining further their views about their opinions related to the statements and questions. Showing each answer as it is written or directly quoting is not wanted due to respecting respondents, nevertheless, some of these answers and ideas behind them will be looked at part 6. *Discussion* as they bring out valid points.

## 5. ANALYSIS

As we will go through analysis it is worth noting that these answers are not full truth nor company's policy, but the individual middle or top manager's view on matters. Next parts will show how respondents did on Bennett scale and how questionnaire results compare to hypotheses.

### 5.1 Bennett scale scores

Statements in the part 1 of questionnaire were partially built based on ideas of Bennett scale to determine respondents' cultural awareness on that scale. Parts for analysis are based on first five levels of Bennett scale: denial, defence, minimization, acceptance and adaptation (Bennett, 1986). Respondents' answers from strongly disagree to strongly agree can be modified into numbers from 1 to 5. From these numbers 1 and 2 of disagreement are counted as lower scores and numbers 4 and 5 of agreement as higher scores. Number 3 of neither disagree nor agree is not counted as a neutral response.

First up there is denial. In questionnaire there are three statements assessing denial part of Bennett scale: part 1 statement 4 *People within certain culture act the same*; part 1 statement 5 *Knowing stereotypes about cultures can help to improve serving customers better*; and part 1 statement 6 *It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences*. Answers for denial-part can be seen from Figure 36 below.

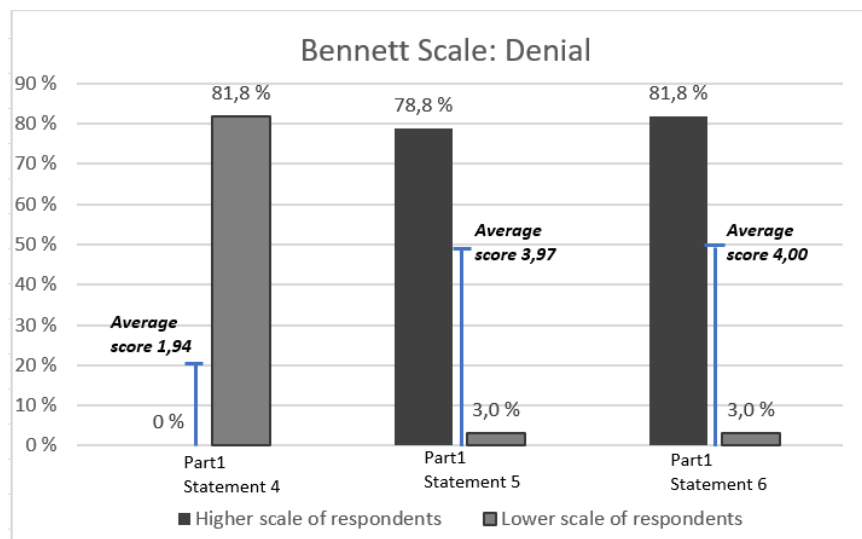


Figure 36. Answers on Bennett scale denial.



The Figure 36 shows how many respondents in percentage answered denial statements with higher scale or lower scale scores. It shows also overall average score of respondents' answers on that particular statement. In statement 4 *People within certain culture act the same* 81,8% of respondents answered with lower scale with more specifically 24,2% strongly disagree and 57,6% disagree. No one chose any higher scores of agreeing with the statement and 18,2% stayed neutral with neither disagreeing nor agreeing. Average score is 1,94. As with this statement the higher score respondents have from it (see. 4.1 Part 1 Metacognitive statements from 4. Results) the more in denial they are, lower scale answers on this shows respondents are more cultural aware than in denial. In statement 5 *Knowing stereotypes about cultures can help to improve serving customers better* over half with 57,6% say they agree and 21,2% strongly agree making the cumulative higher scores 78,8%. Only 3,0% answer with lower score of 2 disagree. Neither disagree nor agree is answered by 18,2%, making the average score 3,97. With this statement the higher score respondents have from it, the more in denial they are, and as these are in fact higher scores based on answers on this statement it can be said that respondents are in denial scale based on this statement. With third statement in denial with statement number 6 *It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences* 81,8% answered with higher score and only 3,0% with lower. From these strongly agree is 21,2%, agree 60,6% and disagree 3,0%. Neither disagree nor agree is answered by 15,2%. Average score of the statement is 4,00. As with this statement the lower score respondents have from it, the more in denial they are, making respondents not being in denial based on their answers. With these three statements we can see that with two of them answers are not in denial scale and with one they are, so in average respondents show having higher cultural awareness than Bennett scale's denial level.

In second level of Bennett's scale there is defence. In questionnaire there are three statements assessing defence part: Part 1 statements 3 *Customers visiting another country are coming to experience that country's way of life not to live their own*; 7 *Our customers culture differs much from Finnish culture*; and 13 *Customers are coming to Lapland to experience Lappish way of life not to live their own*. Answers for defence-part can be seen from Figure 37 below.

For statement 3 *Customers visiting another country are coming to experience that country's way of life not to live their own* respondents answered 57,6% with higher scores, 39,4% agreeing and 18,2% strongly agreeing. Only 3% answered with lower score of disagreeing and 39,4% neither disagreeing nor agreeing. Average score for the answers is 3,73. As for this statement the higher score answers are, the more in defence respondents are, based on answers

it can be said that they are indeed in defence. For statement 7 *Our customers culture differs much from Finnish culture* 39,4% of respondents agree with the statement and 36,4% strongly agree, making the cumulative number in higher scores 75,8%. In lower scores 6,1% answered with disagreeing leaving 18,2% in neither disagree nor agree. Average score is 4,06. For this statement the lower the score more in defence respondents are so based on this they are not in defence scale with this statement. For third statement 13 *Customers are coming to Lapland to experience Lappish way of life not to live their own* almost half answer with higher scores with cumulative 48,5%. From this 42,4% agree and additional 6,1% strongly agree with the statement. With lower scores 9,1% disagree with the statement. Neither disagree nor agree is answered by 42,4%, and the average score is 3,45. As for this statement higher the score is more in defence respondents are, so based on this, they seem not to be in defence level. As two of the statements from three are not in defence level and only one is, overall, the respondents do not seem majorly being in defence level of Bennett scale.

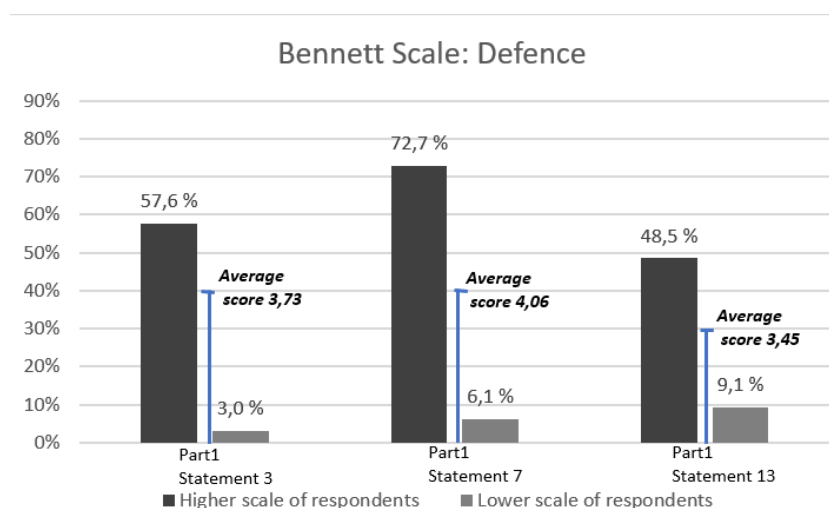


Figure 37. Answers on Bennett scale defence

Third part is minimization. In questionnaire there are three statements related to this part: statement 8 *No matter the cultural differences after all we are all human*; statement 9 *Technology is bringing cultural uniformity to the developed world*; and statement 11 *No matter what their culture people coming to Lapland have the same pull factors and reasons to visit Lapland*. Respondents' answers on higher and lower scale can be seen from Figure 38 below.

For statement 8 *No matter the cultural differences after all we are all human* 24,2% agree with the statement and over half with 63,6% strongly agree with it, making the cumulative higher scores 87,8%. In lower scores 3,0% disagree and 6,1% strongly disagree making the cumulative

lower scores 9,1%. Neutral score of neither disagree nor agree is answered by 3,0%. The average score for this statement is 4,36 so on the higher scale. As for this statement the higher the score, more in minimization scale respondents are, so based on these answers respondents show to be in minimization. For statement 9 *Technology is bringing cultural uniformity to the developed world* majority answered with higher scores with cumulative score being 69,7%; from which 54,5% agree and 15,2% strongly agree. In lower scores 12,1% disagree. Neither disagree nor agree is answered by 18,2% and average score is 3,73. The higher score for this statement means the more respondents are in minimization so they seem to be on that scale. For last statement number 11 *No matter what their culture people coming to Lapland have the same pull factors and reasons to visit Lapland* 42,4% agree and 6,1% strongly agree making the cumulative of higher scores 48,5%. In lower scores 36,4% disagree and 3,0% strongly disagree making the cumulative score 39,4%. The average score for this statement is 3,12. For this statement higher score means more in minimization scale, however, as score 3,12 is close to neutral, for this statement respondents cannot be counted to be on minimization scale. Therefore overall, with two statements being on minimization scale side and one not, it can be concluded that based on their answers, respondents show signs of minimization level.

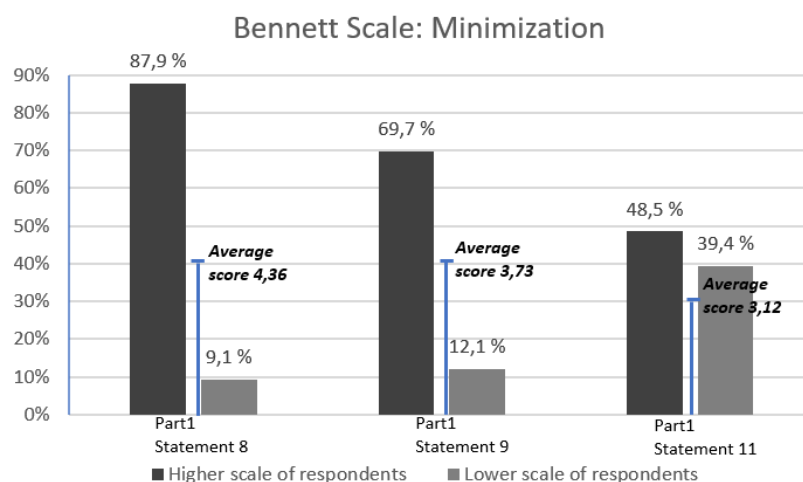


Figure 38. Answers on Bennett scale minimization.

Fourth part is about acceptance level. For these higher levels there are two statements each on the questionnaire as hypothesis was more focused on lower levels. For this part these statements are from part 1 of questionnaire statement 10 *Having multicultural workforce is better fit to serve multicultural customer base* and statement 14 *There is a good cultural awareness within our company*. Scores for these statements can be seen from Figure 39 below.

For statement 10 *Having multicultural workforce is better fit to serve multicultural customer base* cumulative 81,8% answered with a higher score, more specifically 54,5% agreeing and 27,3% strongly agreeing. No one answered with lower scores and 18,2% stayed neutral with neither disagree nor agree. The average score for this is 4,09. As for this statement the higher the score, more in acceptance scale respondents are, they can be said to be on acceptance side. For the other statement number 14 *There is a good cultural awareness within our company* almost all answered with higher scores as 63,6% agree and additional 27,3% strongly agree making the cumulative score 90,9%. Only 3,0% answered with lower score of disagree and 6,1% neither disagree nor agree. The average score is 4,15. For this statement the higher the score more in acceptance scale, so respondents can be said to be on that level. As for both statements respondents' answers set on acceptance level, the overall score concludes also there.

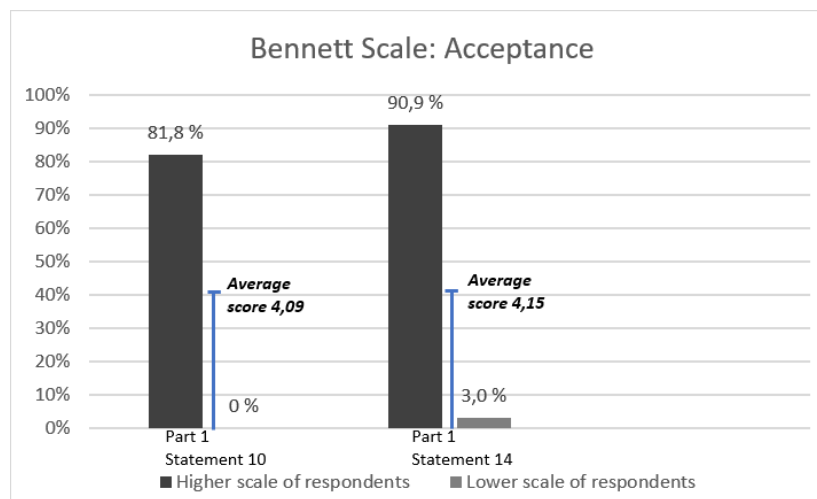


Figure 39. Answers on Bennett scale acceptance.

Fifth and in this analysis final Bennett scale's part is adaptation. The two statements from questionnaire related to this level are statement 12 *Stereotypes can create dangerously false assumptions on cultures* and statement 15 *Cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business*. Scores for these statements can be seen from Figure 40 below.

For statement 12 *Stereotypes can create dangerously false assumptions on cultures* 57,6% agree and 24,2% strongly agree making the cumulative of higher scores 81,8%. In lower scores both 3,0% disagree and same amount strongly disagree making the cumulative score 6,0%. As neutral 12,1% neither disagree nor agree. Average score for this statement is 3,97. As for this statement higher score means more in adaptation scale, respondents can be said to round up on that level. For statement 15 *Cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business* all

answered 100% with higher scores from which 42,4% agree and 57,6% strongly agree with the statement. No one answered lower scores or neither disagree nor agree. The average score is 4,58. For this statement higher score means respondents to be more in the adaptation side. As both statements are on adaptation scale, it can be concluded respondents to set on that level.

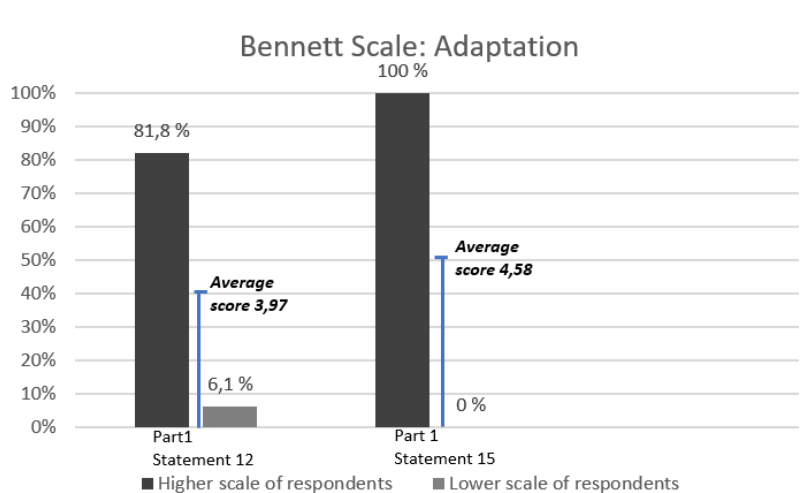


Figure 40. Answers on Bennett scale adaptation

As there are multiple respondents answering on each statement, they do not set solely on one level of Bennett scale, even one person can have tendency of multiple of them. It is also possible that in different situations, or in the questionnaire on different statements, even a same person would show traits of different scales, but the model shows a good indication. Based on these answers and analysis respondents show being on scales of minimization, acceptance and adaptation. Even within these there were few statements that would leave score to be outside those levels, but overall response can be concluded to set on these levels. With same principle, even though in some statements respondents show traits of defence and even denial scale, overall based on answers on questionnaire in this research they cannot be said to be on those levels.

## 5.2 Effect of age on Bennett scale level

T-test was used to see if there is a statistically significant difference between younger and older respondents regarding to cultural awareness on Bennett's scale. Analysed statements are the same as in previous part about respondents' overall cultural awareness level with Bennett scale of denial, defence, minimization, acceptance and adaptation (Bennett, 1986). In this research "younger" is decided to be 34 years old and under. This cropping is due to viewing that those born in 1990s or after could be still counted as young as the world has changed in past decades and younger generations, especially those born in 1990s and after, have grown up in more

globalized world (Fernando, 2023). This could be argued to have offered them a better stepping point towards better cultural awareness. Few additional years from that are added due to previous grouping with 30-year-olds being in the same category as 34-year-olds. Therefore, this cropping creates two groups with 36% being 34-year-olds or under and 64% being 35 years old or older. In following analysis these groups will be called younger respondents and older respondents.

Denial level analysis can be seen from Table 1 below. Based on it can be seen that on statement 4 *People within certain culture act the same* younger respondents have evaluated this slightly higher with average score of 2,00 compared to average score of older respondents being 1,85. As with this statement the higher the score more in denial level respondents are, neither of the groups show being on that level. What comes to difference between the groups, it cannot be said to be statistically significant as t-value is 0,560 and p-value 0,583. On statement 5 *Knowing stereotypes about cultures can help to improve serving customer better* average by younger group is 3,82 and by older group 4,05. Also, with this statement the higher the score, more in denial respondents are which could indicate tendency of older group leaning more towards that way. However, as the t-value is -0,783 and p-value 0,446, there is no statistical significance in difference. In statement 6 *It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences* average by younger group is 3,91 staying slightly lower than average by older group which is 4,00. As with this statement the lower the score more in denial respondents are making neither of the groups to lean towards denial. Also, based on t-value being -0,377 and p-value 0,709 there is no statistically significant difference between the groups on this statement.

Table 1. T-test on denial statements

Statement	t	p	Groups	
			Younger	Older
Part 1, stmt 4 - <i>“people within certain culture act the same”</i>	0,560	0,583	2,00	1,85
Part 1, stmt 5 - <i>“knowing stereotypes about cultures can help to improve serving customers better”</i>	-0,783	0,446	3,82	4,05
Part1, stmt 6 - <i>“it is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences”</i>	-0,377	0,709	3,91	4,00

T-test on defence level can be seen from Table 2 below. In statement 3 *Customers visiting another country are coming to experience that country's way of life not to live their own* younger respondents evaluate the statement slightly higher with average of 3,91 compared to older respondents' average of 3,60. However, as t-value is 1,023 and p-value 0,319 making there not to be any statistical significance between the younger and older respondents. Statement 7 *Our customers culture differs much from Finnish culture* average of younger respondents can be seen to be higher with 4,27 as average of older respondents is 3,95. As with this statement the lower the score more respondents are in defence level, neither of them set on that. Also, there is no statistical difference between the looked age groups as t-value is 0,991 and p-value 0,331. In statement 13 *Customers are coming to Lapland to experience Lappish way of life not to live their own* older respondents evaluate higher with average of 3,55. The average of younger respondents is 3,27. As t-value is -0,951 and p-value 0,353 the difference is not statistically significant.

Table 2. T-test on defence statements

Statement	t	p	Groups	
			Younger	Older
Part 1, stmt 3 - <i>"customers visiting another country are coming to experience that country's way of life not to live their own"</i>	1,023	0,319	3,91	3,60
Part 1, stmt 7 - <i>"our customers culture differs much from Finnish culture"</i>	0,991	0,331	4,27	3,95
Part1, stmt 13 - <i>"customers are coming to Lapland to experience Lappish way of life not to live their own"</i>	-0,951	0,353	3,27	3,55

In minimization level analysis can be seen from Table 3 below. Statement 8 *No matter the cultural differences after all we are all human* shows younger respondents having higher average with 4,45 than older respondents with 4,25. As with this statement the higher the score, more in minimization level respondents are, making both groups to show tendency of that. However, as the t-value is 0,462 and p-value 0,650 there is no statistical significance between the difference. In statement 9 *Technology is bringing cultural uniformity to the developed world* younger respondents evaluated it slightly higher with average of 3,73 whereas older respondents on average of 3,65. There is no statistical significance as t-value is 0,262 and p-value 0,795. Statement 11 *No matter what their culture people coming to Lapland have the same pull factors and reasons to visit Lapland* younger respondents have higher average with

3,27 than older respondents with 2,90. With this statement the higher the score more towards minimization level respondents are, which would show older respondents leaning slightly more away from that. However, as t-value is 0,924 and p-value 0,367 the difference is not statistically significant.

Table 3. T-test on minimization statements

Statement	t	p	Groups	
			Younger	Older
Part 1, stmt 8 - <i>“no matter the cultural differences after all we are all human”</i>	0,462	0,650	4,45	4,25
Part 1, stmt 9 - <i>“technology is bringing cultural uniformity to the developed world”</i>	0,262	0,795	3,73	3,65
Part1, stmt 11 - <i>“no matter what their culture people coming to Lapland have the same pull factors and reasons to visit Lapland”</i>	0,924	0,367	3,27	2,90

Acceptance level t-test can be seen from Table 4 below. Statement 10 *Having multicultural workforce is better fit to serve multicultural customer base* has older respondents evaluating slightly higher with average of 4,15. Younger respondents have average of 3,91. As with this statement the higher the score, more in acceptance level respondents are, showing older respondent to have ever so slightly higher tendency that way. The difference is, however, not statistically significant as t-value is -0,930 and p-value 0,364. In statement 14 *There is a good cultural awareness within our company* younger respondents have average score of 4,18 and older respondents average of 4,10. As with this statement the higher the score more in acceptance level respondents are, both age groups show leaning towards that. Between younger and older respondents there is no statistically significant difference as t-value is 0,382 and p-value 0,705.

Table 4. T-test on acceptance statements

Statement	t	p	Groups	
			Younger	Older
Part 1, stmt 10 - <i>“Having multicultural workforce is better fit to serve multicultural customer base”</i>	-0,930	0,364	3,91	4,15
Part 1, stmt 14 - <i>“There is a good cultural awareness within our company”</i>	0,382	0,705	4,18	4,10



Adaptation level can be seen from Table 5 below. In statement 12 *Stereotypes can create dangerously false assumptions on cultures* younger respondents have average of 4,00 which is slightly higher than average of older respondents which is 3,95. With this statement higher score means being more towards adaptation level of Bennett scale. However, as the t-value is 0,146 and p-value 0,885 there is no statistically significant difference between the age groups. Statement 15 *Cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business* shows younger respondents having average of 4,45. Older respondents score slightly higher with average of 4,65. Also with this statement the higher respondents score more in adaptation level they are. Based on t-value being -1,019 and p-value 0,320 there is no statistically significant difference.

Table 5. T-test on adaptation statements

Statement	t	p	Groups	
			Younger	Older
Part 1, stmt 12 – “ <i>stereotypes can create dangerously false assumptions on cultures</i> ”	0,146	0,885	4,00	3,95
Part 1, stmt 15 – “ <i>cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business</i> ”	-1,019	0,320	4,45	4,65

### 5.3 Effect of cultural differences

Effect of cultural differences was looked with correlation analysis of factors representing cultural awareness and factors representing the influence of cultural differences on business. Factors representing cultural awareness are statement 1 *I see myself as culturally aware* and statement 14 *There is a good cultural awareness within our company* from part 1. These statements show how respondents view their own and their company’s cultural awareness to be, and these are looked as cultural awareness greatly affects taking cultural differences into consideration and operating in cross-cultural situations (Bennett, 1998). Factors representing the influence of cultural differences on business are statement 2 *I understand what cross-cultural communication means and what it can do to my business*, statement 6 *It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences* and statement 15 *Cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business* from part 1 of questionnaire. Being open for cultural differences and willing to make changes to accommodate those can be success factors when operating with multicultural people (Tanner, 2002). Having correlation between these factors can show higher cultural awareness views to have an affect on being

more aware of cultural differences on business and vice versa. Correlation analysis can be seen from Table 6 below.

Table 6. Correlation of factors for hypothesis 3

		Part1 stmt 1 - <i>I see myself as culturally aware</i>	Part1 stmt 14 - <i>There is a good cultural awareness within our company</i>
Part1 stmt 2 – <i>I understand what cross-cultural communication means and what it can do to my business</i>	Pearson correlation	0,492 **	0,251
	p-value (2-tailed)	0,004	0,159
Part1 stmt 6 - <i>It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences</i>	Pearson correlation	0,508 **	0,397 *
	p-value (2-tailed)	0,003	0,022
Part 1 stmt 15 - <i>Cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business</i>	Pearson value	0,390 *	0,385 *
	p-value (2-tailed)	0,025	0,027

\*\*= Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (2-tailed)

\*= Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (2-tailed)

As can be seen from the Table 6 statement 2 *I understand what cross-cultural communication means and what it can do to my business* has moderate correlation of 0,492 with statement 1 *I see myself as culturally aware*. As p-value is 0,004 the correlation is significant at the 0,01 level. This tells that those respondents that would score higher in statement 1 and therefore see themselves being culturally aware are likely to also score high in statement 2 and understand cross-cultural communication. Looking at same statement 2 in comparison to statement 14 *There is a good cultural communication within our company* Pearson correlation being 0,251 would be weak correlation but as p-value is 0,159 there is no statistical significance with it. So, despite respondents understanding cross-cultural communication there is not necessarily good cultural awareness within their company.

Statement 6 *It is worth to change company practice to better accommodate cultural differences* has moderate correlation of 0,508 with statement 1 *I see myself as culturally aware*. For this

p-value is 0,003 making the correlation significant at the 0,01 level. This indicates that people who see themselves culturally aware also view it being worth to change company practices to better suit multicultural customers. With statement 14 *There is a good cultural awareness within our company* previous statement 6 has weak correlation of 0,397. As p-value is 0,022 it is significant at the 0,05 level. Therefore, respondents viewing it to be worth to change company practices are also likely to agree there being good cultural awareness within their company, although with lower correlation than when they see themselves being culturally aware.

Statement 15 *Cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business* has weak correlation of 0,390 with statement 1 *I see myself as culturally aware*, as can be seen from Table 6 above. Having p-value of 0,025 makes the correlation significant at 0,05-level. This translates to respondents who view themselves having higher cultural awareness also likely rating cultural awareness being more important within tourism business. Statement 15 has also weak correlation of 0,385 with statement 14 *There is a good cultural awareness within our company*, which is significant at the 0,05-level due to p-value being 0,027. So, respondents viewing there being good cultural awareness within their company are likely to also see cultural awareness being important in tourism.

#### **5.4 Worth to change operations**

Both within the metacognitive and behavioural parts of the questionnaire, respondents were asked about their views on changing operations within the company. These statements are statement 6 *It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences* in part 1 of questionnaire and statement 8 *It is worth the financial investment to train customer servants on cultural awareness* in part 2. Statement 6 relates to respondents' views on the matter in general if they see changing practices for cultural differences valid related to the effort it takes and statement 8 in more concrete way to use financial investments on training employees to better serve multicultural customers.

For statement 6 *It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences* it can be seen from Figure 41 below that 60,6% agree with the statement and 21,2% strongly agree. From respondents 15,2% stay neutral answering neither disagree nor agree and only 3,0% disagree with it being worth to change company practices. No one strongly disagrees. Average is 4,00. This shows that vast majority agree with the statement.

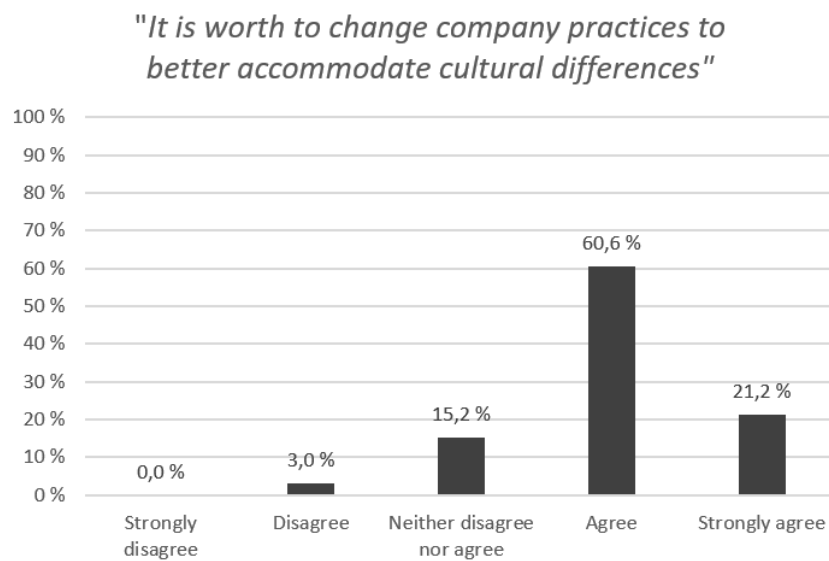


Figure 41. Answers on stmt 6 in percentage

Answers on statement 8 *It is worth the financial investment to train customer servants on cultural awareness* can be seen from Figure 42 below. From respondents 63,6% agree with the statement. Disagreeing is 6,1% and strongly disagreeing 18,2% of them. Only 12,1% neither disagree nor agree, and no one strongly agreed. Average score is 3,21. This shows that vast majority agree with the statement.

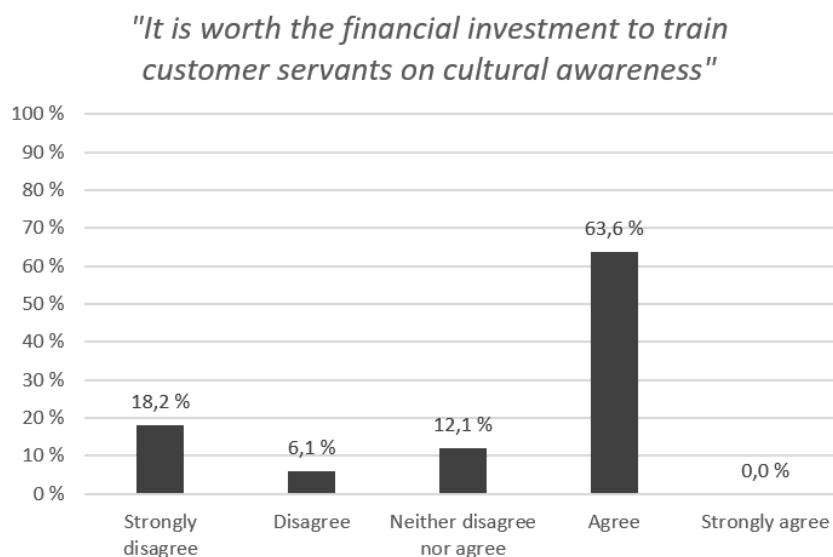


Figure 42. Answers on stmt 8 in percentage

## 5.5 Comparing analysis' results to hypotheses

As the analysis is done, results on hypotheses can be seen from those. This chapter will summon all those answers to retain or reject each hypothesis accordingly. Analysis and figures related to these can be found above within mentioned analysis part of the thesis.

Hypothesis 1) says *Based on their cultural views over 75% of respondents belong to Bennett scale's lower levels denial and defence*. In analysis done in part 5.1 *Bennett scale score* can be seen how respondents set on each statement on each Bennett scale level. In this analysis it was also concluded that respondents show signs of being on scales minimization, acceptance and adaptation but not on denial and defence. As the hypothesis says specifically that “75% of respondents” would belong to lower levels, in Figure 43 below the scores from each statements are combined to give the percentage of respondents that set on each level. As in some statements higher score sets more on the level and in some lower score more, these percentages are calculated taking that into account to not show higher agreement with the statements but instead show the percentage score of being more on that level. Based on the graph, it can be seen that 68,7% of respondents set on minimization, 86,4% in acceptance and 90,9% in adaptation levels of Bennett scale. As these are vast majorities, they match with the results gotten in analysis 5.1 *Bennett scale score* with respondents mainly setting on these levels. In lower levels 27,3% are on denial and 37,4% in defence level. As these do not equal mentioned “75% of respondents” in hypothesis, it is rejected. This shows that the cultural awareness of respondents is higher than expected and they already have some understanding about being mindful towards other cultures.

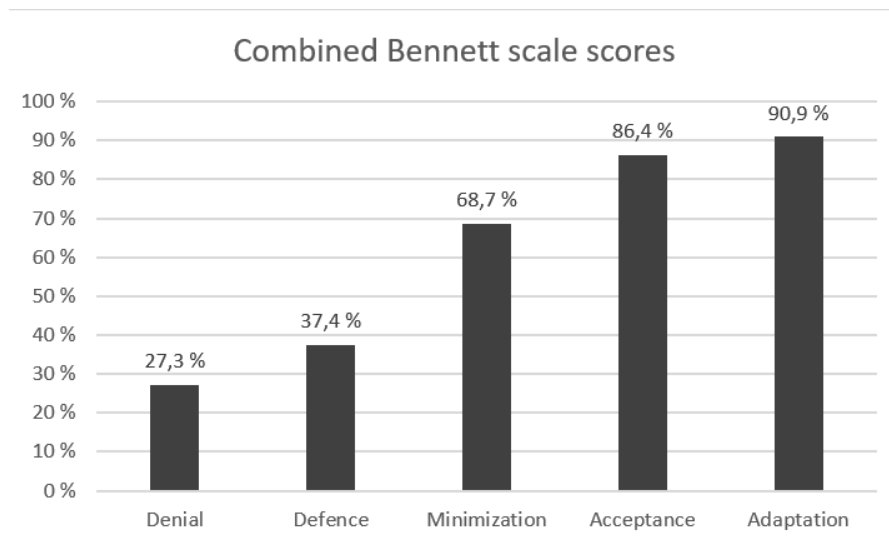


Figure 43. Combined Bennett scale scores

Hypothesis 2) is *Over 50% of respondents do not see the worth to change operations to better serve customers from different cultures*. Analysis on this can be seen from part 5.4 *Worth to change operations*. As in statement 6 *It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences* 60,9% agree with it and additional 21,2% strongly agree, in this statement hypothesis shows not to be true as instead of 50% of respondents not seeing the worth, 82,1% do see it. Same can be seen from statement 8 *It is worth the financial investment to train customer servants on cultural awareness* as 63,6% agree with the statement. Therefore, it can be concluded that hypothesis 2 is rejected. If the answers had not rejected the hypothesis, companies would have a slim chance on improving their operations towards more culturally aware if they fail to see the worth in it.

Hypothesis 3) states *There is a statistically significant correlation among vast majority of factors representing cultural awareness and factors representing the influence of cultural differences on business*. In the analysis there were two factors representing cultural awareness and three factors the influence of cultural differences on business. This creates six possible correlations between the factors. As can be seen from 5.3 *Effect of cultural differences* analysis shows five of these six factors to correlate with statistical significance, two with medium correlation and 3 with weak correlation. Only between statements 2 *Understanding what cross-cultural communication means and what it can do to my business* and 14 *There is a good cultural communication within our company* there was no statistically significant correlation with p-value of 0,159. As majority of factors have statistically significant correlation, hypothesis 3 is retained. If this hypothesis would turned out to be rejected, it would have raised

a question if the respondents have an incorrect view of their cultural awareness, as Koc (2021b) suggests in his research it can be the case with self-assessed questionnaires. Failing to see the influence of cultural differences in business is not very culturally aware, and the results from this research prove there being a correlation between those two.

Hypothesis 4) says *Younger managers are more culturally aware due to them showing higher levels of Bennett scale*. From analysis done in part 5.2 *Effect of age on Bennett scale* it can be seen that despite some differences on answer by younger and older respondents, like in statement 11 *No matter what their culture people coming to Lapland have the same pull factors and reasons to visit Lapland* younger respondents having an average of 3,27 whereas older respondents only have average of 2,90, the answers based on t- and p-values are not statistically significant in any of the Bennett scale levels. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. With bigger respondent groups from both ages could offer better chance in seeing statistically significant differences in opinions. Had the hypothesis proven to be retained and either of the respondent groups scored lower in Bennett scale, people in that group would have been advised to take further action towards educating themselves in cultural aspects.

Overall, based on this research from all four hypothesis one, hypothesis 3) *There is a statistically significant correlation among vast majority of factors representing cultural awareness and factors representing the influence of cultural differences on business* is retained and three, hypotheses 1) *Based on their cultural views over 75% of respondents belong to Bennett scale's lower levels denial and defence*, 2) *Over 50% of respondents do not see the worth to change operations to better serve customers from different cultures*, and 4) *Younger managers are more culturally aware due to them showing higher levels of Bennett scale* are rejected. Therefore, state of tourism operations in Rovaniemi has proven to be more culturally aware than expected as three of the hypotheses were rejected. Based on the analysis, key findings of the research are that vast majority of respondents see the worth to change operations to better serve customers from other cultures as looked in hypothesis 2, there is a statistically significant correlation between factors representing cultural awareness and factors representing the influence of cultural differences on business according to hypothesis 3 and that respondents cultural awareness sets mainly in middle and higher levels of Bennett scale: minimization, acceptance and adaptation as viewed in hypothesis 1. What was left unclear is if the age of managers affects their cultural awareness level as the results in hypothesis 4 were not statistically significant. Despite results looking promising for cultural awareness level of the service supplying companies in Rovaniemi, this does not mean there is no work to be done.

Average scores place overall results on higher levels of Bennett scale but on few statements, there were still majority of answers pointing towards lower levels. This means there is still room for improvement in journey towards culturally more suitable customer service. Also, as majority of respondents set on minimization level with 68,7% (see. Figure 43 above) there is a chance to fall back to defence side (Bennett, 2017). Therefore, it is encouraged to familiarise oneself with knowledge of cultural differences and ways to manage cross-cultural situations.



## 6. DISCUSSION

Within this part results in the light of theory will be discussed. This includes looking Bennett scale further, viewing national traits according to Lewis model, discussing respondents' answers on questionnaire's open box and concluding general points of the research while binding them back to theory. Questionnaire answers and theory on this research offers a lot of material so including some chapters for discussion is necessary prior heading to conclusion.

### 6.1 Further thoughts on Bennett scale

Cultural awareness on Bennett scale was looked both from younger and older respondents' point of view and neither of these set on denial level. As people within that level likely do not acknowledge there being cultural differences to begin with or them being of significance or those people not even being interested in other cultures (Bennett, 1986, 1998, 2004, 2017), they are the kind of people that would not be interested to answer on research about cultural awareness. From possible number of respondents 54% chose to answer on questionnaire leaving 46% out of it. This amount left out is at least that much due to some messages sent to general emails of the company asking for all potential middle and top managers to answer so actual potential managerial size could be even bigger than that. There is no knowledge of why those respondents who ignored the request email or chose not to answer the questionnaire did what they did. It might have been a bad timing, email not reaching them or not wanting to participate among million other reasons, but it raises a question that is it possible that one of these reasons is the views in denial level? Although valid amount of respondents answered to create creditable research it does not show the views of all tourism service supplying managers within Rovaniemi.

From part 1 of questionnaire there is one statement out of three according to which respondents would be in lowest Bennett scale level, denial. This statement is statement 5 *Knowing stereotypes about cultures can help to improve service customers better*. In this question stereotypes were thought to be more so the harmful ones or trusting any stereotypes, definitely making respondents in denial on this one statement. However, as has been also explained within the theory of this thesis, there are contradicting views of stereotypes being useful or harmful depending how they are gained and used. If the stereotypes respondents were considering when answering with high scores on this statement come from empirical learning within job and are used for the benefit and safety of customers, based on theory it can be argued to be good (Houghton et al., 2013, p. 159; Ruuska & Valkoinen, 2008, as cited in Löytty, 2011, pp. 94-

97). So, if respondents in fact thought about and use those kinds of stereotypes, then that is not necessarily harmful and they would not indefinitely show signs of denial level even on this one statement.

In defence statements respondents scored higher with one statement out of three with statement number 3 *Customers visiting another country are coming to experience that country's way of life not to live their own* which would set them in defence level. Also, statement 13 *Customers are coming to Lapland to experience Lappish way of life not to live their own* is very close to being on that level. It seems that managers do view based on these somewhat that the culture within Finland and Lapland, being the destination where their customers are coming to, should be in more spotlight than customers' cultures instead of them being equal in value, just different. In tourism operations this kind of mindset is somewhat understandable, especially depending how respondents view the statement, as it is their job to market the destination and all that can be done there. Quite often, especially in Lapland these do lean on traditions and Nordic ways, as well as Finnish nature. Still, this is a defence mindset and can be a hindering factor in some customer service situations where cultural conflicts may appear. The key idea between the statements was same but what is surprising is that respondents viewed about 10% stronger about just visiting any another country than Lapland. Based on familiarity bias of people finding familiar options more appealing (Gerber, De Vries & Erasmus, 2017, p. 2), it could have been expected coming to experience Lappish way of life being more important factor for respondents due to working in Lapland.

Based on statement 8 *No matter the cultural differences, after all we are all human*, the vast majority seem to agree with this statement. Even though based on the Bennett scale this would set same majority of respondents in minimization scale, and therefore in ethnocentrism side of the scale with not bringing enough value for customers' cultural differences (Bennett, 1986). This is a perfect example that group that has agreed that they have good cultural awareness (see. 4.1 *Part I Metacognitive statements* in part 4. *Results*) and work within higher positions of tourism industry, is still lacking somewhat with awareness of cultural differences and could benefit from further training within it. Even though it is a quite friendly way of thinking "we are all human", in cultural perspective it still creates high risk of undermining cultural differences and in doing so exposes to conflicts. Better way would be to view people as "culturally different humans" not only all as "humans" that can be assumed to think and behave in similar ways. This shows the respondents confuse culture with human nature. Yes, it is true that all humans share same human nature with need for physical necessities like sleep, warmth

and food and all feel range of emotions like happiness, sadness and anger but how they express these or behave according to them is determined by culture, furthermore, not to forget effect of individual's personality (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010, pp. 6-8).

According to adaptation part of questionnaire and more specifically statement 15 *Cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business* all respondents find topic of cultural awareness important as 100% of them agreed with the statement. This would not only draw a conclusion on respondents already having some clue about it but also a willingness to learn more as regarded important. As results have proven there is still room for improvement and respondents are advised to get better acquainted with introduced topics and further enhance their knowledge on this important matter for their line of business.

## **6.2 Nationality and Lewis model**

Specific analysis on managers' nationality and its effects on their cultural awareness is chosen not to be done after all due to limited amounts of participants from cultures other than Finnish. As mentioned in questionnaire part of the thesis it could have been interesting to see comparison between views from different nationalities. With the number of answers received from other nationalities, only 24,2%, it would not be a fair representation of the whole nationality but instead just opinions of those few individual people without a possibility to make academically creditable generalizations.

Instead of using results, cultural differences within nationalities of managers and hypothetical customers can, however, be theoretically looked through Lewis model. Based on theory, there are practical differences how different cultures should be considered in service situations of participants coming from majorly different culture groups. Categories within Lewis model (Lewis, 2006) show the cultures together that likely have similar values and ways of behaving in certain situations and in scales how cultures spread between the main groups of linear-active, multi-active and reactive. The figure about Lewis model can be reviewed from part 2.7 *Lewis model* in page 30.

As Finland sets in between linear-active and reactive groups on the Lewis model (Lewis, 2006), slightly more towards linear-active side, it is the furthest away from multi-active groups like Hispanic Americans, Italians, Spanish and Africans. Looking theoretically, with customers coming from these countries and managers being Finnish, there is a bigger chance for differences in values and behaviour. To avoid conflicts, one should be aware of their own cultural values and behavioural habits that come naturally decoded in them and those of the

people from those other cultures. Closest to Finnish are Swedish and Canadian, yet they are still not part of the same group and awareness of cultural differences needs to be present.

In the respondents there are managers who are Brazilian making them multi-active in Hispanic American group (Lewis, 2006). This makes for instance Finnish the furthest nationality away from them. Looking it purely theoretically, if these respondents have worked and lived in Finland for longer period of time, they are likely to have better understanding of the culture than average tourist. Depending on what level of Bennett scale they are on, they might feel more comfortable operating with other groups from multi-active side like leading a group of Spanish or they have already adapted to Finnish cultural mindset to be able to operate even on integration level of Bennett scale to pick the culturally most suitable behaviour between different situations. Same can be said also for some other respondents' nationalities like French, Italian and Belgium, who set on further way from Finnish but in theory, due to living and working here may have gained further experience on both cultural groups. This could give them an advantage on operating culturally aware with other cultures closer to linear-active and reactive. It is important to note though that even groups setting close to each other or even on same scale there are still cultural differences between countries that may affect the encounter. Communicating with people from similar cultures can feel naturally easier (Reisinger & Turner, 2003, p. 51), and yet customer servants should not be intimidated by differences. This is where learning about different cultural communications styles can help them operate more effectively within their job.

There are studies about concrete actions that companies have done within their business to accommodate to cultural differences. For instance, in some hotels making sure rooms have a tea kettle set to consider growing number of Chinese guests and their wish for it, or offering typical Chinese breakfast (Kotler, Bowen & Baloglu, 2022, p. 47). These changes might be small but enhance overall customer satisfaction through acknowledging their cultural values and needs. Or not necessary all being only for the direct benefit of customer's needs but also for benefit of decreasing conflict like underlying monetary punishment for smoking in rooms in Linnanen's (2018) research. The biggest work is to be aware of them and make the initial effort. It can be hard to collect feedback on customers' cultural needs as it may be that customers do not specifically mention if they were happy to be acknowledged in this way if that is their norm and they were expecting it but might mention the lack of it, or other way around if they were not expecting that to be considered they can mention being positively surprised by it. For instance, croissants should not necessarily be served on breakfast for French

visitors just because those are French, but it can be a thoughtful gesture if French customers prefer having them on breakfast buffet. However, if there is something constantly mentioned by customers from same nationality, it definitely needs to be listened and assessed. This is also why it is highly encouraged to ask about nationality when collecting feedback as it can offer valuable information. Currently not all companies are doing this, as in questionnaire's statement 4 *Customer's culture is taken into consideration when collecting feedback* 30,3% disagreed with the statement and additional 3,0% strongly disagreed, as could be seen from Figure 22 (see. 4.2 Part 2 Behavioural statement in part 4. Results). Feedback is of course not the only way company can be prepared for attaining knowledge about needs of people from different cultures as it can also include studies or observing customers during safaris but could be perhaps the easiest and most cost-effective way to include to current operations if not yet done. Collected data can reveal patterns that people from similar cultures constantly dislike or would need within the operations that can then be assessed on a road to providing culturally better service. Also, if observations during safaris are asked from for instance guides, there is a chance of the information being affected by their bias or level of cultural understanding.

### **6.3 Open thoughts on questionnaire**

Within the questionnaire it was asked if there were anything else respondents would like to add. Few people answered on this and within this section those ideas and views will be discussed. These will be gone through in more discussion manner than actual analysis, hence why this part is included in here rather than part 5. *Analysis*. Answers will not be grouped together with other answers like age, gender or company size by those people to remain anonymous, but culture especially in groups with multiple respondents from same nationality can be mentioned for better cultural discussion without jeopardizing respondent's identity.

Within the answers there are different views about stereotypes. One said not wanting to assume anything as there can be very different people and situations coming along. Based on their answer the feeling is not putting trust on stereotypes as those are not necessarily true within all situations. Another brought forward practical stereotyping through empirically learned things like "*not putting Brazilians to extreme colds for long time*" or "*always put male guide to quests from Middle East*". These examples would seem to be backed by climate and cultural differences and could therefore be justified stereotyping to ensure better customer experience and minimizing conflict potential. Based on the research both of these views on stereotypes can said to be true as it is not good blindly trust any stereotypes as cultural generalizations, but

some empirically learned aspects like people from warmer countries not being as used to same extreme colds as local Finns from north would be. With any group this could also be noted already in the dressing room for openly sharing the temperatures, times estimated to be outside, possibilities for indoors during tour and observing whether people have jeans or wool pants underneath, let say, provided overall.

Another respondent expressed their feeling that there is a current trend within their operations that customers prefer having a local guide instead of foreign one. Proof of such trend on guides or front workers in tourism industry in general was not found from academic sources, however it opens an interesting study possibility. It could have something to do with the ideas that local guides have a better experience on giving tours about their homeland. What it does not take into consideration though, is that there might be guides in Lapland who are in fact Finnish but come from downtown of capital Helsinki instead of being “locals” to Lapland and would have same amount personal experience about Lapland as some foreigners. Perhaps the view case is then that Finnish guide can better “look the part” for telling stories from Lapland for more engaging customer experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, pp. 27-31). If these views would increase, many tourism companies in Lapland would be in trouble as they rely heavily on foreign seasonal workers, currently estimated to be 20-25% from all workers, and there not being enough Finns to do the job (Hiltunen, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021). Having international workers bring also language benefits. There are many nationalities that prefer having safaris operated on their own language or would even have significant trouble joining on an English tour so guides speaking those languages are an asset. Also, it can be argued that having for instance a French guide for French group is culturally closer to them and therefore according to Lewis (2006) has more similar values and behavioural habits as them which could offer better service.

Another point brought forward in the answers by a respondent is some advice for customer servants to “*keep open-minded*” and to “*keep poker face*” no matter what the day brings. Based on the linear-active traits of unemotional and limited body language and reactive trait of avoiding confrontation (Lewis, 2006, pp. 33-34), this comment by a respondent of Finnish nationality shows well traits that are taught in Finland for customers servants. However, with some cultures it is not always the best way of action. For instance, French people, who are part of multi-active culture (Lewis, 2006), are used to using more extravagant body language when talking and the lack of facial expressions from Finnish customer servants can come across as rude (Prevost, 2022). Of course, each company has also their own guidelines how they wish

customer servants to operate, for instance always staying friendly and avoiding negative reactions (Lee, Sweeney & Soutar, 2020).

Furthermore, there were some denial views expressed in answers by using terms such as “*basic politeness*” and “*good manners*” to explain ways for better customer service. What these views lack is the notion of cultural traits as within different cultures there is no “basic” same way as “common sense” does not apply same within different cultures and “good manners” may be viewed differently based on which cultural view they are looked from (Trux, 2000, p. 108; Lewis, 2006, p. 6) People from other cultures are not trying deliberately to act rude when they act according to their cultural ways, same as surely customer servant is not trying to offer bad service even though it might come across as such. Theories like Lewis model (2006) may help with operating more culturally mindful, however, no model is the absolute truth and sole guidebook to follow word-by-word for best results, but the key is to apply suitable knowledge gained from them. As important as understanding other cultures is to understand ones’ own as well as be aware all see the world and operate in cross-cultural counters through their own cultural glasses. Remember that no culture or cultural view is better than another, not even if the other is one’s own culture! In business customer service situations, the company and its employees have bigger responsibility about being aware of and assessing cultural differences as it has a direct impact on the success of their company. Satisfied customers are more likely to return and recommend the company and its services for their friends. Regardless the customer being satisfied or not, they might leave online or word-of-mouth feedback which can then either be beneficial or harmful for the company. One could even say that by choosing not to train on cross-cultural matters or taking significance of cultural awareness seriously, the company is shooting themselves in the foot. Only by training and gaining the knowledge and skills can one assure efficiently serving multicultural customer base and ensure most suitable customer service also in future.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This research set out to find out how culturally aware middle and top managers working for Rovaniemi's tourism service providers are. Aim was to look at both metacognitive views that direct their opinions, thoughts and therefore eventually behaviour as well as what behavioural aspects related to cultural differences have been made in the companies or managers feel would be important to do. Research also sees how culture, meaning being the similar way people from same areas and backgrounds think and behave, and cultural differences, different views and ways between cultures, affect tourism service operations. Culture is one of the biggest aspects affecting these cross-cultural situations happening nearly daily within tourism companies and being aware of its values and proper ways to successfully navigate within it can decrease conflicts and increase customer satisfaction.

Contributing to the discussion on the field, the thesis raises important awareness of the effects of cultural differences in cross-cultural communication. These results can be used by companies to improve their business operations to better serve multicultural customers in the future or by researchers to conduct further studies on the yet limited research pool of cultural awareness. As there are many tourism service supplying companies in Rovaniemi it could be even worth for them to consider co-operation regarding relevant cross-cultural training on cultural issues to benefit all.

As further research possibility the same research could be done again in five to ten years' time to allow companies to make necessary changes and enhance learning, and then re-map their effects on cultural awareness. For Bennett scale questions bigger sample size of respondents of different ages and including more than 2 or 3 statements per level can offer more clear view on hypothesis 4 of affects of age on Bennett scale score. Interesting addition to that could even be to look at if companies which have taken more action towards more multiculturally suitable practices are more (financially) successful within the field. Another idea is related to discussion about people in denial level of Bennett scale and how it would be interesting to ask respondents if there are any reasons or what is the biggest cause for them to not be interested in cultural awareness and why they would not initiate it further within their company. The obstacles that managers still face in metacognitive and behavioural levels are exactly the root causes that still keep them from embarking on higher levels of cultural awareness. Korhonen and Bergman(2019, p. 37) view that the start for any change is to understand current status of things. Within this research that step is provided for companies. Especially to those whose'



managers took the time to answer questionnaire can benefit to reflect theories and results represented within this paper and compare them to their own answers and previous mindset as a steppingstone to see what improvements can be done. As a limitation of research, despite effort being put to choosing the tourism service supplying companies identified with chosen characteristics in Rovaniemi, there is a chance some were not known about during the research period and therefore, not reached out. In case of such event that has happened unintentionally.

Sincere hope is that each tourism service manager would read this, nevertheless if they answered the questionnaire themselves or not, and view the content in relation to their own work and company. This means looking at operations from cultural point of view. If there are aspects noted that could use of improvement, it is urged to take the action and at least voice those potential changes. According to results of questionnaire 30,3% from respondents said they would like to change current operations to better suit customers from other countries, what is stopping them? Change does not happen within a day, and there is no point to make changes simply for the sake of it, however, even small changes made for the right reason and need for it can create major difference. As the new season starts this year let all, especially managers, be mindful on how they talk about different cultures to their employees and how new seasonal workers are trained in cross-cultural matters. Both company and customers benefit from the effort of being more culturally aware.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Appendix 1. Questionnaire accompanying text**

#### **1.1 For personalized emails**

Good morning mr/ms xx!

I hope this message finds you well.

My name is Neea Hietanen, and I'm a Tourism Research master student from University of Lapland. As my master's thesis I'm intending to look at the cultural awareness of middle and top managers of Rovaniemi's safari companies.

Could you please spare a few minutes on helping me with this important research and fill in the short questionnaire from below link? Questionnaire is in Likert scale (1 disagree, 5 agree) and shouldn't take more than 5 minutes to fill. Answers are fully anonymous and offer great view on Rovaniemi's safari companies' current situation, data from which your company can also benefit once thesis is published.

Link to the questionnaire: <https://forms.office.com/r/vv44xaqVza>

Thank you very much for your participation and helping out!

In case you have any further questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

With best regards,

Neea Hietanen

Master student of Tourism, International and Cultural Management

University of Lapland

[neehieta@ulapland.fi](mailto:neehieta@ulapland.fi)

## 1.2 For info emails

Good morning!

I hope this message finds you well.

My name is Neea Hietanen, and I'm a Tourism Research master student from University of Lapland. As my master's thesis I'm intending to look at the cultural awareness of middle and top managers of Rovaniemi's safari companies. Data will be collected with a short questionnaire on Likert scale (disagree, agree) and shouldn't take more than 5 minutes to fill. Answers are fully anonymous and offer great view on Rovaniemi's safari companies' current situation, data from which your company can also benefit once the thesis is published.

For your company I was able to find this general email. Could you please either share this with all the company's middle and top managers (managers, supervisors etc.) or provide me with their contact details so I could contact them myself?

Link to the questionnaire: <https://forms.office.com/r/vv44xaqVza>

Thank you very much for your participation and helping out!

In case you have any further questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

With best regards,

Neea Hietanen

Master student of Tourism, International and Cultural Management

University of Lapland

[neehieta@ulapland.fi](mailto:neehieta@ulapland.fi)

## Appendix 2. Questionnaire

### 2.1 Cover note

# Cultural awareness within Safari companies in Rovaniemi

Following questionnaire is aiming to map out current thoughts and actions on companies' cultural awareness. Questionnaire will take about 5 mins to complete including easy to fill questions on Likert scale (agree/disagree). Using a computer for easier answering is recommended. All **answers will be analyzed completely anonymously**, and results used as data for Master's thesis within University of Lapland.

The questionnaire is aimed at middle and top managers of the companies. It will provide important information about current cultural awareness of local safari companies. Your participation is highly appreciated!

For any further questions please contact Neea Hietanen through [neehieta@ulapland.fi](mailto:neehieta@ulapland.fi)

## 2.2 Part 1

PART 1 questions about your own views about cultural awareness.

1. Please answer following statements on Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I see myself as culturally aware.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understand what cross-cultural communication means and what it can do to my business.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customers visiting another country are coming to experience that country's way of life, not to live their own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
All people within certain culture act the same.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing stereotypes about cultures can help to improve serving customers better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Our customers' culture differs much from Finnish culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No matter the cultural differences, after all we are all human.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology is bringing cultural uniformity to the developed world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Having multicultural workforce is better fit to serve multicultural customer base.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No matter what their culture, people coming to Lapland have the same pull factors and reasons to visit Lapland.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stereotypes can create dangerously false assumptions on cultures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Customers are coming to Lapland to experience Lappish way of life not to live their own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a good cultural awareness within our company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 2.3 Part 2

PART 2 questions about actions taken within the company, answer based on your view

6. Please answer following statements on Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, strongly agree)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
There has been changes made in the company within past 10 years to better suit multicultural customer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

base (excl. changes specifically due to Covid-19 pandemic).					
Our service differentiates based on customers' culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to modify current operations to better suit customers from other countries.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Customer's culture is taken into consideration when collecting feedback.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer's culture is taken into consideration when making modifications based on the feedback.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Training staff on intercultural matters, such as importance of understanding other cultures, is important.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer servants should modify their behaviour based on customer's nationality (e.g. eye contact, talking style, gestures, body language).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
It is worth of financial investment to train customer servants on cultural awareness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People working within tourism industry should have previous experience within multicultural environments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Companies should target their operation on certain cultural clusters (= groups of culturally similar individuals) to create better customer service.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 2.4 Part 3

### PART 3 general questions about demographics of the respondent

Please answer by choosing correct choice or writing down asked number in years

9. What is your nationality? \*

☐ Finnish

☐ Sámi

☐ Muu



10. How old are you? \*

Kirjoita vastaus

11. What is your gender? \*

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to say

12. Please select your current position status \*

- ☐ Top manager
- ☐ Middle manager
- ☐ Muu

13. How long have you worked for the company? \*

Kirjoita vastaus

14. How big is the company you are working for in average? \*

- ☐ Micro (1-4 employees)
- ☐ Small (5-10 employees)
- ☐ Medium (11-25 employees)
- ☐ Large (26 - 49 employees)
- ☐ Very large (50+ employees)

15. How big is the company you are working for during peak season? \*

- ☐ Micro (1-4 employees)
- ☐ Small (5-10 employees)
- ☐ Medium (11-25 employees)
- ☐ Large (26-49 employees)
- ☐ Very large (50+ employees)

16. Anything else you would like to add?

Kirjoita vastaus

### Appendix 3. Questionnaire in detail

#### Part 1

In Part 1 statements are built based to look metacognitive skills on the Bennett scale (denial, defence, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration). These responds would help to determine hypotheses 1) *Based on their cultural views over 75% of respondents belong to Bennett scale's lower levels denial and defence*, 2) *Over 50% of respondents do not see the worth to change operations to better serve customers from different cultures together* with part 2, 3) *There is a statistically significant correlation among vast majority of factors representing cultural awareness and factors representing the influence of cultural differences on business* and 4) *Younger managers are more culturally aware due to them showing higher levels of Bennett scale* together with part 3 of questionnaire.

First statement in Part 1 is “*I see myself as culturally aware*”. This very first statement sets the idea that no matter what respondents answer on following questions they are likely to already have a view on themselves either as culturally aware person or not. Seeing responds to this in comparison to how respondents overall set in Bennett scale will offer an interesting comparison point.

Second statement is “*I understand what cross-cultural communication means and what it can do to my business*”. As despite trying to create questionnaire with as mundane language as

possibly, there still needs to be some mention of crucial terms for the topic, cross-cultural communication being one of them. In case middle and top managers of the company do not understand the meaning of this term nor what it may do for their business, the change in the company practises need to start from there prior discussing other beneficial improvements that could be done to improve it.

Third statement is “*Customers visiting another country are coming to experience that country’s way of life, not to live their own*”. It is part of Bennett scale’s defence. Agreeing with such statement shows wish that visitors would behave the same way as one does themselves and yet seeing some room of difference even though protecting their original world view. The higher score respondents have from this, more in the defence part of the scale they are.

Fourth statement is “*All people within certain culture act the same*”. This statement is part of Bennett scale’s denial having only broad categories for different cultures and separating them strongly from us. The higher score respondents have from this, more in the denial part of the scale they are.

Fifth statement is “*Knowing stereotypes about cultures can help to improve serving customers better*”, being also part of Bennett scale’s denial part. Person agreeing with this statement has poor motivation to interpret cultural differences. The higher score respondents have from this, more in denial part of the scale they are.

Sixth statement is “*It is worth to change company practices to better accommodate cultural differences*”, being also part of Bennett scale’s denial part. Not seeing any need to accommodate to needs of people coming from different cultural backgrounds shows lack of motivation to interpret cultural differences. The lower score respondents have from this, the more in denial part of the scale they are.

Seventh statement is “*Our customers’ culture differs much from Finnish culture*”. This part is about Bennett scale’s defence due to relating to cultural identity. The lower score respondents have from this, the more in defence part of the scale they are.

Eight statement is “*No matter the cultural differences, after all we are all human*” and therefore part of Bennett scale’s minimization. This statement goes into physical universalism bringing emphasis more on physiological similarities of human beings than richness of cultures. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in minimization part of the scale they are.

Ninth statement is “*Technology is bringing cultural uniformity to the developed world*”, being also part of Bennett scale’s minimization. Statement is minimizing the significance of cultural differences in the world changing through technological outspread. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in minimization part of the scale they are.

Tenth statement is “*Having multicultural workforce is better fit to serve multicultural customer base*”. This statement moves towards the ethnorelativism of Bennett scale being part of acceptance. Seeing the potential in different cultural backgrounds on understanding cultural varieties is a step towards more tolerantly working environment. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in acceptance part of the scale they are.

Eleventh statement is “*No matter what their culture, people coming to Lapland have the same pull factors and reasons to visit Lapland*” and goes to Bennett scale’s minimization part. This statement is not giving much emphasis on the different cultures people coming from other countries may have and therefore minimizes the significance of them. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in minimization part of the scale they are.

Twelfth statement is “*Stereotypes can create dangerously false assumptions on cultures*”. This statement goes into adaptation part of Bennett scale. Taking other people’s cultural ways into consideration can communicate respect towards them, however as stereotypes are not always accurate presentation of one’s culture it can create disrespect instead. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in adaptation part of the scale they are.

Thirteenth statement is “*Customers are coming to Lapland to experience Lappish way of life not to live their own*”. This statement is similar to statement number three making it part of Bennett scale’s defence part. This statement differentiates from the previous in respondent’s point of view bringing the statement closer to them and their line of work as sometimes this may alter our views whether, we talk about things happening somewhere further away or right in contact with our everyday life. The higher the score respondents have from this, the more in defence part of the scale they are.

Fourteenth statement is “*There is a good cultural awareness within our company*”. This statement is part of Bennett scale’s acceptance part. Agreeing with the sentence does not equal there being a good cultural awareness with a certain company, but answering so puts a behavioural emphasis on how well the manager sees their company to have knowledge of other cultures, including their own. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in acceptance part of the scale they are.

Fifteenth statement is “*Cultural awareness is important within tourism line of business*”. This statement is part of Bennett scale’s adaptation part. As within tourism work, such as safari companies in Rovaniemi are doing, working with customers from different cultural backgrounds is a big part of the work. Being aware of other people’s culture and modifying own views and behaviour to meet them halfway demonstrates adaptation to their cultural ways. The higher score respondents have from this, the more in adaptation part of the scale they are.

## **Part 2**

Part 2 of the questionnaire is about behavioural aspects, meaning have companies already done some changes regarding customers’ cultural backgrounds. As each respondent answers questionnaire on their own and not as a representative of certain company, these answers are based on their views. These statements are helping to determine hypotheses 2) *Over 50% of respondents do not see the worth to change operations to better serve customers from different cultures.*

First statement is “*There has been changes made in the company within past 10 years to better suit multicultural customers base (excl. changes specifically due to Covid-19 pandemic)*”. Even though cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication and their role in tourism business world are still relatively new concepts, company might already be aware of them and would have done changes within past years to better accommodate operations on changing world by removing own cultural privileges and introducing more acceptive ways (Anderson, 2021, p.3). Changes due to Covid-19 pandemic were wanted to exclude from this as it was a force major kind of situation that everyone needed to adapt, and not the factor wanted to look in this research. There might have been some changes done during that time that were noticed to be good and kept since, weather respondents viewed those as changes not specifically only for Covid-19 and wanted to include those in their answer it was up to their judgement.

Second statement is “*Our service differentiates based on customer’s culture*”. With this statement it was wanted to see if some companies are offering differentiated service for customers based on their cultural differences. Doing this would show belief in cultural aware practices.

Third statement is “*I would like to modify current operations to better suit customers from other countries*”. Even though respondents were middle and top managers of the companies, they might not still have power or other means to alternate operations, simply as it may not always be that easy. However, if they have scored higher scores from this question, it shows they have

in fact noticed something from the operations that could be modified or improved to offer better customer service for multicultural customer base.

Fourth statement is “*Customer’s culture is taken into consideration when collecting feedback*”. Companies have different ways of collecting feedback may it be questionnaires, forms or face-to-face feedback. Knowing their culture could help to analyse situation based on is it always people from the same culture that see place of improvement in certain parts of operation and tackling that part for at least groups from that culture could then increase customer satisfaction.

Fifth statement is “*Customer’s culture is taken into consideration when making modifications based on the feedback*”. This statement ties to the previous one on making cultural background as factor to take under consideration when making changes on operations based on customer feedback.

Sixth statement is “*Training staff on intercultural matters, such as importance of understanding other cultures, is important*”. If respondents have scored higher on this statement, it shows that they value cultural awareness factors as part of their business style. It would be important to train staff to being able to execute operations culturally aware.

Seventh statement is “*Customer servants should modify their behaviour based on customer’s nationality (e.g. eye contact, talking style, gestures, body language)*”. As people from different cultures have different communication styles and best way to show acceptance and adaptation on these is through accurate knowledge or mimicking, it can be said that higher score on this statement shows greater cultural awareness and willingness to adapt that in behaviour.

Eight statement is “*It is worth of financial investment to train customer servants on cultural awareness*”. Same as with sixth statement if respondents have scored higher in this statement, it shows that they value cultural awareness factors as part of their business style. As some could say that it is enough that managers or those in charge are trained in cultural awareness to make informed decision, it could also be argued that trained customer servants are able to offer better service for multicultural customers by having better knowledge within their work (Hart, Toma, Issa & Ciottone, 2019).

Ninth statement is “*People working within tourism industry should have previous experience within multicultural environments*”. Experiential learning like living, studying or working abroad for longer times can have an effect on individual’s cultural intelligence (Hietanen, 2020). Based on this if manager, possibly the person who has some say in who is hired for the company,

scores higher in this statement, they have some view on importance of cultural intelligence or its connection to cultural awareness.

Tenth statement is “*Companies should target their operation on certain cultural clusters (=groups of culturally similar individuals) to create better customer service*”. Focusing on only certain cultural clusters could be argued to make offering culturally more suitable service for customers easier as there are less cultural ways to learn, but also limit the customer base by lot and possibly creating unnecessary limitations for either not offering service for all or it being culturally less suitable for other customers. The meaning of term “cultural cluster” was explained due to in test run of questionnaire it was found as hard understandable word, specific to field.

### **Part 3**

Part 3 is about general questions about demographics of the respondents. These give base of respondents’ possible viewpoints on the matter and are used together with Part 1 for hypothesis 4) *Younger managers are more culturally aware due to them showing higher levels of Bennett scale*. Part 3 includes seven questions on demographics as well as one for free word of adding anything else they would like to say about the questionnaire or research.

First question is “*What is your nationality?*” with ready offered options of Finnish and Sámi wanting to make the cultural difference between there, as well as option to choose “other” and write their own nationality. As cultures are looked at and all operating companies are situated in Rovaniemi, Finland, it could be meaningful for the research to know cultural background of respondents. Especially if there are any major differences of opinion between different nationality groups it could offer an interesting comparison. What needs to be remembered though is that one person from certain nationality is not enough to represent ideas of the whole nationality and if there is not enough variety or only by few people such generalizations cannot be made.

Second question is “*How old are you?*” where respondents could write the answer themselves. This question helps to shed some light on weather there are opinion differences between older and younger generations. The world has changed in past decades and younger generations, especially those born in 1990s and after, have grown up in more globalized world (Fernando, 2023). This could be argued to have offered them a better stepping point towards better cultural awareness.

Third question is “*What is your gender?*” with options of woman, man, non-binary and prefer not to say. This question can show if there are gender differences between views or behaviours of cultural awareness.

Fourth question is “*Please select your current position status*” with options of top manager, middle manager and other with place to write which. The questionnaire was aimed for top and middle managers, so this question helps to see which of them majority of respondents are and possibly eliminate answers that are neither as they do not suit in looked group.

Fifth question is “*How long have you worked for the company?*” with open space to reply to it. It was not wanted to limit people’s answer too much or group too many months or years together so open answering space was opted. This question can give some indicator on respondent’s experience on working in multicultural environment, yet not fully as they may have gained some of it already prior to working to that specific company in case they viewed the question as such.

Sixth question is “*How big is the company you are working for in average?*” with options of micro (1-4 employees), small (5-10 employees), medium (11-25 employees), large (26-49 employees) or very large (50+ employees). The size of the company may affect on how easy changing operations or adding training towards more culturally aware workforce. In addition, it gives on idea of the current situation of Rovaniemi’s safari companies cultural awareness based on company’s size.

Seventh question is “*How big is the company you are working for during peak season?*” with same option choices as in previous question. As safari companies are greatly working seasonally and there can be big differences of employee amounts on average or during main season, it was found important to make the separation between these two, making it also easier to respond to the question of company’s size.

Eight question is a simple open box with question of “*Anything else you would like to add?*”. As answering all previous questions has been mandatory but there not being many open-ended questions giving space for additional explanations, it was found important to add this box of open word. Respondents’ answers on this can be used within analysis or discussion if interesting points are raised.