Electrolux and Scania in Africa:
A qualitative study of how two Swedish companies; Electrolux and Scania adapt their business culture when operating in African Markets

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Abstract

Businesses are seeking international market opportunities more than ever before. The growing activities of international business has given rise to the globalisation of markets which in turn creates more economic, political, social and cultural interconnectedness among countries. A few decades ago, most Swedish companies had limited trade with African countries due to the sluggish economic growth, low market size, political instability and redundant regulations. However, there have been recent developments in Africa and the continent is now home to growing economies. Today, Swedish companies trade with African countries such as Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa.

Africa is the most heterogeneous continent; culturally, linguistically and ethnically. In order to successfully operate in African markets, foreign businesses need to develop an understanding of the African cultural value system. The purpose of this degree project is to explore how two multinational Swedish companies; Electrolux and Scania adapt their business culture when operating in African markets. We chose a qualitative research strategy with an inductive approach and conducted semi-structured interviews with Electrolux and Scania, which are currently active in Africa. The respondents hold various positions within these companies. A thematic analysis was used to analyse our data.

Our empirical findings suggest that Electrolux and Scania are very similar in how they adapt their business cultures in African markets. Although there are some commonalities, business culture can vary widely from country to country in Africa and what is true in one country might not be true in another. African markets have a relationship-based business culture and Electrolux and Scania have been successful in Africa by building good and long lasting relationships with business entities. Building relations, coupled with strong company core values, help both companies tackle corruption related issues. Our findings also indicate that Electrolux and Scania have an understanding that Africans have different time perception and consequently, adapt by understanding, accommodating, and being flexible and patient towards their business counterparts. The only major difference about how the two companies adapt their business culture in African markets regard how local talents are used. Whereas Electrolux appoint local people to take leadership positions, Scania send expatriates to the countries they have business operations in.

In conclusion, Africa has a unique business culture environment that requires foreign business people to have a sense of flexibility and freedom to respond to subtle or major difference in the various and diverse African countries.

Keywords: Culture; Business Culture; African Markets; Adapt; Electrolux, Scania
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**Concept definition**

- **Adaptation**: “is the act of changing something or changing your behaviour to make it suitable for a new purpose or situation” (Collin Dictionary, 2017)

- **Apartheid**: a former policy of racial segregation by politically and economically discriminating against non-European groups specifically in South Africa. (Merriam Webster, n.d)

- **Business culture**: a model or style of business operations within a company. It determines how different levels of staff communicate with one another as well as how employees deal with clients and customers. (Business Dictionary, n.d)

- **Business Sweden**: A Swedish Trade and Investment Council which aims at strengthening and promoting Sweden as an attractive, innovative and competitive business partner. They facilitate and promote the growth of Swedish companies abroad and investment opportunities for foreign companies in Sweden. (Sweden Abroad, n.d)

- **Culture**: the values, norms, customs and behaviour of a particular people or society. (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d)

- **Glocal**: “Reflecting or characterized by both local and global considerations” (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d)

- **Ubuntu**: an African philosophy that includes essential human virtues of compassion and humanity. (Amoako- Agyei, 2009)

- **Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)**: A geographical area of Africa that lies south of the Sahara desert. (Exploring Africa, n.d)
Abbreviations

HC – High Context

LC – Low Context

MNE – Multi-National Enterprise

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SME – Small- Medium Enterprise

SSA – Sub-Saharan Africa
1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce the topic of our research to familiarise the reader with the geography of Africa as well as the challenges and developments the continent has faced over the years. We further present the problem background which leads to the identification of the research gap where we argue for the relevance of addressing the knowledge gap. This is followed by the presentation of the purpose of our study and based on the discussion in the problem background, we formulated a research question. Lastly, the delimitations of our study and the historical background of Swedish business relations with African countries are presented.

1.1 Problem Background

International business refers to companies engaging in trade and investment activities across national borders. Businesses today seek international market opportunities more than ever before (Cavusgil et al., 2016, p.34). The growing activities of international business have given rise to the globalisation of markets which in turn creates more economic, political, social and cultural interconnectedness among countries (Cavusgil et al., 2016, p.35). Emerging markets, such as China and India, are investing billions in Africa to manufacture and market diverse products and services. These activities by the emerging markets have made Africa look increasingly attractive and have inspired businesses from Europe and the United States to do business with African countries (Cavusgil et al., 2016, p.252) and Sweden is no exception. Many Swedish companies had limited trade with Africa a few decades ago due to the low economic growth, political instability, low market size, and unnecessary regulations (Wohlgemuth, 2002, p.47). Today, Swedish companies trade with most African countries such as Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa.

Despite the growth of international business and foreign investments, most African countries have not significantly benefited from globalisation nor have they experienced the same level of growth as other emerging economies (Creek, 2015, p.7). Even though Africa is receiving foreign investments, research suggest that many foreign companies are reluctant to conduct business in Africa due to lack of understanding of the business environment and the cultural nature of the African markets (Amoako-Agyei, 2009). Africa contains diverse populations of over one billion, with about 3000 different ethnic groups speaking thousands of languages in addition to the six colonial European languages (Amoako-Agyei, 2009; Kamoche, 2011; Kuada, 2010). There are 54 countries in Africa with five major geographic areas; north, east, west, central and southern Africa (figure 1). Although differences may exist, the countries within each geographic area are similar in their economic and sociocultural setups (Moran et al., 2014, p.515). Africa has also been historically divided in academic disciplines into two main world regions by international organisations and foreign governmental agencies; North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa (figure 2). Many believe that Northern Africa is socially and culturally different from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Northern Africa, also known as “Arab Africa”, contains countries on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Exploring Africa, n.d). Northern Africa is an economically diverse region consisting of countries with different levels of economic development and natural resource endowments, but nonetheless a common heritage with the middle east (International Monetary Fund, 2003). The region contains six countries which has been significantly influenced by the culture of the Arabs and Islam from the Middle East (Exploring Africa, n.d). Islam defines the region’s ethnicity and languages and Arabic is the unifying common cultural influence in the region. The economies in the region are centred among other things around textiles, agriculture and
mining. There is also French colonial cultural influence in the region as most of the countries were under French colonial rule (Moran et al., 2014, p.515).

Sub-Saharan Africa, commonly referred to as “Black Africa”, contains all countries in the eastern, western and southern Africa, which lie south of the Sahara Desert (Exploring Africa, n.d). Sub-Saharan Africa contains six of the ten world’s fastest-growing countries (Amoako-Agyei, 2009; Bolchover, 2012; Sanchez & Hinson, 2013). Sub-Saharan-Africa is the most heterogeneous region in the world- linguistically, culturally and ethically, which share many cultural elements but with variations (Amoako-Agyei, 2009, p.330; Government Offices of Sweden, 2016). Despite differences, there is a level of basic cultural understanding and basic principles shared among the people of Sub-Saharan Africa (Amoako-Agyei, 2009, p.330). Half of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa are children and young people and in most countries, more than two thirds live in rural areas (Government Offices of Sweden, 2016, p.5). Many Sub-Saharan African countries have experienced episodes of upheaval, violence and cultural challenges both from internal and external sources. Foreign religions such as Christianity and Islam coupled with colonialism challenged long-established customs, local religious beliefs and ways of life (Gordon & Gordon, 2007, p.2).

Conventional wisdom about Africa is that it is a continent that is “hopeless” (The Economist, 2000) and “backward” with brutal genocides. According to Gordon and Wolpe (1998, p.52), this undesirable image about Africa is rooted in media focusing exclusively on the negative aspects of the continent. However, in the late 1990s, the global environment of Africa underwent fundamental changes with greater emphasis on poverty reduction and debt forgiveness. In response to these external changes, internal reforms were in place and the growth in many African countries created renewed interest in Africa on the part of investors and trade partners (Taylor, 2012, p.9). To improve the business climate, 37 out of 48 economies in the SSA region instated many reforms in 2015/16, which is a relatively large increase from the previous year (World bank group, 2016). This makes the SSA region the second-highest incidence of reforms in the world (World bank
Most of the reforms carried out were with regards to starting a business and resolving insolvency (World Bank Group, 2016, p.40-3). Today, countries like Rwanda and Nigeria have made it easier to start a business through the introduction or improvement of online portals (World Bank Group, 2016, p.31). Reconciliation procedures for companies in financial difficulties are found in countries like Cameroon, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast to resolve insolvency (World Bank Group, 2016, p.43). Moreover, the African continent is experiencing a booming emerging middle class which is projected to be 1.1 billion by 2060 (African Development Bank Group, 2014, p.2). Cavusgil et al. (2015, 243-5) emphasise that a rising middle class allows for households to engage in unrestricted consumption whereby they tend to buy goods that are outside the limits of simple necessities, which is good for investors. Further, there is also a young growing workforce and this brings more opportunities for rapid economic growth in African countries (African Development Bank Group, 2014, p.6). These developments are unprecedented and yield a sense of hope and possibility for businesses in Africa.

Although scoring three times as high as the average improvement for OECD high income economies, many African countries continue to become the least business-friendly when it comes to regulations (World Bank Group, 2016, p.80). Further, corruption is also an issue that is costly for the economic growth as well as operating businesses in Africa. Corruption allows for private agents to be imposed independent bribes by governmental agencies and bureaucracies (Shleifer & Vishny, 1993). Even though efforts have been made to reduce corruption by implementing good practices, corruption is still prevalent in Africa. Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (2017) records some modest improvements in recent years, Botswana and Cape Verde ranked 35 and 38 respectively, which is exemplary for many African countries. Nonetheless, 90% of African countries ranked below 50 (Africa Development Bank Group, 2014, p.30) and Somalia is ranked the most corrupt country in the world (Transparency International, 2017). World Bank Group (2016, p.85) reports that corruption in Africa is generally exacerbated by a kinship–based social organisation where officials feel a moral obligation to the expectations of their networks and surroundings.

1.2 Theoretical Background
As previously mentioned, a few decades ago, most Swedish companies had limited trade with Africa. During this time, Sweden mostly traded with Asia and its largest trading partner there is China (Sweden Abroad, 2013, 2009, p.2). The main reason that Swedish companies trade with China is the potentially lucrative Chinese market (Sweden Abroad, 2013, 2009, p.4-7). Moreover, China has as a huge potential market because of the low-cost labour and manufacturing costs (Shugar, 2016), but for the past few years, the benefits of low costs have changed because of the economic changes China is facing. The economic growth is slowing down and wages and manufacturing costs are rising (Eloot et al., 2013). Meanwhile in Africa, there has been an increase in resource prices in the past years and this has boomed the economies in African countries, especially those located in the SSA region (Sy, 2013), which has the most resources in Africa. Although the African continent has been historically depicted as the home to the poorest people in the world, today Africa is home to growing economies that are persistent and widespread (African Development Bank Group, 2015). This, together with recent developments has positioned Africa to become the world’s next emerging economy which provides new opportunities for the continent to take investments from foreign companies, such as Swedish companies, and therefore improve the economy.
When foreign companies, such as Swedish companies, do business in Africa, they need to deal effectively with cross-cultural issues and failure to do so can have severe consequences (Huang et al., 2003). The globalisation of markets has led to the need for an increased standardisation or organisational design, systems and procedures (Nnadozie, 2001, p.52). Nonetheless, when doing business in a foreign country, it is not enough to understand and apply a universal business model, rather, understanding the culture of the people that you are dealing with is more important (Tomalin & Nicks, 2007, p.2). Therefore, it is important for foreign companies to think outside the proverbial box when collaborating and forming business partnerships in Africa (Koku, 2005). Cross-cultural issues are almost always prevalent when doing business across national borders and this applies to Swedish companies operating in other countries. For example, a study showed that in order for Scandinavian managers to avoid imposing their culture on Vietnamese managers, which is being on time, they will not come early to a meeting. This resulted in the Vietnamese managers sitting and waiting for Scandinavian managers (Anh & Van Thoan 2010, p.152). The study shows that even when solving a potential cross cultural conflict, Scandinavian and Vietnamese managers tried to adapt to each other’s culture, can create new problems which can be risky.

In Africa, cross cultural issues usually arise when conducting business due to differences in attitudes towards time. Mangaliso (2001, p.28) recounts a case that involved a sales representative who had an appointment with a Zulu customer at her home. The salesperson arrived punctuality at the customer’s home only to find out that the host was not ready and it took a while before the discussion started. Later, the salesperson found that in Zulu culture, the host has control over what happens when an individual has an appointment at their home. In essence, by agreeing to meet at the client’s home, the salesperson was tacitly agreeing that the host would decide whether she would prioritise family activities or the business meeting. Managers therefore need to balance the consistency of systems and procedures with adapting their “organisation to the local characteristics of the market, the legislation, the fiscal regime, the socio-political system and the cultural systems” to achieve success (Nnadozie, 2001, p.52). In a word, it is important to empathise and recognise that a country’s culture may be different from yours when doing business there, by understanding how the customers, partners and suppliers do business (Tomalin & Nicks, 2007, p.3).

For Swedish businesses, understanding and empathising with the African culture may be challenging, especially when there is a popular belief that contemporary Africa lacks business culture at the medium and large scale level. Business culture impacts the strategic decisions and directions for business (Bhagat & McQuaid, 1982, p.1). Taylor (2012, p.6) contends that the view that Africa lacks business culture is derived from the misconception of what African culture is, which further leads to the erroneous conclusion that African culture constrains a legitimate business in the region. Africa is culturally diverse, despite the monolithic caricature, which is the tendency to speak of Africa as a country with one culture which almost always has a negative connotation attached to it (Taylor, 2012, p.6). The continent consists of different countries with different values, beliefs and attitudes which need to be considered when doing business in the continent. This extreme cultural diversity poses many problems which needs to be clarified to provide necessary information that prospective investors in Africa could use to effectively deal with management challenges for business improvement and profitability.

The importance of cross-border business relations when operating in a culturally distant market where the norms and values of the two companies differ as is the case of a Swedish company and an African country has been emphasised (Williams et al., 1998; Fafchamps, 2004; Ford et al., 2011;
Mangaliso, 2001; Amoako-Agyei, 2009). Holm et al. (1996, p.1049) added that the survival and development of all companies are dependent on their relationship with customers, suppliers, business partners and others, and that the development of these relationships is even more important when conducting business in foreign markets. This is because such partners, customers and suppliers enable foreign companies to access local market knowledge, establish networks and facilitate bargaining negotiations. Poor infrastructure is a factor that constrains foreign businesses in Africa from accessing the right business partners and information (Fafchamps, 2004, p.12).

There are also challenges related to local market knowledge in Africa such as lack of reliable data, which derives from informal market cash transactions and establishing networks (Sime, 2012, p.3). The informal economy has activities that are not captured in the normal data and statistics of GDP. This hinders businesses from capturing insights that are relevant in helping understand customer behaviour. The large income disparity in Africa also results in varying consumer behaviour when it comes to spending and consumption (Sime, 2012, p.3). Consequently, it is important for investors to capture the needs of consumers and their behaviour. This can be challenging especially for foreign investors who do not share the same culture as consumers in this region. Policies that have been shown to reduce income disparities are infrastructure investment in roads and electrification (World Bank Group, 2016, p.11). Businesses in emerging markets are plagued by risks and challenges regarding poor infrastructure (Cavusgil et al., 2016, p.244). Although South Africa has a functioning infrastructure and an established market, the infrastructure in other parts of Africa are generally poor. For example, to support the company’s operations in Africa, a subsidiary of Tata Chemicals was obliged to build their own road and railway (Cavusgil et al., 2016, p245).

Considering the above-mentioned challenges and opportunities in the African business environment, exploration of how culture affects patterns of business behaviour commands attention. As stated above, Sweden has a close trade relations with the African continent and the differences in culture changes how business is conducted. The differences in values, beliefs and attitudes may require Swedish companies to adapt or change their business culture to be able to conduct business in the African countries. Yang et al. (2006), acknowledged that research in international business has mainly focused on one country sample and some regions such as African regions are under researched. Kamoche (2011) has similar views, arguing that Africa has been under researched in the fields of international business. Although considerable research has been devoted to Swedish businesses operating in regions such as Asia, because most countries are trading with China, there is a little focus on Swedish companies doing business in Africa in general. It is therefore important to explore how Swedish businesses deal with cross-cultural issues regarding business especially with the changing circumstances in Africa.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how Swedish companies adapt their business culture when operating in Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. The current paper aims to contribute to the body of research in business culture especially on the relationship between Sweden and the above-mentioned countries. This research will offer insights into how similarities and differences in business culture influence business relationships of Swedish businesses in African markets. The implications of the findings of this study should be useful for helping Swedish businesses who are either new to the African markets or are thinking of establishing there to successfully manage their business. This will be achieved by conducting interviews with companies that are already established in African markets.
1.4 Research question

*How do Electrolux and Scania adapt their business culture when operating African markets?*

1.5 Delimitations

This paper will focus on two Swedish multinational companies; Electrolux and Scania, that have been operating in African markets for at least 10 years. Since the purpose of our study is to gain understanding of how Swedish companies successfully adapt their business notwithstanding cultural differences, it is plausible to choose companies that have extensive experience in this region. Since Africa consists of 54 countries, there is a limitation to finding Swedish companies operating in all 54 countries. We have therefore chosen to focus on countries that Electrolux and Scania are currently active in. Electrolux is currently active in Egypt in the north and South Africa in the south, and Scania is active in Ghana in the west, Tanzania and Kenya in the east.

Although we acknowledge that to propose a monolithic African culture is inaccurate (Darley & Blankson, 2008), because Africa is characterised by varying beliefs and behaviours, we will sometimes use the term “Africa” or “African” in the ensuing sections as an overarching concept. This is because we want to avoid repeating the African countries that we will focus on. Moreover, there are commonalities of some cultural dimensions such as hierarchical social structure, the importance of kinship, time perception, human interdependence and reciprocity among these countries.

1.6 Sweden’s Business Relations with African Countries

Sweden has been trading with African countries for decades and by 1950, the Africa’s share of Swedish exports was around 3.6% (Wohlgemuth, 2002, p.47). We believe that it is important to present the business relations between Sweden and African countries that this study will focus on. All the chosen countries in this study are important Swedish markets in the regions that they are located in. During the 1990s, private direct investments by Swedish companies had almost ceased to exist in Southern Africa mainly due to the struggle for independence and apartheid in South Africa, which eventually led to sanctions against South Africa (Wohlgemuth, 2002, p.47). The sanctions were lifted in 1993 which significantly increased exports to South Africa and made the country Sweden’s most important market in Africa (Business Sweden, 2017). During the recession in 2009, Swedish exports to South Africa declined but grew again and amount to over 10 billion Swedish kronor per year. Today, South Africa is the largest market for Sweden in Africa with about 100 Swedish companies operating in the country alone. (Sweden Abroad, 2017a) South Africa is a gateway to the rest of the African continent which is why so many Swedish companies are established in the country (Business Sweden, 2017).

In north Africa, Egypt is an important trading partner for Sweden, especially after their entry into the Association Agreement in 2004. An increase in the trade exchange between Sweden and Egypt has strengthened ties but trade exchange and relations between the two countries have traditionally been strong. Egypt is the second largest market for Sweden in Africa after South Africa with around 30 Swedish companies established in the country. Total Swedish export to Egypt amounted to 6.15 billion SEK in 2015 and has been stable during the last few years despite the political unrest in the country. (Sweden Abroad 2016)
Furthermore, there has been a growing interest in Swedish companies doing business in East African markets and a growing number have established themselves in Kenya and Tanzania. Sweden’s trade relations with Kenya date back to Kenya’s independence in 1963 and since then, the two countries have shared longstanding and cordial relations. Sweden's export to Kenya amounted to approximately 311 million SEK in 2014 and today, there are about 50 Swedish related companies currently active in Kenya. (Sweden Abroad, 2017b). Trade between Sweden and Tanzania started around 1994 but increased during 1998 when total Swedish exports to Tanzania amounted to approximately 197 million SEK (SIDA, 1999).

Ghana is situated in West Africa and is the second largest country in that region. It is a country that is well structured when compared to other African countries; characterised by a stable democracy and relatively less corruption. Ghana became Sweden’s third largest market in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and trade between Ghana and Sweden amounted to 1.4 billion SEK in 2009. Today many Swedish companies either have direct presence in Ghana or rely on local partners or agents. (Sweden Abroad, 2017c)
2. Theoretical Frame of Reference

This chapter will present existing literature and theories within our study. It begins by exploring the meaning of the concept culture for a subsequent understanding of the different behaviours of the Swedish and African business cultures. A comparison between Swedish and African business culture follows and we further present theories of business relationships, cross-cultural learning and cross-cultural adaptation.

2.1 Culture

Culture is found to be a key component of business because it impacts management of people, marketing activities interaction with customers and relationship with partners. Intercultural communication is central to contemporary organisations and consequently, it is important to explore the meaning of the concept culture for a subsequent understanding of the different behaviours of the Swedish and African business cultures. Although culture is an important concept in the business environment, it has been defined in so many ways that no consensus has emerged (Bhagat & McQuaid, 1982, p.1).

Varner and Beamer define culture as coherent, learned and shared viewed of a group of people that ranks what is important, furnishes attitudes and dictates behaviour (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p.10). An implication of this definition is that culture is learned, meaning that it is not innate. This goes to show that a manager or businesses operating across national borders can develop and learn intercultural competence to have a better understanding of a salient culture. Further, knowing that cultures rank what is important differently, which dictates behaviour and furnishes attitudes, can help businesses know what is important to a culture and consequently avoid conflicts that may arise from communication. This definition embodies points that makes it difficult for different cultures to work together toward a common goal regarding a shared view or just what is important since cultures rank what is important to them differently.

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), in their classic monograph, listed 160 definitions of culture by anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers and others, arranged into categories: descriptive, historical, normative, psychological, structural, genetic and incomplete definitions. They later presented a useful summary of the definitions and passages: ‘culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action’(Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p.181). The authors aimed to present a historical rather than a true or correct perspective on the many definitions of culture thereby creating a conscious awareness of the variations in which the concept of culture has been used.

Hofstede et al. (2010) have done comprehensive research about how culture influences value in the workplace. The authors use the analogy of the ways computers are programmed and define culture as ‘the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others’ (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 6). This definition creates irreversible social implications such as the need for culture to be updated. We have seen updates of culture on how the world is converging towards a more westernised culture aided by globalisation. Nonetheless,
some cultures like the Piraha tribe still conserve their culture (Everett, 2005), showing that cultural values may change but not everyone will get or accept the new “version.” This is something that foreign investors need to tackle and diversity in the workforce has been shown to help understand this issue. Hofstede et al.’s definition does not imply comparing values, attitudes or behaviours, rather it seeks to know why and how people behave the way they do.

Hofstede (1980) and Hofstede et al. (2010) researched about how culture influences values in the workplace and came up with 6 cultural dimensions. The way in which a country stands on the context dimensions affects communication patterns. These dimensions are power distance, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism and long-term orientation. These dimensions are presented below.

2.1.1 Hofstede’s 6 Cultural Dimensions

**Power distance**
The power distance dimension details the degree of equality and inequality in a society underlined by social organisational patterns, age, roles and institutions. It describes the hierarchy between a leader and a subordinate. When power distance is high, it means that followers and leaders endorse a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. When power distance is low, power is distributed, independent thought is encouraged and people question authority.

**Individualism vs. collectivism**
This is the degree to which a society reinforces individual or collectivist achievement and interpersonal relationship. A collectivist culture reinforces collective achievement and is relationship oriented. What this means for people from collectivist cultures is that the success of one person is the success of the whole group and this implies an importance for teamwork and helping each other. On the other hand, individualistic cultures will attribute individual success to the individual and results are more important to them than nurturing relationships.

**Masculinity vs. femininity**
This dimension describes the degree to which a society reinforces traditional male/female characteristics. When a society scores high on masculinity, it means that a society reinforces competitiveness, assertiveness and achievement. Caring for others and quality of life is what characterise a feminine society. Feminine societies tend to be democratic; encourage discussions and decision making achieved through involvement.

**Uncertainty avoidance**
This is the degree to which a society avoids or tolerates ambiguity or uncertainty. It describes how the society handles an unknown future and how prepared they are for what might happen. Societies with high uncertainty avoidance are more rigid and tend to put emphasis on principles and rules than practice and do not deviate from these principles. Low uncertainty avoidance societies, uncertainty tolerant, are more flexible and tend to have a more relaxed attitude regarding ambiguity.

**Long-term orientation**
The degree to which a society embraces long-term devotion to forward thinking values is the long-term orientation dimension. It is about how the society is connecting its own past with the challenge that the present and future brings. A low score on long-term orientation, short-term orientation,
means that the people in the society view change with suspicion, maintain honoured traditions, want to achieve quick results and have low propensity to save. On the other hand, long-term oriented societies tend to be more pragmatic, embrace change and prepare for the future.

**Indulgence**

This dimension describes the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses according to how society allows them or how they were raised. Societies, that do not engage in indulgence, restrain. When they do engage in indulgence, they control the gratification of desire and put less emphasis on leisure time.

### 2.1.2 Comparison on Country Context

Hofstede (1980) used data from a survey of IBM employees from 40 countries reveal national culture. Below is a comparison of Sweden and some African countries to see the values of the 6 dimension in each country.

As can be seen in figure 3, Sweden scores relatively low on the power distance dimension but all the compared African countries score high. This goes to show that generally, African countries endorse a hierarchical order in society. House et al., (2004) engaged in a 10-year project that describes how 62 societies score on 9 major cultural attributes and 6 major global leader behaviours. This project is called the Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) project. In phase 3 of the GLOBE project, which focuses on 25 societies, Chhokar et al. (2008, p.1021) point that most African societies do not expect power to be distributed or have gender equality. It is found that power distance is positively related to corruption due to public officials believing that it is their privilege to obtain personal benefits because of the status they have from their official positions. Furthermore, the large disparity in power may causes the underclass to try to improve their positions or living standards through extortion (Getz & Volkema, 2001, p.14). Szymura-Tyc and Kucia (2016, p.71) explain that when someone occupies a top position in a society with a high level of power distance, it entails that they receive higher salaries and special privileges. This is one aspect that may be challenging for Swedes doing business in Africa. However, knowing and understanding that high power distance is prevalent among African countries can also help Swedes doing business in Africa better manage potential conflicts.
When Hofstede's dimension of individualism is looked at, Sweden scores high, showing that it is an individualistic country. In phase 3 of the GLOBE project, Holmberg and Åkerblom (2008, p.41) found Sweden to be the most collectivist society regarding institutional collectivism among all participating countries. Institutional collectivism is referred to as social arrangements on a societal level that promote conformity. This makes Sweden an extremely collectivist and an extremely individualist society. An explanation by Holmberg and Åkerblom (2007, p.47-8) of this paradox is that Hofstede measured family collectivism and did not distinguish between the small family group and the society which is the much wider group. Swedes “more than any other culture examined ...Sweden begins with the individual, his or her integrity, uniqueness, freedom, needs, and values, yet insist that the fulfilment and destiny of the individual lies in developing and sustaining others by the gift of his or her own work and energy” (Hampten-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993, p. 239, cited in Holmberg & Åkerblom, 2007, p.48). This bridge the differences in the findings of Hofstede and the GLOBE project.

South Africa also scores high on this dimension, making it an individualistic country too. While South Africa has an individualistic culture, Egypt, Tanzania, Kenya and Ghana are collectivist societies since they score low on the individualism dimension. In a collectivist society, relations between the employer and the employee resemble that of family ties (Szymura-Tyc & Kucia, 2016, p.71). Collectivism facilitates teamwork and African workers have a positive work ethic which tend to be relatively less productive (Nnadozie, 2001, p.56-9). Regarding corruption, collectivism has been found to be associated with corruption because in this type of culture, it is likely that public officials would accept or demand a bribe, or the person’s allegiance to the social group would make them overlook their responsibilities to act ethically (Getz & Volkema, 2001, p.16).

There is an undoubted difference about one dimension between the Swedish and most African cultures. Sweden’s score on masculinity is very low meaning that it is a feminine society. This is reflected in their work/life balance and flexible work hours which Swedes value. There seems to be a consensus between Hofstede's findings and the GLOBE project which ranks Sweden as the international lowest ranking in assertiveness (Holmberg & Åkerblom, 2007, p.47). Although South Africa is more like Sweden than other African countries on most of Hofstede’s six dimensions, it may be a surprise to many that Egypt, Tanzania, Kenya and Ghana score relatively lower on masculinity than South Africa, meaning that these countries are more like Sweden on this dimension than South Africa. The implication of this is that whereas Sweden may face cross-cultural conflicts regarding for example work/life balance in many parts of Africa, this may not be the case in other parts.

Sweden scores lower than all the compared African countries in uncertainty avoidance. This implies that Sweden has a lower preference to avoiding ambiguity which means that managers in Sweden tend to focus more on strategic issues than they do on operational activities (Szymura-Tyc & Kucia, 2016, p.71). This is the opposite in high uncertainty avoidant societies. In high uncertainty avoidant societies, matters are regulated in detail but they are not usually followed (Szymura-Tyc & Kucia, 2016, p.71). Uncertainty avoidance has also been found to promote corruption. Individuals who want to achieve personal interest may feel the need to go through informal channels which induces, in a sense, bribery and corruption (Getz & Volkema, 2001, p.15).

Regarding long-term orientation, all the compared African countries score low but Sweden scores relatively high on this dimension. There is no information regarding long term orientation for
Kenya. This means that Swedes are more inclined to engage in long term plans than their African counterparts. Many African countries score about mid-range on both uncertainty avoidance and long term orientation in the GLOBE project (Chhokar, et al., 2008, p.1021). When it comes to relations with business partners, profits are evaluated from a short-term perspective (Szymura-Tyc & Kucia, 2016, p.71).

Another surprising outcome is the similarity between Sweden and Ghana on their score on indulgence, which is moderately high. While South Africa scores relatively high on this dimension, Tanzania scores low on this dimension. Egypt scores extremely low on indulgence in comparison. There is no information regarding indulgence for Kenya.

In a word, the culture of Sweden through the lens of the Hofstede’s six-dimension model shows that although Sweden generally has differences with African countries on some cultural dimensions, there are also similarities especially with South Africa.

The cultural dimension model by Hofstede does not escape criticisms. To start with the research which the model is based on was conducted more than 30 years ago which makes it somewhat dated. Culture is dynamic, and there are rapid changes in global environments which raises the question about the relevancy of this model today. A study in a subsidiary of one company, IBM, cannot provide information about entire national cultures. Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996, p.67) criticised the model for being developed empirically rather than theoretically. Jones (2007, p.5) also raised a similar point that a “survey is not an appropriate instrument for accurately determining and measuring cultural disparity.” The international team that developed this model consisted only of Western researchers (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996, p.67). This gives the model a western perspective of viewing culture which is not holistic in nature.

Furthermore, some authors have raised concerns over the use of nations as units of analysis in cross-cultural studies and have therefore criticised Hofstede’s model. To start with, Hofstede assumes that nations are homogeneous when in fact the milieu of individuals in a culture can be heterogeneous. For example, Africa is home to the world’s most diverse countries, due to the continent’s colonial legacy. The “European powers also carved Africa up into territories and possessions, along lines with little respect for the actual people who lived there. When Europeans left, the borders stayed” (Fisher, 2013). This shows that people who share the same cultural values can find themselves in different nations and those sharing different cultural values may be in the same country. Boyacigiller, et al. (2007, p.127) state that nations are not formed along stable cultural lines, rather, they are arbitrary political, economics, technological and social formations. This is exemplified by nations disintegrating, such as Sudan, as well as regional integrations such as the European Union (EU). Nevertheless, Inglehart and Baker (2000, p. 37) insist that nations remain a key unit of shared experience despite globalisation, and that the values of everyone in that society is shaped by its cultural and educational institutions. Furthermore, Parker (1997, p.1) makes the point that national culture is a critical factor that affects “economic development, demographic behaviour and general business practices’. Smith (2004) has also defended the use of national cultures as a cross-cultural unit of analysis. Notwithstanding the criticisms of Hofstede’s cultural dimension model, we believe that his work is still important to our study and can be used as a tool for a general understanding of cultures.
2.2 Business Culture

People from different countries are perceived to have a common culture that influences how they behave in social and organisational life. Members of different national backgrounds have different expectation about the formal structures of organisations and the informal patterns by which work in the workplace is accomplished (Boyacigiller, et al., 2007, p.122). It is these expectations that dictate how people respond to unfamiliar behaviours, how negotiations are carried out, and how business is conducted with business partners from a different country (Boyacigiller, et al., 2007, p.122). Just like Swedish business culture is the Swedish way of life, African business culture is the African way of life. This is determined by the way of life of society in general which are the values, attitudes and behaviours observable within the business framework, in business relations or business operations (Nnadozie, 2001, p.52).

To understand the cultural considerations related to both Swedish and African business environments, it is helpful to answer certain basic questions as found in Varner and Beamer (2011):

- Do results or relationships take priority?
- Is approach to authority and social organisations horizontal or hierarchical?
- Are rules bent or followed?
- Is uncertainty avoided or tolerated?
- How is communication conducted?
- How is time understood?

Results vs. relationships

Although cultures vary greatly from nation to nation in Africa, there are some common cultural characteristics. According to Varner and Beamer (2011, p.113), cultures that are result-oriented tend to be individualistic and value the outcomes of actions, especially measurable outcomes, as what matters at work or in life. In line with Hofstede’s dimensions, this qualifies Sweden to be a result-oriented culture. Relationship oriented cultures on the other hand, tend to be collectivistic (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p.113). The relationships that connect people in a network are more significant than the tasks people accomplish. Nnadozie (2001, p.54-6) pu forth that personal connections and relations are very important in the African business culture. In general, Africans emphasis knowing people, having personal connections and relationships. African business culture is about harmony and cooperation which means working for the benefit of the whole, not necessarily based on long term goals, is more important (Nnadozie, 2001, p.54-6).

Approach to authority and social organisations

In many cultures, approach to authority is indirect and sometimes, people must go through certain avenues to reach an authority. According to Holmberg and Åkerblom (2007, p.49), social organisation in Sweden is rather horizontal. The opinions, ideas and experiences, of everyone, are respected and heard, because everyone is considered a potential contributor to the accomplishment of a task in place or to the solution of the problem being dealt with (Holmberg & Åkerblom, 2007, p.49). Further, compromising solutions, collective consideration and mutual understanding are valued in the Swedish culture (Holmberg & Åkerblom, 2007, p.49). Differently, Africans generally take formalities and prestige very seriously and put emphasis on respect for hierarchies, title and age (Nnadozie, 2001, p.55-6). It is believed by many Africans that that age and wisdom are positively related which gives rise to respect for authority. The remarkable respect for hierarchies
and emphasis on protocol leads to an extreme politeness and a slow pace of life (Nnadozie, 2001, p.55-6).

**Approach to rules and uncertainty avoidance**
Following rules, and making sure that others follow them too, is a way of reducing ambiguity which is related to uncertainty avoidance (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p.118). In places where relationships are primary and power distances are great, like in SSA, rules may be bent to serve more important values (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p.118). Because rules are not usually enforced, Africans generally do not adhere to them and have the tendency to break them (Nnadozie, 2001, p.56). The prevalence of bribery and corruption in the region exemplifies this. In comparison, places where results matter such as Sweden, rules are viewed as important to facilitate results (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p.114-8).

**Communication**
Culture can be regarded as a frame of reference in which communication takes place. Hall, in his book, *Beyond Culture* (1976), theorised about culture by examining the role of communication context in exchanges, which he termed high-context (HC) and low-context (LC). Hall (1976, p.91) warns that no culture exists exclusively at one end of the continuum. Hall asserts that when communicating in HC cultures, the meaning of a message depends on the context, but it can also be internalised in the person where very little is explicit in the coded message sent. HC cultures prefer face-to-face communication as a channel, this way, non-verbal aspects of communication such as gestures and facial expressions are visible, hence, more accuracy when decoding a message. For HC cultures, written communication may come across to them as cold and it is hard to understand what tone is being used. According to Varner and Beamer (2011, p.181-5), when engaging in written communication, HC cultures use an indirect plan, meaning that they do not start with the main message.

In HC cultures, harmony and keeping face is high on their list of values. Regarding harmony in HC cultures, someone for example will say ‘no’ by saying that ‘that may be difficult’ (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p.195), because it is easier for them to say yes than to say no. Keeping one’s words is valued in keeping face, and not doing so will result in losing face. For this reason, words are enough for closing contracts in HC cultures. Therefore, it is important to consider the context when doing business in a foreign land. HC cultures tend to be collectivist in their social unit of life and are more relationship oriented. Relationship-oriented cultures value nurturing relationships and are more likely to prefer oral to written communication. (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p.114)

Communicating in LC cultures is the opposite of communicating in LC cultures, where the meaning of the message is almost entirely conveyed in verbal language; oral or written (Hall, 1976, p.91). LC cultures prefer written contracts and like to emphasise understanding through precise, clear and direct words. LC cultures use a direct plan in communication; starting with the main message. LC cultures may therefore view HC culture indirect plan as a waste of time because communication is primarily task oriented (Cordon, 2008, p.401). In a word, similar cultures are more likely to communicate more effectively than dissimilar cultures which in turn can impact corporation, commitment and the level of trust among business partners, suppliers and customers. If cultural differences are significant enough to affect communication between business partners, their business relation can be undermined (Mehta et al., 2006, p.163).
Hall (1976) did not present country ratings for his HC/LC model, rather, he put a positioning of some cultures for his concept of context. Rosch and Segler (1987) extended Hall’s contexting model by placing his ranking in a graphical format. In later research, Hall and Hall (1990) examined contexting in intercultural business communications in several cultures. Figure 4 is mainly based on Rosch and Segler (1987), and Hall and Hall (1990) research. As can be seen in figure 4, Sweden is a relatively LC culture and Holmberg and Åkerblom (2007, p.49) mentioned the same. Figure 4 also shows Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa are relatively HC cultures and Mangaliso (2001, p.26) concur by stating that in the African milieu, children are thought from birth to listen to the context as well as the nuances of language in conversations.

Time perception
Cultures differ in attitudes toward time and how it should be observed. According to Hall (1976), HC cultures tend to be polychronic; meaning that they use time as a flexible medium in which activities take place. Nnadozie (2001, p.56) claim that Africans are generally polychronic in that they have a more relaxed attitude towards time and view it as flexible. Moreover, polychronic culture carry out tasks simultaneously where different activities and several different people are involved. In contrast, LC cultures such as Sweden tend to be monochronic; they treasure time as a commodity, tend to be more oriented towards planning and scheduling, and tasks are carried out sequentially (Hall, 1979, p.150).

Hall’s work has been cited in most academic literature regarding cross-cultural comparisons. His work has become integral parts of intercultural communication textbooks (Varner & Beamer, 2011). Fantini and Smith (1997, p.133) claimed that Hall’s HC/LC model is the most widely used cultural model in intercultural communication courses. However, Hall’s work has escaped scrutiny and has received little criticism due to the vagueness of the presentation of his model (Hermeking, 2006, p.201). Nonetheless, Cordon (2008) criticised Hall for not mentioning his method about how his HC/LC model was developed. Moreover, Hall did not describe how he conceptualised his rankings of cultures from LC to HC, nor did he explain how he collected data. We nonetheless
believe that Hall’s HC/LC model will be useful in this study because in this globalised age, intercultural communication is imperative and an integral part in the functioning of an organisation.

2.3 Business Relationships

Business relationships are very important for companies because they are the basis of business and without them, no company can operate (Ford et al., 2011, p.1). To survive and be successful, businesses depend on their relationships with other actors in the market especially in highly uncertain business environments (Acquaah & Eshun, 2010, p.673) such as Egypt. Coviello and Munro (1995, p.50) add that markets are perceived as a relationship among customers, suppliers, competitors, private and public support agents. Business relationships bring many advantages such as enabling the company to access skills and resources of others (Ford et al., 2011, p1), accessing valuable information about products, marketing, and technology, as well as creating opportunities for acquiring and exploiting knowledge (Acquaah & Eshun, 2010, p.673). Business relationships also enable the company to make profitable sales and save time and cost in producing and delivering products and services (Ford et al., 2011, p.1). When a company expands across national borders through existing relationships, which helps to develop new partners and new contacts, it is more likely to succeed in that new market (Coviello, & Munro, 1995, p.50).

Businesses engage in different behaviours in their web of relationships to take advantage of the benefits that business relationships bring. Businesses may attempt to influence legislations in a way that will favour them by interacting with relevant governmental bodies and trade organisations (Thornton et al., 2013, p.1160). According to Acquaah and Eshun (2010, p.674), the government plays an important role in regulating business activities and providing resources and opportunities in many Sub-Saharan African countries which creates a high level of government dependent businesses. Nonetheless domestic-owned companies tend to benefit more from building relationships with government politicians when compared to foreign-owned companies (Acquaah & Eshun, 2010, p.691). Businesses may also use an important party such as a customer to gain insight into customer preferences and therefore influence demand or identify and interact with potential partners through bypassing important network members (Thornton et al., 2013, p.1161-2). They may also take advantage of newly formed relationship with a partner in a new market to get access to its local knowledge and its established web of relationships (Thornton et al., 2013, p.1161-2).

However, trust, respect and confidence are essential elements when doing business in Africa to take advantage of the benefits that business relationships bring (Moran et al., 2014, p.512). Personal trust, which comes from history of successful exchanges, is an effective substitute for the security provided by costless enforcement (Fafchamps, 2004, p.14). Trust can therefore give assurance between the parties involved in a relationship that each other's actions will not harm or put to risk the other. This confidence allows the parties involved to save cost on formal monitoring to maintain the relationship. Getting to know a business partner as an individual before getting down to actual business activities is very essential as friendship comes next in importance after family for Africans (Moran et al., 2014, p.512). This makes building interpersonal relationships a prerequisite for having a business relationship. Further, African societies are generally warm and friendly and interpersonal relationships are based on sincerity and respect such that “when Africans smile, it means they like you. When smiles are not seen, it is a clear sign of distrust” (Moran et al., 2014, p.512). In many African countries for example, a philosophical thought system known as Ubuntu embodies the values, norms and behaviours of many in the population. Ubuntu is about human
interdependence, harmony, hospitality, teamwork and treating others with respect and dignity. It is a common phrase in many parts of Africa that ‘a person is a person through others’, meaning that it is only through the relationship that one has with others that he or she becomes a person. (Mangaliso, 2001, p.24; Amoako-Agyei, 2009, p.332). Thus, an individual cannot be isolated from his or her community.

In the same way that an individual cannot be separated from his or her community, no business relationship exists in isolation and all are aggregated as a network (Ford et al., 2011, p.5). Networks can be perceived as informal relations among social actors in a community (Qureshi, 1995, p.16). Szymura-Tyc and Kucia (2016, p.72) argue that the individualism/collectivism cultural dimension of a society may influence networking relationships due to how members of the society perceive individual and mutual respect, and how important trust and loyalty are in the relationships. In this globalised age where knowledge and information are the basics of wealth and power, networking relationships enables a new way of working by meeting the challenges posed by the information age (Qureshi, 1995, p.15). Networks can function as a means of coordinating and exchanging efficient and reliable information (Qureshi, 1995, p.16). Electronic communications technology is a very significant contributor to business relationships as it allows a range of interaction to come into play and provides a medium of communication for people living in different parts of the world (Qureshi, 1995, p.19-20). However, developing business relationships takes time and require efforts in terms of investment and maintaining the relationship. These efforts can sometimes be a burden to carry (Ford et al., 2011, p.15). Nonetheless, to build capabilities and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, it is essential for businesses to develop relationships and establish collaboration with business counterparts in African markets. Engaging in such behaviour will give assurance to business people that they are making appropriate decisions for the culture of the market in which they are competing in, which will in enhance the quality of managerial decision making (Darley & Blankson, 2008, p.380). Networking is important in building business relationships and cultural knowledge is a key part of successful networking (Tomalin, & Nicks, 2007, p.15).

2.4 Cross-cultural Learning

Studies about how important cross cultural competences are for the success of international business have been done by Bird et al. (1999); Johnson et al. (2006); Yamazaki and Kayes (2004); and Black and Mendellhall (1990). Their research has identified three components that are integral to the success of international business. These components are, cultural knowledge, skills, and attributes. These authors discuss how a venture can fail when not enough training has been conducted or pre-understanding gained before going to a new country. These components are supported by Hofstede’s six dimensions and Hall's intercultural communication competence that are described above.

To get to know a new culture, Bird et al. (1999) described Hofstede’s cultural dimensions as a tool to help decode and provide a deeper understanding of cultural differences. The dimensions can be viewed as a universal language that will help the understanding of new cultures and environments. However, when focusing on one culture, such as the host culture, the dimensions are not enough to understand its complexity, and stereotyping will emerge to help understand the host-culture. The cultural behaviour might not fit with the imagined stereotypes, which can become a hindrance for getting a deeper understanding of that behaviour (Bird et al., 1999, p.163).
The components mentioned above have been used to create a framework that combines cultural knowledge, skills, and attributes (Johnson et al., 2006). The knowledge dimension takes several aspects into account, such as knowledge of language and rules of interactions, but focuses on two aspects: general and specific cultural knowledge about the host-country. General knowledge is about recognising or knowing the cultural differences between one's own, and the host-country, in an international business environment (Johnson et al., 2006, p.530). For example, the difference in legal, economic, political, and social aspects (Johnson et al., 2006, p.531). Specific knowledge is the specifics about the other culture, such as history, laws, invisible rules in the society, and customs. This type of knowledge can be gained by providing training for the employees, for example by learning the host language, which can also be perceived as a skill (Johnson et al., 2006, p.531). The next component is skills, which is described as the abilities of a person which has been acquired over a period. These include language competence, ability to adapt to new behaviour norms of the new cultural environment, conflict resolution, and good stress-management (Johnson et al., 2006, p.531).

Additional research on cross culture has been done by Yamazaki and Kayes (2004), where they identified 73 skills that are important for cross-cultural learning (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004, p.362). They narrowed down the list to four necessary skills that they combined with Kolb’s experiential learning theory (ELT), and made it into a framework. They have used the following four dimensions: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Each dimension is part of a specific learning style (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004, p.365-6). For example, concrete experience is about the feeling of experiencing a new situation, or reinterpretation of an existing situation (McLeod, 2013). Yamazaki and Kayes (2004) have put forth the skills that represent these learning styles with these as the four major skills: interpersonal, information, analytical, and action skills (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004, p.372-3). To emphasise the importance of cross-cultural training for international business, the authors Black and Mendellhall (1990) performed a literature study and combined the findings with Social learning theory (SLT) to acquire some empirical strength behind their data (Black & Mendellhall, 1990, p.120-1). It showed that the training has a positive relationship to a person’s development of skills, adjustment (or adaptation) and performance to cross-cultural situations (Black & Mendellhall, 1990, p.124-5). By combining the skills with the learning style that fits the individual, it can help with cross-cultural learning and adaption in a new host-culture.

2.5 Cross-cultural Adaptation
The term adaptation goes deeper than identifying the cultural values of the foreign culture by understanding the logic behind the culture and establishing the individual cultural values within that logic, such as was discussed by Bird et al. (1999, p.164). It has been discussed above about how knowledge and skills are important factors for cross-cultural training and understanding. The author Selmer (2007) carried out a study of American workers working in Canada and Germany to see how they acted in the different cultural environments, where one environment is similar and the other dissimilar to their own. The author’s proposition was that it was equally difficult to adapt in a dissimilar as a similar host cultural environment, and that there are different types of adaptation involved, such as general, work and time-related adaptation (Selmer, 2007, p.194). The study showed that the similarity or dissimilarity of cultural environments are irrelevant to how workers are adapting to the new host culture. The adaptation to the new culture could be because it easier in a dissimilar host culture due to the easily identified differences; however, even in a similar cultural environment, there will be some differences, but one tends to fail to see them, because they
do not look for them. It is assumed that there are no differences in a similar cultural environment to one’s own, and when those situations occur, it can create frustration and problems for workers who are unable to see them (Selmer, 2007, p.194). The differences between the African culture, compared to Swedish, is easy to identify as was discussed above with Hofstede’s dimensions. However, it is also discussed that there are unexpected similarities between some African countries, similarities which may catch expatriates unaware when going there. This study argues the importance of having the knowledge and skills, as identified above, to improve cross-cultural training to increase the likelihood of success in international business. These skills can develop into cultural intelligence, which is the ability to interpret the unfamiliar behaviour into a familiar behaviour to understand the host country’s cultural behaviour better (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004, p.1).

A cultural intelligence study has been conducted by Templer et al. (2006) where they explored the relationship between motivational culture intelligence and realistic previews to cross-cultural adjustments for expatriates in global environments. The authors explain motivational cultural intelligence, which is to what extent the individual is interested or driven to adapt to their new cultural environment. It stimulates and channels the individuals’ cultural knowledge and strategies to guide themselves in cultural situations (Templer et al., 2006, p.156-7). When it comes to cross-cultural adjustment, Templer et al. (2006) have identified three dimensions; general, interaction, and work adjustment. General adjustment is how individuals are adjusting to the general living conditions and the new host culture. Interaction adjustment is how comfortable they are engaging in interpersonal relations with the host population. The work adjustment dimension is how well individuals are at fitting in with the local work environment, with their expectations, and the new requirements they are facing in the foreign workplace (Johnson et al., 2006, p. 530). These dimensions are like the two aspects Johnson et al. (2006, p.530-531) wrote about. Templer et al. (2006) found that motivational cultural intelligence is a part of cross-cultural adjustment and it is based on the individuals’ own interests in succeeding in the host-culture. High interests from the individual displays higher interest in integrating and learning about the host culture, and vice versa (Templer et al., 2006, p.170-1).

Cultural shock will occur no matter how much the organisation prepares the expatriates (Winkelman, 1994; Lewthwaite, 1997; Jassawalla et al. 2004). However, there are ways that the organisations can decrease or minimise the discomfort of cultural shock for its expatriates. This comes back to the question of whether Swedish companies are preparing their expatriates before they are going abroad for their assignments, and emphasises the importance this has for said expatriates. Winkelman (1994) has identified four stages that the expatriate will go through before they reach adaptation. To ease the process of those stages, the authors emphasise the importance of cross-cultural training before departure and increasing the personal skills that will be needed to be able to implement the training in the host country.

Cultural shock is a phenomenon that will happen to the expatriate, prepared or not. Winkelman (1994) has conducted a study about it together with adaptation. He has focused on the nature, different stages, and what causes culture shock as well as established general guidelines on how to manage them. Culture shock is when the differences in the host culture and one's own culture are clashing in social, corporate culture, behaviour, and language situations; this is its nature (Winkelman, 1994, p.122). Winkelman (1994, p.122) found four stages that an expatriate will go through; honeymoon stage, crisis or cultural shock stage, adjustment and reorientation stage, and
last adaptation, resolution or acculturation stage. The last stage is when adaptation and acceptance of the host culture is happening and the final goal for the expatriate reached. Winkelman (2004, p.122) argued that the best ways of reaching the last adaptation stage is to prepare the expatriate with the right knowledge to be able to handle the differences. This study will be used as groundwork for the interview questions about their preparation process for their expatriates. The organisation can increase the success rate of adaption by providing the necessary resources for the expatriate, making the transition as comfortable as possible. A recourse, can be to provide a house with security, food, and transport (Winkelman, 1994, p.124).

A study about how international students are adapting to their new environments has been conducted by Lewthwaite (1997). He focused on the aspects of cultural, social, academic, and linguistic adaptation (Lewthwaite, 1997, p.167). When the students arrived in the host culture, they had little to no information about the differences between their new host culture and their own. The students felt that the university did not provide enough information about the behaviour and social construct of their host culture, which in turn ended up causing irritation and misunderstandings (Lewthwaite, 1997, p.175). This is an aspect shared with a working environment, such as the one focused on in the current study. This aspect of Lewthwaite (1997, p.167) can be applied to employees at a foreign company as well, as they share large workloads and a social (corporate) environment.

Lewthwaite (1997, p.175) also found that the academic studies provided the students with a heavy workload, which deprived them of free time to experience their host culture. This led them to feel that they were on the edge or outskirts of the host culture rather than integrated within it. Lewthwaite (1997, p.176) also discovered that the international students, during this change and adaptation process, were seeking out other students from the same or similar culture. They argued that it helped them relax to speak their own language and know their own hidden social behaviour. It was a necessity for them to be able to survive during their time in the host culture (Lewthwaite, 1997, p.176). This is another aspect which can be extrapolated to a corporate environment, as seeking contact with host individuals outside of the employee pool is a difficult endeavour, leading to similar isolationist feelings. Therefore, following Lewthwaite (1997, p.176), the aspects of preparation and need for integration are similar between these two environments. For the current study, these are important aspects to consider. The other aspects of culture, social and linguistic, will be the same as the current study as well.

How the expatriate managers adjust and handle their cross-cultural conflicts has been researched by Jassawalla et al. (2004). They found that most expatriates are cancelling their foreign assignment before its ending date because of stress and frustration over the cultural differences. This is from poor cross-cultural adaption, and when not done properly, causes stress, discomfort, and frustration. (Jassawalla et al., 2004, p.837) The authors believe that cultural training and development of interpersonal skills before departure is key for the success of the expatriate’s stay in the host country (Jassawalla et al., 2004, p.847). As previous authors in this section have discussed, cross-cultural adaptation and training are important factors for success in international business. A study about global managers working in foreign environments, and their abilities to adapt these environments, was carried out by Deal et al. (2003). They believe that cultural adaptability is a critical part of the success for a global leader. Three factors were identified; cross-cultural adaptation, international experience, and training (Deal et al., 2003, p.152-5). The importance of cross-cultural adaptation and training has been discussed by most of the authors above and Deal et al. (2003) do not describe
them in a new way. But international experience is a new factor that has not been mentioned by previous authors in this section. The authors argue that the more international experience an individual has, the more understanding of the world they will have, therefore expanding how they perceive the world through their own experiences. It will help them get a better understanding and awareness that there are cultural differences wherever they go, and embrace them instead of seeing them as an obstacle. (Deal et al., 2003, p.153-4)
3. Scientific Method

This chapter presents our scientific method but first, we outline our pre-understandings regarding our research topic, which demonstrates our self-awareness and potential bias that could affect our research process and conclusions. We then present and argue for our philosophical positions; epistemology and ontology, our research approach, research strategy and research design.

3.1 Our Pre-understandings

This section will include a short description of both authors’ pre-understanding and the effect it has when it comes to selecting a topic. The pre-understanding will affect the choice of methodology and research question which is influenced from the author's education, social background and practical experience (Johansson-Lindfors, 1993, p.25). There are two types of pre-understanding; first hand pre-understanding is based upon self-perceived events, and the second-hand pre-understanding is based upon theoretical experiences that is gained from books, scientific journals and lectures (Johansson-Lindfors, 1993, p.76). This explains the authors’ interpretation of data in the study, which emerges from their pre-understandings (Johansson, 2011, p.48).

We, Aminata Drammeh and Frida Karlsson, are two Umeå University students that are writing this thesis. We have brought together our different practical experience, education and social backgrounds with our first and second hand pre-understandings. Using this, we will introduce how we have been influenced by those factors in our decision making and how we reached the chosen topic and research questions.

I, Aminata, was born and raised in The Gambia in West Africa but have lived in Sweden for the past seven years at the time of writing this degree project. My first-hand pre-understanding stems from living in both Sweden and The Gambia and this is characterized by different cultural backgrounds. This has broadened my horizons in terms of cultural diversity. Furthermore, my completion of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program in high school where I was exposed to different cultures, expanded my experiences with cultural diversity even more. My second-hand pre-understanding comes from being a business student, where I have theoretical pre-understanding about culture through the courses I have taken in the International Business Program at Umeå University. Exchange studies in Canada coupled with travelling to various locations in Europe has given me relevant practical pre-understanding about culture. These experiences have fostered interest in me about learning from different cultures. Even so, I have never worked for any of the companies interviewed in this research, nor do I know any of their existing organisational norms.

I, Frida, grew up in Stockholm, Sweden, travelled inside and outside of Europe and have worked in Norway, which is where my first-hand pre-understanding began. I was surprised over the cultural differences I experienced both in and outside of work. The largest impact on my first-hand pre-understanding came while traveling in South America, where I met many different cultures. The variety of cultures did not only come from the natives, who are from an opposite cultural environment than Sweden, but also from fellow travellers' cultures. The cultural shocks experienced during travels have provided an understanding that cultures are inherently different and that it is ok that they are different. My second-hand pre-understanding started in the International Business Program at Umeå University. During my studies, I have taken courses about culture such as business culture, which has provided me with a theoretical pre-understanding of it. The courses also increased my interests on how to get to know more about behaviour, so it leads to
me focusing my studies on Management. I have never worked for any of the companies interviewed in this research, nor do I know any of their existing organisational norms.

We have differences in our backgrounds, but common interests in culture in general. We have taken the same cultural courses throughout university studies and this made us start discussing the different sides of culture and what would be interesting to write about. Previous courses taught that the economy of Africa is growing and the countries will become part of BRIC’s countries. It made us think that Africa might be a rising star in the future for companies that want lower manufacturing, labour and resource costs. Because of the fast-growing economies in Africa, it means that those countries will become more developed over time, which provides large investment opportunities. Currently, China has become more expensive compared to decades ago and we believe that Africa will emerge and fill that void. We are aware that our pre-understandings may bias our perceptions, interpretations and decision-making in this study. Consequently, we have tried as much as possible to be objective. Our second-hand pre-understandings has developed our analytical skills and critical thinking abilities which we believe will help eliminate possible bias in our study.

3.2 Ontology
A fundamental question related to social sciences is how things really are and this question about social entities is called ontology (Klakegg, 2015, p.61). Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and defines the nature of how a researcher views social entities regarding whether social phenomena and their meanings should be considered objective and independent of the social actors; objectivism, or whether they should be considered subjectivist and social constructs built up from actions of social actors (Saunders et al., 2012, p.131). The nature of research methods and how research questions are formulated are influenced by the researcher’s ontological position (Klakegg, 2015, p.62).

Objectivism is an ontological position which implies that an objective reality exists and that this reality is external to or exists outside of human experience (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.21). This position implies that everyone has the same sense of reality because here is only one reality (Collis & Hussey, 2013, p. 47). Research questions from an objectivist view point will tend to emphasise that shared values and customs, which comes across as something external, are internalised by people. These beliefs and values have the characteristics of an object and hence have an objective reality (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.21). Consequently, there must be a real objective and definitive world in order to perceive reality as objective. Constructionism on the other hand, is an ontological position which asserts that social phenomenon should be considered social constructs that are continually being accompanied by social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.22). Because social actors shape social realities, many realities exist as people hold different views of the same situation based on their reasoning and interpretation dictated by their individual viewpoints (Saunders et al. 2012, p.132). Research questions from a constructionist point of view will tend to emphasise beliefs and values of culture, instead of culture being external reality, it is “complex and changing concept where the social actors create and recreate culture continuously (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.21-2).

We believe that social actors, such as the people representing the companies interviewed in this study, will have different interpretations of the situation in which they find themselves in while operating in different parts of Africa. This is because, as stated before, business culture is determined by the way of life of a society, which are the values, attitudes and behaviours of people
in that society. The adaptation of business culture to different business environments is thus influenced by people and social interactions because of the interdependency between people’s actions as social actors and the organisation in which they work and interact. We believe in the subjectivist view that culture is something that the organisation ‘is’ as opposed to the objectivist view of culture being something that the organisation ‘has’, because of the process of continuing social enactment (Saunders et al., 2012, p.132). Moreover, peopleattach certain meanings to phenomena such as social interactions and physical factors and these meanings need to be understood in order for culture to be understood. Consequently, the ontological standpoint that underpins this research paper is constructionist, accepting a subjectivist viewpoint in order to solve the research task at hand (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.21-2). Our research methods and how the research questions will be formulated will therefore be influenced by a constructionist approach. There are rapid changes in the global business environments which brings many challenges. People must therefore create solutions to such problems by adapting their understandings to the new situations considering what is different about it, which is in line with the constructionist viewpoint (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.33).

3.3 Epistemology
One branch of research philosophy is epistemology which describes different sources of knowledge and what type of knowledge is viewed as acceptable. It goes through the limitations, possibilities, and sources of knowledge within the research subject. In a way, it can be viewed as the researcher’s own criteria of what is or is not considered acceptable knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.26-7).

The different sources of knowledge can be put into four categories: intuitive, authoritarian, logical and empirical knowledge. Intuitive knowledge is based upon how feelings are part of knowledge such as belief, faith and intuition when they are compared to facts. Authoritarian knowledge explains the source of information that has been learned from reading books and/or research papers. Logical knowledge is described as the new knowledge that has been learned through logical reasoning. Last is empirical knowledge, which states that the source of knowledge depends on the objective facts that have been built up and can be shown (Dudovskiy, 2016a). We will use a mix of the four sources of knowledge when we are interpreting our collected data. Intuitive knowledge will be used when conducting interviews and interpreting the data. Authoritarian knowledge will be used through the whole paper, by collecting theoretical information to use when writing the interview questions, analysis of the data to discover patterns and to develop a theory based on the analysed data. Logical knowledge will be used during the interviews and the analysis of the data, when we are learning new information. Empirical knowledge will be used for the final results when we have analysed the data.

Within epistemology there are four branches that describe knowledge as different aspects of what is acceptable knowledge (Dudovskiy, 2016a). To start with, positivism states that acceptable knowledge is only based upon the observed phenomenon in the study (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.28). This approach is based upon facts and how to be objective rather than the human aspect of a study (Dudovskiy, 2016c). Because we are interested in the human aspect in this study, positivism will not be used. Realism has the same corner stones as positivism, but puts emphasis on explaining the phenomena within one or multiple situations. Empirical realism states that insufficient data means that the impression of the data is inaccurate, which shows the data to the world through the personal human senses of the researcher (Dudovskiy, 2016d). It can also be explained as “what you see is what you get”. Critical realism explains that the observed phenomena itself is creating impressions
that can be open to misinterpretations by the researchers and argues that humans can experience the real world through their own senses or images but the real world can be deceptive and provide a false narrative (Dudovskiy, 2016d). Realism will not be used because the focus of realism is about facts within multiple situations, which does not take the human aspect into consideration.

Interpretivism explains the social phenomena and the subjective meanings of a study (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.29). The focus is on the details of the human behaviour, the reality of the details and the subjective meanings that motivate that behaviour to occur during various situations. The researcher should view the social construct, interpret the elements and acknowledge the difference between the interviewees (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.28). This approach is describing what we want to study, the human aspect of behaviours and why those behaviours occur in different cultural situations. One common critique about interpretivism is that the data cannot be used in a general setting due to the personal point of view when collecting the data and will be less reliable to a certain extent (Dudovskiy, 2016b).

The approach that fits best with our study is interpretivism because the definition most closely resembles what we want to perform with this study. Based on our research questions, we need to ask in-depth questions about culture and situations that interviewees encountered such as ethical and leadership issues. By doing in-depth interviews, we want the interviewees to express themselves and talk freely about and around the questions. We are interested in knowing and understanding the human side of how the world is perceived and how they are expressing it in their own language, shared meanings, instruments and consciousness. Also, studies that have been conducted with this approach are associated with high level of validity because the data collected is usually honest and trustworthy (Dudovskiy, 2016b).

### 3.4 Inductive vs. Deductive Theory

Deductive theory is where the researcher is developing a theory or hypothesis based upon an already known theory, and later design a research strategy to test if the theory or hypothesis is correct (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.23). It starts with stating a theory or hypothesis of the study and then tests are conducted to find the general link or relationship between the variables stated in the hypothesis (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.24). The data collection is compared to the already expected pattern to deduct a conclusion or hypothesis from the propositions that were stated before. While the tests are performed, or designed from existing theory and approach, they have new context to see if it is valid for the given context (Babbie, 2010, p.52). Deductive theory is used when performing a quantitative study, with a large sample size and using mostly surveys to collect the data (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.23). This theory will not be a good fit for a qualitative study, therefore we will not use this theory.

In inductive theory, no assumptions are made before the findings have been discovered, and the outcome of the findings then become the theory. This is describing the relationship between the research and theory (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.25). To come to the theoretical conclusion in the end of the research process, the researcher is looking for patterns that have been discovered and starts to develop a theory that will answer the research question(s). This will provide the freedom for the researcher’s needs to be able to alter the direction of the study if needed, based on the information that has been gathered, without having to re-do the interviews. This type of reasoning is based upon learning from experience, such as patterns and regularities. Experience is found in the findings, results, and this will help the researcher in making a theoretical conclusion (Saunders et al., 2012,
p.146). This is mostly used when conducting a qualitative study and the research is made with in-depth interviews and a smaller sample size (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.14).

Inductive reasoning is considered to go from the bottom-up, focusing on understanding the dynamic, emergence and individual behaviour by conducting other qualitative data collection methods in addition to interviews (Saunders et al., 2012, p.144). The theory that fits with the way we have decided to conduct this study is the inductive theory. We will not make any assumptions or theoretical frameworks before we have collected the data, instead we will use the inductive theory to help us develop a theory that is based on the patterns we discover. In-depth interviews will be used as a means of data collection. The data will then be interpreted using our own, and the interviewees’ experiences to find a pattern to develop a theory that will help us answer our research questions.

3.5 Research Strategy

It is important to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research because doing so is helpful for a comprehensive understanding for a range of issues related to research in business (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.26). Quantitative and qualitative research are two clusters of research strategy that are different in terms of epistemological and ontological standpoints as well as the role of theory in relation to research.

Quantitative research is a research strategy that emphasises quantification in the collection and analysis of numerical data. Regarding epistemological orientation, it reinforces the natural sciences model and positivism. The ontological position of this research strategy is objectivists and therefore views social reality as external to social actors. In terms of the role of theory in relation to research, it embodies a deductive approach where theories are tested. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.26-7) This research strategy has been criticised for failing to distinguish between objects in the natural world and social phenomena. It has also been criticised for lack of ecological validity through controlling variables to determine their effects (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.167-8).

Qualitative research emphasises non-numerical data such as words, pictures and video clips (Saunders et al., 2012, p.161). Data from qualitative research need to be analysed and interpreted for the meanings to be understood. Regarding epistemological orientation, it gives preference for an interpretivist approach. The ontological position of this research strategy is constructionist, accepting that social actors shape social realities. In terms of the role of theory in relation to research, it embodies an inductive view (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.27). Qualitative allows for the development of theories from data (Saunders et al., 2012, p.163), instead of testing them. This research strategy has also been criticised for being too subjective and the reason being that the researcher decides what to focus on. Further, because of its unstructured form, it is often difficult to replicate and generalise to a wider population (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.408).

Given the distinctions above, a qualitative research strategy is more coherent with our epistemological, ontological and theory in relation to our research. Saunders et al. (2012, p.163) argue that qualitative research strategy is characterised by an inductive reasoning and associated with interpretivist and constructionist orientations. Furthermore, it enables the development of a conceptual framework, which is one of the objectives of this research paper. Since the purpose of our study is to understand how Swedish companies adapt their business culture when operating in Africa, a quantitative strategy would not fit for this purpose due to the technique not allowing an
understanding of how the relationship between two variables has been produced by the people to whom it applies (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.168). We believe that a qualitative method will allow us to interpret data and have a more in depth understanding about the responses and perceptions of the participants in our study.

3.6 Research Design

The term research design is used by Bryman and Bell (2015, p.49) to describe a framework on how to collect and analyse data. The design reflects on how to prioritise the data based on the range of the elements in the research process. It includes four important aspects that are part of the priority processes. The first aspect is the discussion about the connection between the chosen variables and the second is to compare the findings to the general population instead of the individuals that participated in the study. Third is to understand the behaviour and its meaning during specific social contexts, and last is to view the social phenomena and its interconnections over time (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.49). There are different types of designs that can be used during research. The type depends on what research is conducted, for example if it is a quantitative or qualitative study. Because we are conducting a qualitative study, we will look at the designs that are appropriate for that type of research. The two types that will be discussed are case study and comparative designs.

Case study design is a very popular design to use when doing business research. When using this design, the researcher is performing a study that is detailed, in-depth, and intensive analysis of a case. An example of a case can be to focus on a single organisation, single location or a single person (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.67-8). This case study design does not fit with the research question, because this study’s aim is to investigate several different markets in Africa and not only one.

Comparative design is frequently used in research that is conducting a cross-culture or cross-national research (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.72), which is part of our research question. Cross-cultural research can be divided into two directions, which the researcher use to explain the cultural research more in depth. The direction is defined as: cross-cultural, which is to compare the local business customs and national management systems in different countries with each other, and intercultural, which puts emphasis on how the interaction between people and organisations happen when having different national and/or cultural backgrounds (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.73). The intercultural approach, will make us stride away from our purpose with this study, therefore we will not use this in-depth cultural direction.

When a team or individuals are doing a cultural study about specific phenomena and/or issues between two or more countries, the focus will be on: language, customs, institutions, traditions, and lifestyles. They will then explain the differences and similarities between the nations, to gain a deeper understanding on social reality. (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.72)

Based on our study, the comparative approach will help us answer our research questions. It will help us get a deeper understanding on the similarities and differences between the chosen companies in the African markets. When comparing the data, we will get an advanced understanding of the social factors behind the behaviour, and the adaptability both for individuals and companies. We will use the more in depth cross-cultural approach when conducting this study, because we will compare the local business culture, and what the similarities and differences are with Swedish companies’ business culture.
4. Practical method

This section presents the sampling method of our study, the interview guide, data collection method and data analysis method. A literature search and source criticism is then presented for scrutiny and evaluation of the sources used in this paper. This is followed by a presentation of ethical considerations within our study.

4.1 Sampling

The concept of sampling consists of two main categories: probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is defined as a selected sample which is randomly chosen, where each sample in the population has an equal chance of being selected (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.187). This sampling method is mostly used for quantitative studies (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995, p.104), where the randomness of the samples is needed to describe the generalisation of the population (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995, p.98). This sampling method will not be used, because we are conducting a qualitative study. Non-probability sampling is defined as a selected sample that is not randomly chosen. Non-probability sampling gives some samples a higher chance of being selected than others (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.187). This sampling method is commonly used in qualitative studies (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995, p.104), which is this study’s approach. Non-probability sampling would fit best to use for this study, because the selected sample will be chosen based on their fit of the chosen criteria, and not randomly. There are many types of non-probability sampling techniques for a qualitative study, and the three of the closest fit to this study will be discussed: purposive, convenience, sampling and snowball.

Purposive sampling is when the sample cases or participants are chosen in a strategic way, via their relevance to the research question. The researchers choose a set of criteria that the participant must fulfil for their data to contribute in a theoretical way, and so the researcher is able to answer their research question (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.430). This sampling approach fits better with our study. The chosen criteria which decide which companies are eligible for this study are; conducting business in several African markets to get a diversity coverage of the markets, have established business in Africa for at least 10 years, and be a Swedish company. The companies that have been chosen will help us answer the research question and develop a conceptual framework in the end. This sampling method is a good fit for our study, where we have chosen specific criteria that should be fulfilled so that the participants will help us answer our research questions.

Convenience sampling is to collect data from the population which is readily available at that moment and able to participate in the study. When collecting data, there are no identified criteria for the population. The first and most available population members will be chosen. An example is to stop random people on the street and ask them to participate in a short questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 291). This sampling method was not initially utilised in this study as a form of choosing companies. However, once companies responded based on our required criteria, convenience sampling was utilised to narrow the list down.

Snowball sampling is used when it is hard to find data for the study. The main idea is based on referrals from primary subjects to get additional subjects for the study. This means that at the end, participants of the study are recruited via referral (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 289). We have used this technique when recruiting participants to our study, by contacting companies to ask them to refer us to a member of their organisation with the right knowledge about their business in several
African markets. We started to email the companies’ general contact information, and we obtained names or email addresses to those members that we should talk to about participating in our study.

The appropriate sample size for any qualitative study is difficult to know, as many voices have been vocal about what the appropriate number of participants should be. According to Bryman and Bell (2015) it is impossible to know the number of participants needed to achieve theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation is explained as when no new or relevant data will be discovered during the data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.432). Saunders et al. (2012) agree with this statement; however, they point out that the data should reflect a wide range of factors that is specific to the research. They also believe that when conducting a qualitative study, with semi-structured in depth interviews, as this study, it depends on the population, and generally requires something around 5-25 participants (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 283).

For this study, we used more than one sampling method. We started with purposive sampling using specific criteria so that the participants will help us answer the research question. The criteria helped us locate eligible companies that can participate in the study, and provide us with a diverse coverage when it comes to the African markets. We thought that it would be easier to get information about and from a Swedish company’s point of view because we live in Sweden and are more knowledgeable about the Swedish companies than the African. We found many Swedish companies that are active in multiple African markets, which could provide us with unique perspective based on the companies differing locations. Therefore, we focused on multinational Swedish companies that have been conducting business in Africa for at least 10 years to see how they are experiencing the cultural differences in their business culture. We used snowball sampling to find participants within the organisations who are knowledgeable within that area. Based on the reply from the chosen participants, we used convenience sampling to choose which participants would be a part of our study. The companies that replied first were chosen to be part of our study.

4.1.1 Electrolux
The idea of Electrolux was born when the Swedish businessman, Axel Wenner-Gren, was visiting Vienna where the modern vacuum cleaner was displayed in 1908 (Electrolux, 2017a). He made some modifications on the vacuum cleaner, and it became so successful, that in 1919, the company went international and established themselves in Switzerland, Denmark, France and Netherlands many more European countries (Electrolux, 2017a). The markets in Africa and the Middle East have more than 70 countries with differences in wealth and urbanisation. In Africa, the demand for Electrolux's products is growing because of most the population is of home-owning age (Electrolux, 2017b). Even so, it is difficult to penetrate the markets as it is low for most appliances but nonetheless, the markets have a high growth rate due to the new increase for household purchasing power (Electrolux, 2017b).

Today Electrolux is a multinational company and a global leader in both home and professional appliances offering a broad span of products that include refrigerators, ovens, cookers, hobs, dishwashers, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, air conditioners as well as small domestic appliances (Electrolux Group, n.d). They collaborate with the people who use their products to develop thoughtfully designed, innovative and sustainable solutions (Electrolux Group, n.d). Electrolux Group is a combination of brands such as AEG, Zanussi, Frigidaire and Electrolux Grand Cuisine, with 60 million products for customers in more than 150 markets every year and in 2015, Electrolux had sales more than 15 billion dollars and over 58,000 employees (Electrolux
Electrolux has also, during 2011, developed an ethics program that provided the company with guidelines on how to handle bribery, anti-corruption, and other ethical issues (Electrolux, 2015). The company has three core values that they expect their employees to share and follow, no matter where they are in the world. The first is "Passion for Innovation", which describes people who like to find new ways of doing things and are open to new ideas. "Customer Obsession" is the second value, and states that the employees should deliver the best customer experience in all parts of their work. Last is "Drive for Results" where Electrolux aims for measurable, visible, and balanced results from what the employees are doing (Electrolux, 2017c).

4.1.2 Scania

It all began in Södertälje 1891, when Philip Wersén started the company Vagnfabriksaktiebolaget (Vabis) with the main production being baggage cars, passenger carriages, and goods wagons. After a few years, he expanded his production to build and develop cars and trucks. Twenty years after the beginning, he merged with a company called Scania who produced similar products as Vabis and the company became Scania-Vabis. They merged the two companies to be able to compete with their European competitors on the international market. (Scania, 2016a). In 1969 Scania-Vabis merged with another Swedish car and aircraft manufacturers, Saab, to create a new company Saab-Scania. However, Scania becomes the new brand name for their trucks and busses section (Ekengren, 2017a). After winning the award "Truck of the Year" in 1988, Scania continued to refine their modular thinking and started to make trucks that are "made-to-measure" which is based on the customers’ orders (Ekengren, 2017b).

Today Scania is a global company and is established in over 100 countries with 45,000 employees all over the world. They offer their products, services and financial services in many markets internationally, with manufacturing plants in Europe, Asia and South America (Ekengren, 2017c). Scania is established in many African markets, such as in the south, east, west and northern regions. They have strengthened their position in those areas by establishing "Regional Product Centres" (RPC) or a hub in South Africa, where they do bodywork, assembly of the products and fitting locally-adapted vehicles (Ekengren, 2017c). Scania's turnover during 2016 was around 104 billion SEK where 22 billion SEK was from their service revenue that had a 5% increase compared to last year (Andersson, 2017).

Scania produced a guide on how ethics shall be handled by the company in 2012. In the guide, they describe their code of conduct, and go into more detail on how to handle gifts from business partners, bribery and corruption, and donations (Scania, 2012, p.9-17). It also provides possible scenarios with suggested answers to the employees. They describe "the Scania way," where they clearly state that bribes and corruption is not accepted by the company, and never will be (Scania, 2012, p.15). "Scania's core values defines our culture" its stated on their website (Scania, 2016b), where they explain their six core values; "Customer first" which describe that the customer’s success is the company's success. "Respect for the individual" states that everyone is unique and should be treated as such. "Elimination of waste"(quality) explains that the focus is on quality and not quantity. "Determination" means to be dedicated and motivated to go to the next level with the company. "Team spirit" is working together to reach a common goal from all parts of the world, and "Integrity" aims to always do the right thing by using Scania's core values and principles, and to treat relationships with business partners and customers with respect. (Scania, 2016b)
4.2 The Interview Guide

As aforementioned, an interview guide can be employed to refer to the questions to be asked in a semi-structured interview. Our interview guide comprised of different questions categorised into six themes; African markets, African culture, business culture, business relationships, cross-cultural learning and cross-cultural adaptation. Saunders et al. (2012, p.386) emphasised that interview themes may derive from theories, literature, experiences of a topic, tutors or simply common sense, that reflect the variables being studied. Moreover, it is important to have some idea of a theme or themes intended to be discussed with participants in an in-depth interview as this will give a sense of focus. The authors further advised against the use of incomprehensible language, and that it is important to construct questions that are logical to interviewees. We used simple language in our interview guide and stayed away from jargon as much as we could. We included the so called ‘facesheet’ information such as name, age, gender and position in company in our interview guide. Bryman and Bell (2015, p.488) argued that such information is useful for contextualising the answers of respondents. We believe that this will help in answering our research question. Table 1 presents the theoretical foundation of the interview guide. For the full interview guide, see Appendix.

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<td></td>
<td>Cavusgil et al., (2016)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Getz and Volkema (2001)</td>
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<td>Moran et al. (2014)</td>
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<td>Wohlgemuth (2002)</td>
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<td>Amoako-Agyei (2009)</td>
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<td>Kamoche (2011)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kuada (2010)</td>
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<td>African culture</td>
<td>Hofstede (1980)</td>
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<td>Hofstede et al. (2010)</td>
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<td>Chhokar et al. (2008)</td>
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<td>Szymura-Tyc and Kucia (2016)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Getz and Volkema (2001)</td>
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<td>Holm and Åkerblom (2007)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business culture</td>
<td>Hall (1976)</td>
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<td>Hofstede et al. (2010)</td>
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<td>Hofstede (1980)</td>
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<td>Varner and Beamer (2011)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nnadozie (2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business relationships</td>
<td>Ford et al. (2011)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Acquaah and Eshun (2010)</td>
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<td>Moran et al. (2014)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mangaliso (2001)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fafchamps (2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural learning</td>
<td>Johnson et al. (2006)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Templer et al. (2006)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Data Collection

The most widely used data collection strategy in a qualitative research method is interviewing (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.465). There are many types of interviews and some of them are structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Walle, 2015, p.71). Structured interviews enable the researcher to ask specific questions that are predetermined and cannot be varied. This allows the interview to be completed quickly because the respondent does not have to think too much, however, freedom of response is limited (Walle, 2015, p.74). Bryman and Bell (2011, p.405-6) add that a structured method of data collection implies that the researcher has certain predetermined expectations about social reality and therefore, the findings are bound to be the product of the researcher’s considerations. This limits the opportunity to genuinely reveal the perspective and experiences of the people being studied and as a result, structured interview will not be used in our study.

There are two main types of interviews used in qualitative research; unstructured and semi-structured interview (Saunders et al., 2012, p.374). In unstructured interview the interviewer typically has an aide memoire which contains the list of topics or issues to be covered. The questions asked may vary from interview to interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.205). The interviewer may ask just one question and allow the interviewee to respond freely, but follow up questions can emerge where necessary (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.467). Unstructured interviews are very time-consuming and difficult to analyse (Collis & Hussey, 2014, p.135). Because of time constrains, unstructured interview will not be used in our research.

Semi-structured interviews will be used in our study because we have time constraints. Interviews in interpretivist paradigm imply exploring data on opinions, attitudes and understanding of people (Collis & Hussey, 2013, p.133). In semi-structured interview, the researcher has a list of questions, an interview guide which gives an element of structure. The researcher can deviate from the interview guide and ask follow-up questions to explore the topic more in-depth. Nonetheless, all the questions will be asked to all interviewees and similar wordings will be used in all interviews (Bryman, & Bell, 2011, p.467). Both open and closed end questions can be used in semi-structured interviews. The purpose of our study is to have an in-depth understanding of how two multinational Swedish companies; Electrolux and Scania, adapt their business culture when operating in African markets and this implies having a large of data. This type of interview allows for correspondence between the respondent and researchers and gives richer data.

Most semi-structured interviews are conducted face-to-face but they may also be conducted by telephone or electronically via the internet, when it is impractical to do it face-to-face (Saunders et al., 2013, p.404). In face-to-face interviewing, bias may arise when the interviewee answers the questions they believe the interviewer wants to hear or is desirable. Telephone interviewing removes such potential bias that may arise because of the mere presence or characteristics of the interviewer, as the interviewer is not visibly present (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.206). Furthermore, telephone interviews are cheaper when the interviewer needs to travel long distances between respondents. Nonetheless, with telephone interviews, the interviewer does not have the opportunity to capture the non-verbal behaviour of the interviewee and this poses problems on whether to
follow up a question or not (Saunders et al. (2012, p.405). In addition to telephone interviewing, Voiceover Internet Protocol servers such as Skype is an alternative to face-to-face interview. This technology allows the interviewer to conduct interviews electronically where users can video conference and engage in voice chat. In addition, the instant messaging feature facilitates sharing and transfer of files (Saunders et al., 2012, p.406).

4.3.1 How We Contacted the Companies
To have an initial contact with our potential respondents and see if they are interested in participating in our study, we first searched on google about Swedish companies that are currently operating in Africa. We called each company’s service centre in Sweden and started making inquiries about how we could request for an interview. All the companies we called provided us with email addresses and sometimes phone numbers that we needed to be in contact with. Since the matter concerned operations in Africa, none of the contacts we obtained from the inquiries were residing in Sweden. Hence, we decided to only send emails as phones calls would have been rather expensive. We had the first reply within one week of sending the emails. We agreed on time and medium of conducting the interviews and offered to send a copy of the interview guide upon request. All companies interviewed thought that having the interview guide beforehand was good as it helped them better prepare for the interview. The interview guide was sent to the six respondents two to five days before the interview day.

4.3.2 How We Conducted the Interviews
The interviews were conducted between the 21st of March and the 24th of April 2017. We recorded the interviews so that we could concentrate on the interaction with the interviewees. Audio-recording an interview has advantages and disadvantages. An advantage of audio-recording an interview is that it allows the interviewer to capture the data from the interview more efficiently (Saunders et al, 2012, p.375). It also allows the interviewer to concentrate on questioning and listening instead of taking notes of all the discussions. Also, it allows for accurate and unbiased data where the interviewer can use direct quotes from the interviewee (Saunders et al, 2012, p.398). Nonetheless, there is the possibility of technical problems while recording, and transcribing an audio-recording is very time consuming (Saunders et al., 2012, p.396). All interviews took place in a group study room at Umea University Library which was a quiet setting. Two of the interviews were via AT&T teleconferencing, which the companies provided us with access codes. Three were via WhatsApp, and one was through Skype. All the interviews were recorded using a Samsung galaxy s6. For each interview, one of the authors of the current study took care of the recording and the other one asked the questions. The author recording the interview also took notes about contextual information about the interview to capture nonverbal communications, because without additional contextual information, the data will be impoverished to some extend (Saunders et al., 2012, p.550).

Before the interview started, we briefed the interviewees about the purpose of our study, confidentiality and anonymity were assured upon their request and the right to quit the interview any time without any consequence. After the interview, we debriefed the interviewees and told them that a copy of our report will be available upon their request. The lengths of the interviews varied because whereas some respondents elaborated more by giving examples, others gave less examples regarding certain issues. Nonetheless all the interviewees answered all questions in detail. Below is a presentation of our respondents, the positions they hold, the medium through which the interviews took place, the date and duration of the interviews summarised in table 2.
### Table 2 - Summary of the Interview Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of respondent</th>
<th>Company &amp; position</th>
<th>Medium of interview</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Duration of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lorenzo Milani</td>
<td>CEO Electrolux Africa and Middle East</td>
<td>AT&amp;T teleconference</td>
<td>21 March 2017</td>
<td>83 mins 36 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Gittelston</td>
<td>Managing Director Electrolux South Africa</td>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>24 April 2017</td>
<td>36 mins 49 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatem Mostafa</td>
<td>Managing Director Electrolux Egypt</td>
<td>AT&amp;T teleconference</td>
<td>24 April 2017</td>
<td>54 mins 31 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Holmström</td>
<td>Managing Director Scania East Africa</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>24 March 2017</td>
<td>64 mins 41 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lars Eklund</td>
<td>Managing Director Scania Tanzania</td>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>19 April 2017</td>
<td>53 mins 05 sec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik Morsing</td>
<td>Managing Director Scania West Africa</td>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>24 April 2017</td>
<td>58 mins 39 sec</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

Our epistemological position dictates that the views and perceptions of our respondents be interpreted. After the data collection, we transcribed the recordings from the interviews on a word-for-word basis as a first step in analysing and interpreting our data. The transcripts were then checked against the original recordings for accuracy (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.88). According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p.483), although time-consuming, transcribing interviews enables the interviewer to keep the interviewee’s words intact. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.88) state that transcription helps in the early stages of data analysis as it allows the researcher to develop a thorough understanding of his or her data through having transcribed it. Qualitative data will likely be large and complex in nature and will have further implications in their analysis. Since qualitative data is likely to be large and complex in nature, this brings the need to summarise, condense and categorise data into themes to make sense of it. The data was then linked between themes in a structured way to enable answering the research question (Saunders et al., 2012, p.546-8). However, qualitative data, unlike quantitative data is not straightforward to analyse because no clear-cut rules have been developed about how this type of data should be analysed (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.579). Saunders et al. (2012, p.548) suggest that when one begins research by collecting and exploring data without a clearly defined theoretical or descriptive framework; an inductive approach, one will seek to build up a theory or framework that is grounded in the data collected.

The generic approach to analyse qualitative data follows general principles of analysis. This approach starts by identifying categories or codes which allows for large and complex amount of
qualitative data. Second, data from different sources are attached to applicable categories to integrate data from different transcripts. Third, key themes and patterns are identified from the integrated data to develop analytical categories. Fourth, based on the key themes or patterns identified, theories are developed and/or tested. The last principle involves drawing and verifying conclusions. (Saunders et al., 2012, p.556-7) Several specific analytical procedures that are inductively based and used to analyse qualitative data include: grounded theory, narrative induction and discourse analysis (Saunders et al, 2012, p.566-7).

For this study, we used thematic analysis approach to analyse our data. According to Bryman and Bell (2015, p.579), thematic analysis is one of the most common approaches used in qualitative data analysis but unlike approaches such as grounded theory and discourse analysis, this approach has not been identified as a distinctive technique. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79-80) share similar viewpoints and add that the idea of the search for themes draws on core features common to most qualitative data analysis approaches. Some of the phases of thematic analysis are not unique to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.86). The process goes through six phase similar to the generic approach of analysing qualitative data described above. These are; phase 1: familiarising with the data collected; phase 2: generating initial codes; phase 3: searching for themes; phase 4: reviewing themes; phase 5: defining and naming themes; and phase 6: producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87).

Since we collected the data ourselves through interviews, we gained some prior knowledge of the data and some initial analytic thoughts. This allowed us to familiarise ourselves with our data. Also, the transcription of the interview data gave us the opportunity to further familiarise with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87). In phase 2, which involves generating initial codes, we read and reread the transcripts to identify interesting aspects that will later form the basis of the themes. Since our approach to theory is inductive, this stage of the data analysis was approached with no questions in mind (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 88-9). We started our analysis by coding the transcribed interviews. While reading the transcripts, we both highlighted aspects we found interesting, for example, we both highlighted “it is important to have a business relationship with those accounts in order to build up credibility and to earn respect” and “here you need to show your face, shake hands and have some coffee together” from the transcripts. The third phase involves arranging and combining the codes identified in phase 2. We started to organise the codes to see the relationships between codes and themes. For example, the above codes were organised, combined and briefly described as “Africans put a great emphasis on relationships” as seen in figure 5.

Phase 4 involves reviewing the coded data extracts as well as reviewing and refining the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.91). Referring to Braun and Clark (2006, p.91), we considered whether the coded data extracts for each theme formed a coherent pattern when we reviewed them. If a theme did not form coherent pattern, we either discarded it from the analysis or created a theme that would be home for the coded extracts. If on the other hand the candidate theme formed a coherent pattern, we then considered whether it accurately reflects the data set. Again, if the theme reflected our data set, we moved to the next phase, otherwise we re-reviewed and re-refined the coding until we reached a satisfactory thematic map. Phase 5 of the thematic analysis involved defining and naming the themes that would be presented and consequently analyse the data within these themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). We did this by first identifying and determining if the themes captured the data set and what aspects they captured. This gave us structure and helped clearly define themes, (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 92), for example,
we subsequently collected themes in relation to the organised codes such as “Reasons to adapt” as seen in figure 5. In the final phase of the thematic analysis, where we produced the report for the analysis, we compared our findings to the previous literature presented (Braun & Bell, 2006, p.92).

4.5 Literature Search and Source Criticism
Conducting a literature review helps inform the researcher about what is already known so that the research is not a repetition of what has already been studied (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.91). Saunders et al. (2012, p.71-2) add that establishing knowledge about your research topic of interest as well as its key theories and concepts is significant because a researcher’s findings will ‘inevitably be judged in relation to other people’s research and their findings.’ Although they often overlap, there are different categories of literature sources; primary, secondary and tertiary. How and when these sources are used will depend on the researcher’s objectives and research question. Primary literature sources such as reports, thesis, emails and government publications are the first occurrence of a piece of work and are usually more detailed but often less accessible than secondary and tertiary sources (Saunders et al., 2012, p.82-3). However, due to technological advancement, primary literature sources are made easier to access through the internet (Saunders et al., 2012, p.89). Secondary sources such as books and journals are subsequent publications of primary sources. Tertiary literature sources or search tools such as databases and indexes aid in locating primary and secondary literature. (Saunders et al., 2012, p.82-3)

When conducting a literature search for a subsequent review, the initial step is to carefully read primary and secondary sources such as books, journals and reports to define the parameters of the chosen research area (Bryan & Bell, 2011, p.103). We already had in mind a few initial references and keywords regarding culture which comes from our previous course literature. In our initial literature search, although general internet search was sometimes used as a starting point, we eventually used EBSCO and Google Scholar search engines for access to full text from a range of journals, reports, books and even sometimes chapters from books. We entered key words and terms such as ‘African business culture’, ‘business culture’ and ‘Africa’, ‘business culture’ and ‘adaptation’, and ‘cultural learning’, on the search engines. We believed that these key words were relevant to our research area. Further, we obtained a list of references to authors who have published on our research area of interest. After the initial search, we were able to obtain more comprehensive results by revising the above-mentioned key words and at the same time having our research questions and objectives in mind. We also used articles referenced in the articles that we have selected to review. From this, we then evaluated, recorded and started drafting the review. In doing so, we fully acknowledged the sources in order to avoid plagiarism (Saunders et al., 2012, p72).

In the theory section, the selection for the list of references was mainly based on the criteria that they are scholarly journal articles since scholarly articles are peer reviewed, and that the full text can be accessed. Bryman and Bell (2011, p.32) state that peer-reviewed articles are valued especially in management and business research because the papers are reviewed by academic experts in the subject area of the paper, from which the editor of the publishing journal decides whether to publish the paper or not, based on the review. In the methodology section, we mainly used commonly accepted academic books such as: Business Research Methods by Bryman and Bell (2015) and Research Methods for Business Students by Saunders et al. (2012). We have used the book Business Research Methods by Bryman and Bell in a previous course in our programme and this made it natural to start with this book. Further, we have used the database DiVA, which is a centralised archive of Scandinavian research publications and student thesis (DiVA, n.d) to obtain
The literature we used in our study includes some relatively old and contemporary research. Although old, research on culture by authors such as Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), Hall (1979) and Hofstede (1980) are still widely used and relevant, therefore, we do not perceive using these sources as an issue. However, as raised in the theoretical background section, Africa has been under researched regarding international business, and this made it quite difficult to obtain many sources for the theory section. Nonetheless, we could obtain some sources such as the empirical study conducted by Acquaah and Eshun (2010) and Amoako-Agyei (2009), which is relatively contemporary. The interviewed companies’ websites were also used to gather additional information.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics have been described as the researcher’s standard of behaviour which guides his or her conduct in relation to the rights of the participants of the research (Saunders et al., 2012, 226). Bryman and Bell (2011, p.128) add that it is the responsibility of the researcher to follow ethical guidelines when conducting a research. Ethical considerations should be kept in mind throughout the various stages of the research process; from designing and planning the research to collecting, analysing and reporting the data (Saunders et al., 2012, p.226). The code of ethics outlines the general categories of ethical issues which are divided into four main areas: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.128).

Lack of informed consent
The principle of informed consent is concerned with the right of participants to be provided with the right information about taking part in a study and to be assured the right to withdraw without consequence, in order for them to make informed decision about whether or not they want to take part in the study (Saunders et al., p.231). When we sent the interview requests to potential companies, we provided them with the information about the aim and purpose of our study and why we needed them to take part in the study and how we are going to use the data. Since, we audio-recorded the interviews, we briefed the participants about the purpose of our study and encouraged them to ask questions, this way, informed consent can be formally recorded (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.136). We informed the participants about the right to withdraw from taking part in the study without any consequences. Furthermore, we did not try to force the companies that declined our request to take part in our study. This gives us confidence that there is no lack of informed consent in our study.

Harm to participants
Harm in research can mean physical harms, harm to self-esteem, stress or harm to career (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.128). Saunders et al. (2012, p.231) state that harm may be caused by violating assurances about confidentiality and anonymity or using research methods that are intrusive or zealous. This means that the identities and information recorded about the participants should be kept confidential. If confidentiality and anonymity is requested, it should be honoured. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to carefully assess the possibility of harm to participants and minimise it (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.128-9). In the consent form, we clearly stated that the identities and records of the responses will be confidential and anonymous in order to protect the integrity of the participants if they wished to. None of the participants asked for anonymity but if they had, we would have maintained this assurance by using pseudonyms. Since our research topic is not considered sensitive, we believe that there was no harm to participants.
**Invasion of privacy**

Privacy is a key ethical principle in research that is linked to other ethical principles such as informed consent and harm (Saunders et al., 2012, p.231). Bryman and Bell (2011, p.136) explain that this is because when participants accept to take part in a study, they are somehow acknowledging that their right to privacy has been surrendered for a limited domain. Nonetheless, this does not give the researcher the right to intrude on the privacy of the respondent. Bryman and Bell (2011, p.136) further add that covert research methods, where the informed consent is not possible, are usually considered to violate the privacy principle because participants may reveal information that they otherwise would not have, had they known the purpose of the research or the status of the confidant as a researcher. We are convinced we have not violated the privacy of our participants in any way because we briefed them before the interview and informed them that the conversation will be recorded. We also debriefed them after the interview and that we sent a copy of our report to those who requested it.

**Deception**

Deception in research is when the researcher makes the respondent believe that the aim of the study is different from what it actually is (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.136). Some researchers use deception in their research because informing participants about the aim of the research will keep them from responding naturally or bias their behaviour. Although deception is widespread and sometime justifiable in business research, Bryman and Bell (2011, p.137-8) contend that it is not desirable and ‘not a nice thing to do’. We conformed to this principle by informing the participants about the aim of our study.
5. Empirical Findings
This chapter presents the empirical findings of our qualitative study. The findings are derived from the interview transcriptions but we focus on data we view as relevant to the current study. We present the chapter similar to the headings in the theory section; African markets, African culture, business culture, business relationships, cross-cultural learning and cross-cultural adaptation. Before that, we briefly present the interviewees’ profiles to contextualise their responses.

5.1 Presentation of Participants
In this section, a brief presentation of the participants’ positions in their respective companies and their work experiences will be presented.

**Lorenzo Milani**
Lorenzo Milani is the CEO of Electrolux for the Middle East and Africa region. He has an extensive experience working internationally and in different markets such as the United States and European countries. He has been in his current position for a couple of years. Before holding his current position, Lorenzo spent some time filling in Electrolux on the African region. He has also worked for competitors of Electrolux and has had 10 years of experience in the Middle East. He is currently based in Dubai with his team but the team is well spread around different areas.

**Mark Gittelson**
Mark Gittelson is the Managing Director for a subsidiary of Electrolux Group in South Africa. He has had this position for about 2.5 years when he started there in January 2015. He is a native South African. He has not worked outside of South Africa before but has worked for several multinational large corporations. For example, he has worked for the footwear company Nike for about 14 years as a director, and for Samsung as a business leader for home appliances and brand goods.

**Hatem Mostafa**
Hatem Mostafa holds two positions: country Managing Director for Electrolux Egypt and head of Shared Service Director. He has had the position of Managing Director for two years and Shared Service Director for four years. He is native Egyptian and has worked with international companies for about 24 years. Hatem has also lived abroad for many years and has worked for the Dubai government from 2002 to 2004. He has also worked for a local company from 2007 to 2011. This local company was later acquired by Electrolux in 2011.

**Per Holmström**
Per Holmström is the Managing Director for Scania East Africa in Kenya. He has had this position for four years and was part of the start-up group of the company the 1st of March 2014. However, he was there before (in mid-2013) to help with the preparations to be able to start the company. Per Holmström has worked internationally his whole life and began his career directly after graduation. Since then he has been in many different position and they all are part of doing international business. During a few years in the 1990’s Per Holmström worked and lived in Tanzania which gave him experience in the African business environment.

**Lars Eklund**
Lars Eklund is Managing Director for Scania in Tanzania. He has had this position for about a year and started the 1st of June 2016 as Managing Director. This is his first expatriate assignment but he
has previously worked in Headquarters in Södertälje outside of Stockholm in Sweden. During his time there, he was working towards the international markets for about ten years and traveling 50 to 60 days per year worldwide. The international travel has provided him with a better understanding of international business and culture.

Fredrik Morsing
Fredrik Morsing is the Managing Director for Scania West Africa. He has had this position since Scania Group started the company in July 2014. Fredrik has worked with international business for roughly 25 years of which 15 years were international assignments. He has worked in several European markets, but focused on the African markets such as Tanzania, Cameroon, and Ghana. This has provided him with a better understanding of African business ways.

5.2 African Markets
The participants provided a general description of how Electrolux and Scania are operating in the African markets. They went in depth on the risks and opportunities the companies are facing.

5.2.1 Electrolux
Lorenzo provided a brief general history of Electrolux operations in Africa and of how the company decided to move from a tactical approach to a more strategic approach. Africa is a big continent with many different countries and humongous differences and at different levels of development. There are differences in their culture, infrastructure, population, distances and language. These are factors that influence the decision of which markets Electrolux should conduct business in. When entering a new market, Electrolux uses a strategical approach which investigates these factors to establish which approach to use specific to the market. In South Africa, Mark added that after the apartheid in 1994, Electrolux entered the market and established themselves there. South Africa is a large market, worth almost 1.4 billion euros, with great potential for business for Electrolux.

During their time in Africa, Electrolux has found that there are two different business strategies that work for them. First, find a local partner or agent that can import and distribute the products. The second strategy is where Electrolux establishes their own operations and take care of sales and distribution of their products. Today Electrolux has established operations that include a factory and office in South Africa and Egypt. However, there are some differences of doing business depending on which part of Africa the company is operating. In the north, they are using agents, while in the south they establish Electrolux owned companies. It is hard to do business in central Africa due to the poor infrastructure and small markets. Hatem added that Electrolux acquired one of the largest home appliances companies in Egypt in 2011. The company started around 1962-1963 and was well established all over Egypt. The transition between the two companies went smooth, because of the similarities in the finances, company values and business conduct with Electrolux.

Lorenzo clarified that Electrolux has two direct operations in Africa which are established in Egypt and South Africa. In the northern markets, with a base in Egypt, the company provides and serves surrounding countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya with products, while in the south, South Africa is serving the surrounding countries such as Namibia, Botswana and Angola. Lorenzo stated that the company is covering almost the whole continent through imports and going through the two bases of operations. Electrolux is not operating in areas such as central Africa because the markets are too small for the company. Another reason is that it is hard to establish a
brand with such quality as Electrolux and to sell at the large volume that is needed to cover the costs in some country.

Lorenzo explained that one general risk in Africa is when one forgets to distinguish between the different regions in Africa. There is always a risk when doing business in Africa but there are specific risks, depending on the region, that are important to be aware of. In the north, it is necessary to know the person the company is doing business with such as a partner for example. There is a risk that the partner is involved in corruption or smuggling and therefore it is important to perform a detailed analysis or background check of the partner before agreeing to anything business wise. A more generalised risk, that is region dependent, is security, such as stealing and riots, which is why Electrolux is not operating in all African countries but has instead established two bases. Another risk for Electrolux is not getting paid when conducting business. However, Electrolux has resolved this issue with the establishment of a financial institution that will help with the payment system and make sure that both parties do not get swindled.

Mark described the risks in South Africa from the past with the business not being profitable. This is because there are many competitors in South Africa and for a business to be sustainable, an economy of scale is needed. Another factor, might not be a risk, but a factor that has a negative impact on Electrolux is the lack of local manufacurers. Hatem stated that, there is no specific risk for Electrolux in Egypt but there are environmental risks, such as economic and political situations, that may affect every company in Egypt, regardless if they are local or international.

What Lorenzo described as a major opportunity for Electrolux is the urban population in Africa. Today the population of the continent is several 100 million inhabitants with 52 cities that have over 1 million inhabitants with an average age of 28. He stated that this provides the potential for many customers all over the continent and continued, “so clearly the future, one way or the other, it may be Africa”. These markets are not fully developed as in US or Europe but are growing strong which provides the companies that want to establish their business in Africa with great possibilities. For the companies that are already established, the population growth provides a tremendous chance for expanding into new markets. Hatem agreed with Lorenzo that the urban population is a great opportunity for Electrolux. In Egypt, he explained, there are around 90 million inhabitants and the surrounding countries have a high population as well. This is providing almost unlimited opportunities for Electrolux, but the environmental risks Hatem described above, can hinder the company of taking advantage of these opportunities.

Mark continued that thought and brings in the South African perspective when it comes to opportunities. Electrolux is a strong brand and has other strong brands such as AEG that are under its umbrella. It becomes an opportunity because the emerging market customer segments are very brand conscious. The customers in South Africa are willing to spend money to get a brand product. To have a strong marketing campaign to market the strong brands is a great opportunity for the company and its subsidiaries.

5.2.2 Scania
Per, Lars and Fredrik described briefly Scania's general history in Africa. Scania came to Tanzania in the 70s to help a Chinese company build a railroad and Scania provided the tracks that were needed to complete the railroad. A few years after the project, Scania started a company there and it grew with the market and is still there. Per, Lars and Fredrik put forth that, in Tanzania, Scania
has been operating for at least 45 years and the long history Scania has its operations in Africa. Scania has conducted business in the north, such as in Egypt for several years. They have been far less active in the western region historically, but according to Fredrik, a base has now been established in Ghana to cover the west African markets. Per clarified that in the south, Scania established their company in South Africa for a long time, "but the time we were out of South Africa during the apartheid where we were not allowed to operate since 1994 I think, then we re-established our services in South Africa again."

Both Per and Lars described Scania's operations as being established in most the African markets with a few blind or white spots in the central region. In the south, Scania has a hub in South Africa where the company works through their own operations while agents cover the areas in the northern markets. In East Africa, Scania is well established in countries such as Tanzania and Kenya, and they have good coverage in the neighbouring and surrounding countries as well. The blind or white spots, where Scania is not established, are mostly in central and some of western Africa such as Mali and The Gambia. This depends on the fact that those markets are too small for the company. But to cover the western market better, Scania has recently established themselves in Ghana. Fredrik also said that Scania is trying to cover more markets in that region. He continues with saying that they have currently around 20 markets around Ghana that are viewed as potential markets. But, as Fredrik continued, Scania West Africa cannot go out to all those markets at the same time, the process should be slow. They have selected three new focus markets as a start, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Cameroon, to get a better coverage in that area and will continue from there.

The biggest risks in Africa depends on how and in which countries Scania is operating in, combined with the size of the market, according to Per, Lars and Fredrik. Per clarified that in a small market, Scania uses agents and in the larger markets, the company establishes their own business. It depends on which region in Africa Scania is doing business, for example in the north, the markets are too small so they use agents. This way of doing business through agents is common all over Africa where the brand is not strong enough to survive on its own. In the south, it is different because of the large markets and the countries’ economies are large enough to sustain the business. Per emphasised that when establishing operations in this area, the costs of starting up the company will be covered.

Lars and Fredrik named another major risk of not getting paid, which is the high level of fraud and corruption in Africa. This makes it easy to lose a lot of money quickly if a business deal does not go well. According to Fredrik, this could be the reason why the government and the police have a high level of control. He also mentioned that the reason for not getting paid may be due to the non-existing or poorly implemented legal system that can disrupt their daily operations.

Lars described that there are long term opportunities in Africa for Scania. The population is growing fast and this leads to the governments improving the infrastructure with transportation opportunities such as busses and trucks. Per agreed with Lars and added that another opportunity for Scania is the undeveloped infrastructure in the major cities. Today the bus system in the major cities are based on private small minibuses that are trying to find passengers to fill their busses. When the buses are full they will leave and this can lead to the bus drivers fighting over the customers. Currently, the public transport is chaotic and very unorganised in the city centre, combined with unpleasant traffic situations, stated Per. He specified that the goal of the project is to put 150-180 busses on the road, that include a service package, which includes a ticket system,
time table, bus stops and other services. This project is opening opportunities for Scania because similar projects have started all around Africa and they are called "Bus Rapid transport" (BRT) which will continue to spread to the larger African cities over the continent.

Fredrik described that West Africa presents many potential opportunities. The population is growing with an increase in the middle class which provides an abundance of sales opportunities. The market also has fewer competitors when compared to the European market. Fredrik is using Ghana as an example, and if the company does well there, he believes they will be successful in other locations as well.

5.3 African Culture
The respondents were asked about the nature of work ethic, leadership style, social structure and corruption in the markets they are operating in.

5.3.1 Electrolux
Regarding work ethic in Africa, Lorenzo stated that people are generally hardworking but one needs to remind, check or pressure them so that the work is done. Mark believes that South Africans work very hard, especially blue collar workers. However, in the manufacturing segment, people mostly do not hold tertiary qualifications which makes it challenging to have affordable local manufacturers with the working class. As for people in corporate positions, Mark stated that there are very high skill sets and most of them have professional degrees. As for Egypt, Hatem explained that there are different work environments in Egypt; governmental, local, and the international work environments. Hatem went on to say that the legal framework of the different work environments is the same and that it is the company’s core values that govern how people work in Egypt. Therefore, working for Electrolux in Egypt is no different from working for Electrolux in Sweden. In essence, the Egyptian work ethic can be different depending on the core values of the company in question.

Lorenzo described the African leadership style as generally authoritative and explains that this is because the manager is usually the owner of the company and he or she will have power and control, while others are simply just employed and only depend on their salary as they are not shareholders. Mark stated that there is generally a high level of autonomy and respect regarding leadership in South Africa’s corporate environment. The more senior the position is, the more of a self-starter one is and the more autonomy one has, to make decisions. According to Mark’s experience, being a leader in South Africa requires a lot of confidence and the ability to make decisions. As for Egypt, Hatem stated that just like the work ethic can be different depending on the company in question, the Egyptian leadership can also be different depending on the capabilities of the team in question.

Lorenzo stated that people in Africa who hold higher positions receive special privileges in the social world, for example by living in protected areas. For Electrolux however, a core value of the company is treating everyone the same regardless of what country the company is operating in, and this is exemplified by “If you come here where we are, it looks like Sweden in the way we are organised.” Lorenzo went on to say that the offices have been organised as an open space by a Swedish designer. Although in some areas the boss has a big office, and subordinates have a mid-size office, “everybody has their own office” meaning that no one receives special privileges because of the positions they are holding. As for South Africa, Mark made the point that South Africa has been a true democracy since 1994 and that there have been many advances made
regarding privileges held by some groups under the apartheid era. However, Mark believes that it will take about 10 to 15 years to have a true democracy in South Africa and for everyone to enjoy the same privileges due to socioeconomic and macroeconomic challenges such as education, safety and a high HIV rate.

When asked about if corruption affects Electrolux’s business operations in South Africa, Mark stated that the company has good ethos regarding conducting business. While acknowledging that corruption is a challenge in South Africa especially in the political environment, Mark has not experienced any unethical business practices in his role as the managing director of Electrolux South Africa. In an economic lecture that Mark attended a few weeks ago, “South Africa was ranked only the 47\textsuperscript{th} worst from a corruption aspect, which is quite positive considering all the other African countries were ranked much much higher.” Hatem believes that while corruption is an issue in Egypt, it is not an issue for Electrolux for the simple reason that corruption is against the company’s core values. Hatem elaborated that Electrolux has managed to build strong relationships with business entities and “when you have a good relationship with any government body or an individual, this facilitates work more than paying the bribe.” Lorenzo believes that “the system must be the number one driver of your business” and being aware that there are cultural differences that exist between doing business in Sweden and doing business in Africa can mean the difference between success and failure. For example, knowing that corruption is prevalent in a certain country, Electrolux will not want to operate in that country to safeguard its reputation. Hatem added that at “Electrolux, we do not do any bribes, we do not do any donations, we only do our work.

5.3.2 Scania

When asked to describe the work ethic in East Africa in general, Per pointed that Kenyans are generally hard working, and highly qualified people are readily available in the workforce. However, this is not the case in the neighbouring Tanzania where the set-up is completely different because it is hard to find qualified staff. Lars concurred with Per and described the work ethic in Tanzania as low and slow when compared to Sweden. As for Ghana, Fredrik described the Ghanaian work ethic as mixed but he believes, to a certain extent, that Scania has even more dedicated employees in Ghana than in Sweden.

Regarding leadership style, Per described the East African leadership style as authoritative where the boss decides almost everything. This is the opposite in Sweden where there is a more open, transparent and democratic system and a shared responsibility. Per further explained that when Scania took over in Kenya from their agent, the staff were used to the typical Kenyan leadership style which is authoritative. The management wanted to introduce Scania leadership style, which is more democratic with an open-door policy, but it took a long time to change the mind-set of the staff. Many of the staff finally adapted to the change but there were a few who had problems adapting. These people had to be replaced with others who were willing to accept a more democratic leadership style. Lars agreed that there are huge differences between the Tanzanian and the Swedish leadership style. He described the Tanzanian leadership style as a very old traditional management style where there is a high emphasis on respecting the elderly and authority. This he believes makes the employees very restrictive in giving feedback to the manager. Fredrik pointed out that Ghanaians generally have an authoritative leadership style and high respect for hierarchies like Tanzanians.
Regarding whether people receive special privileges because they hold a higher position, Fredrick believes that while this may be true in the social environment, it is difficult to generalise it in the corporate environment as differences exist from one company to another. Per stated that in Scania, employees do not receive special privilege because they hold a higher position. He gave an example that the managers’ canteens were removed so that there is only one canteen for everyone and that everyone eats the same food. Also, all the staff sit together and there are no special seats. Lars put forth that in Tanzania, people have high regards for those who hold top positions.

All respondents from Scania stated that bribery and corruption is prevalent in most African countries. According to Per, this phenomenon is growing and “it’s not going into the right direction.” Along similar lines, Lars said that bribery and corruption is an issue for Scania in Tanzania so much that it offsets the competition in the market. Scania has a different cost structure and such a system makes competition out of balance and extremely difficult. Fredrik contributed that although corruption is an issue, Ghana is a relatively less corrupt country when compared to other African countries and “if you see the Transparency International ranking for instance, Ghana was ranked better than all its neighbouring countries.” Corruption is prevalent among authorities in most parts of Africa according to Per. Often, some authorities will demand excessive information or documents because they want money, with money any document can be obtained in one day, otherwise authorities will make it difficult to obtain. Per however clearly stated that Scania does not bribe anyone for business which is the reason why the company mostly only sell to private people. Scania avoids doing business with the government and public authorities because according to Per, such entities are always expecting something in return. For example, it is extremely difficult to obtain a vehicle registration without bribing.

Per believes that the benefits of knowing the cultural differences between Sweden and East Africa helps only to a certain extent because it is certainly easier to deal with someone from the same cultural or geographic area. However, in Scania Kenya, where the staff consist of a group of different people: Somalis, Arabs and indigenous Kenyans, the advantage of having such diverse employees with different ethnic backgrounds and religions is the ability to handle most of the potential customers or other business partners. Lars finds it beneficial to know that there are existing cultural differences between Tanzania and Sweden. For example, in the business environment, it is important to know about how to communicate respectfully, about religion and people. Not knowing these can bring about cultural conflicts and affect business transactions. Fredrik appreciates knowing about the cultural differences between Ghana and Sweden for many reasons, one of which is the way he deals with people in both the social and corporate environment. For example, Ghanaians are very kind and friendly people and if such behaviour is not reciprocated, they may feel agitated. Knowing this has helped Fredrik avoid unpleasant encounters with Ghanaians.

5.4 Business Culture
The respondents answered questions regarding their corporate culture, how they perceive and handle business laws and regulations, uncertainties as well the communication style of the countries they are located in.

5.4.1 Electrolux
Regarding corporate culture, there seem to be a consensus from all the respondents from Electrolux that there is no difference between Electrolux doing business in Sweden and the company doing
business in African countries. However, Lorenzo mentioned that the way that Electrolux communicates can be different depending on where Electrolux is operating. This is because of the cultural differences that exist when communicating in African countries. Regardless of cultural difference that may exist, being “glocal” is the key when operating in any African country. Going glocal means that the company will still be a global company but at the same time, acknowledging and having respect for local activities. Mark added that although Electrolux has a Eurocentric strategy of doing business, one cannot copy and paste the strategy in an emerging market like South Africa. South Africa for example has a different consumer segment, culture, market strategy and channel strategy. It is therefore important to be locally relevant if a business wants to be successful in South Africa. According to Mark, this means having the right products, the right marketing strategy, the right consumer segment and the right channel strategy. Electrolux’s channel environment is completely differently to anything in Europe. For example, consumers are usually on credit in South Africa where they pay off monthly instalments which are purchase agreements, or they could take a store credit. This is different from Europe where people pay cash or by credit card. Mark went on to say that the form of payment by customer influences hyperinflation rate. For example, the consumer price index inflation (CPI) in South Africa is around 6% whereas in Europe, the CPI is 0%.

When asked about how business laws and regulations are perceived and handled in Africa, Lorenzo replied that such laws and regulations are changing quite often and in some countries, rules are often created to adopt or defend certain areas or certain parties even if some of these rules are not pro-population or not pro-development. Hatem described Egyptian business laws and regulations as unorganised and that there is a long bureaucracy regarding implementation. Lorenzo, Mark and Hatem stated that Electrolux makes sure that their products are perfectly in line with the requisition of the market and that their presence complies with the local legislation. Lorenzo added that sometimes, the management of Electrolux does not understand these legislations due to the high level of interpretation needed, for example when in Egypt, but nonetheless Electrolux respects the laws of the countries they are operating in.

When asked about how Electrolux handles uncertainty in the business environment, Lorenzo gave an example about Egypt devaluing its currency by 100% in November 2016. During situations like this, the management of Electrolux makes decisions every week. Lorenzo states that it is important to be extremely quick in making decisions. “I mean you need to take quick decisions. In many African countries, one can create a 100 different ways of going about the market. In order to be successful, speed on changing your approach is fundamental as well as understanding the situation and taking the right measurements.” One lesson to learn in such uncertain environments as Egypt is that waiting is not the solution. Also, it is important to work very close with the natives, whether in Egypt, Tanzania or South Africa because it facilitates quick decisions. Hatem states that when it comes to uncertainties regarding the political environment in Egypt, it is important to accommodate the economic situation since the direction of the political regime can create an economic ambiguous environment. Mark mentioned that South Africa is facing a somehow political uncertainty now and this can be challenging for business operations in South Africa.

Regarding how communication is conducted in African countries, Lorenzo stated that it can be direct or indirect depending on what location it is. Lorenzo mentions that in countries such as South Africa, communication is more direct. Mark concurred and stated that South Africans are very direct when they communicate. For example, if there are issues in the workplace, they will always
bring them up and they follow the correct procedures. However, in Egypt, communication is more indirect according to Hatem. Because of the subtle differences regarding communication style in African countries, Lorenzo stresses that it is very important to understand the situation. Lorenzo gave an example that if one wants to obtain something from a north African such as an Egyptian, an Algerian or a Moroccan, just offer something and he or she will be almost obliged to give the same thing back; which is direct communication in a sense. However, Lorenzo stressed that it is important to avoid being aggressive in business. Another difference in terms of communication according to Lorenzo is that Egyptians are generally less likely to interrupt during a conversation when compared to Tanzanians.

The cultural differences that Lorenzo finds particularly hard to accept are how Africans perceive time and having the need to double check employees almost all the time. Lorenzo states that in north Africa, one needs to expect and respect that a business partner is supposed to pray at certain times and business may not be as usual during Ramadan. Regarding Egyptian perception of time, Hatem stated that the perception of time is different between the corporate and the social environment in Egypt. This is the same in South Africa and Mark described that in the South African corporate environment, the perception of time is the same as in Europe. In the social environment however, both Mark and Hatem argued that people have a more relaxed attitude towards time. Mark added that South Africans have a famous saying that “tomorrow is another day. What they mean by this that if you can’t complete something today, you will complete it tomorrow.”

5.4.2 Scania
Scania has the same corporate culture and principles in, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania as they do in Sweden. According to Fredrik, Scania uses its core values everywhere they operate in the world. For example, one of the core values of Scania is quality and this value does not change just because Scania is operating in another country. Lars added that the culture of Scania is deeply rooted in the company’s core values. Per further elaborated that a universal corporate culture is important to the company and therefore when recruiting, the company’s management always start with training the recruits and discussing with them the core values of Scania and how one should behave in the company. For example, another core value of Scania is treating people with respect and encouraging them, be it a customer, a managing director or a cleaner. Per explained that in the African markets that he has been too such as Tanzania and Kenya, the employees are sometimes not recognised for what they are doing, instead, they are screamed at and very little encouragement is given to them. He further added adds that many Swedish companies are working in the same way and the above-mentioned core values makes it a fundamental difference between how Swedish companies such as Scania act when operating in African markets from many other companies operating in Africa. As an expat, Lars believes that it is his duty to maintain the core value of Scania in Tanzania and any other country. However, Lars argued that trying to maintain some of the company’s core values in Tanzania is much more difficult than when compared to Sweden because one needs to consider the Tanzanian cultural values as well.

Regarding how business laws and regulations are perceived within Scania, Per made the point that business laws and regulations vary from country to country. When it concerns laws and regulations about products and other aspects, such laws are very few in the African countries when compared to the rest of the world. However, starting a business may be difficult in many African countries because one needs all kinds of permits to start a business. Per further elaborated that if one wants
to register their business in Rwanda or Ethiopia, it will probably take a day in Rwanda and may be one week in Ethiopia. Starting a business in Uganda is also relatively easy. However, Per stated that when one wants to start a business in Kenya, it can take up to one year to get the same licence and as for “Tanzania, it will also give you a headache especially if you are a foreigner, they will do everything to make life difficult.” Regarding dealing with authorities, this may be difficult according to Per because if one wants to obtain a work permit, one must go through immigration procedures. Nonetheless, this is not saying that it is always a problem or difficult to deal with authorities in East Africa because there are some areas where the authorities can be very helpful. Nonetheless, it is always good to have someone who can help you deal with authorities in an efficient manner. Per explained that currently, Scania is trying to obtain a communications licence about fleet management in Kenya but it is a hassle to get it because the authorities are asking for all sorts of documents. Lars pointed out that the business laws in Tanzania are relatively stable however, how these laws are enforced changes very often.

According to Per’s experience, there are always uncertainties in Africa. Fredrik stated that the variations and fluctuations of Scania’s sales are much stronger in Ghana than in Sweden. What is therefore important according to Per, is that “you need to do your homework before” and this applies to any market and not just African markets.

When it comes to communication in Africa, Per argued that it is the same as everywhere else. He claimed that in Kenya, some people communicate in an indirect fashion but one cannot generalise that all Kenyans communicate in this way. Per believes that the indirect way of communicating is more common with Asians since they often do not say what they want and one needs to interpret what they mean. Per does not see communication as an issue at least in East Africa where he is head of Scania but he finds it important to do a market and/ or country analysis, “do your homework”, and understand how business negotiations are conducted in order to communicate more effectively in African markets. Lars stated that Tanzanians are mostly indirect when communicating. He added that before a strong relationship is established, Tanzanians are usually not vocal about their opinions and are usually distant. However, this behaviour changes with time and they loosen up as they get to know you better. Fredrik described the Ghanaian communication style as more direct and “a bit Swedish.”

Per stated that time is perceived differently in Africa when compared to other parts of the world. An example is that if one has a meeting with a Tanzanian, they might not turn up, even if the meeting is scheduled in their office. They do not call to say that they are late or that they got stuck in traffic, they just do not show up and later will only say “oh sorry I had another thing.” Furthermore, a business partner can sometimes be 1 to 2 hours late, and this does not seem to bother them because it is normal to be late for a meeting. Usually, the maximum meeting that one can have in Tanzania according to Per is one per day, and one needs to get used this. Lars described the Tanzanian perception of time as short-term oriented and relaxed, which he finds challenging. Fredrik also described the Ghanaian approach to time as relaxed and flexible. He joked that the Ghanaian approach to time is “Ghana Maybe Time (GMT).” According to Lars, such perception about time can be frustrating sometimes especially when there is a pressure from outside on
delivering results and improving situations. Lars added that he has a very understanding board that has experience with the Tanzanian business climate and this has helped him tackle challenges that derive from time related issues. In addition, he tries to visualise the company’s plans and at the same time making the plans simple and very clear. Further he makes a follow up of the plans more often than if it were in Sweden.

5.5 Business Relationships
The respondents were asked questions about business relationships with their business counterparts.

5.5.1 Electrolux
The African view of business relationships according to Lorenzo is characterised by respect and a non-aggressive approach. African business partners are somehow ethical. Although African business partners generally like to deal with Swedish companies because of the values that Swedish companies embody such as quality, one needs to establish good relations with them from the beginning. Mark added that relationships are vital in South Africa and South African retailers are extremely loyal. “If a global brand like Electrolux supports a retailer, the retailer will do anything in their power to ensure that you are trading profitably...The more you deliver on what’s been promised and on your terms and condition agreements, the stronger position you are in,” said Mark. Hatem stressed that trust is a vital element for building business relationship with Egyptian business people. According to Lorenzo, Electrolux has a good relationship with their business partners such that when the company does not have sales operation in a country, the business partners represent the company in that country. However, when there is a sales operation in a country, the staff is always local, meaning that expatriates are not sent to that country to take leadership positions.

When dealing with business partners in African markets, Lorenzo, Mark and Hatem agreed that while results are important in the long run, relationships are valued very much. For example, Mark mentioned that “Electrolux’s strategy in South Africa has always been to focus on the company’s strategic accounts and to achieve this, it is important to have a business relationship with those accounts in order to build up credibility and to earn respect. Electrolux is an externally-based company and there is a high level of engagement with their retail partners on an ongoing basis to ensure that the business is performing.” Hatem stated that it is easier to deal with business partners and build business relationships in Egypt when a company has a good reputation through working within the legal framework. Furthermore, when dealing with business patterns, Lorenzo and Hatem claimed that Electrolux always focuses on long-term goals although short-term goals are also important. Mark added that the short term operational activities need to be done very quickly followed by the medium-term strategy before the long-term goals are achieved. As a managing director, Mark focuses more on strategic activities than on operational ones. This is because Electrolux has a specific supply criteria in South Africa where they mostly deal with premium brands and as such, Electrolux cannot supply on a door to door basis. Further, Electrolux must guarantee a certain profitability to retail partners and a level of exclusivity and segmentation and differentiation. Hatem finds that due to the economic uncertainties in Egypt, it is important for him as a managing director to focus on both strategic and operational activities.

An attribute that Lorenzo appreciates most with his African business partners and customers is that once you establish a good relationship with them, they have a degree of respect for you and almost
everything works smoothly. Also, as opposed to some European customers, African customers are not aggressive in their business approach. Hatem values that in Egypt having good business relationship with certain entities facilitates business transactions more than paying a bribe. Mark appreciates that South African business partners are very hardworking, intuitive, locally relevant and they always find solutions. He added that most South African retailers work in a very tough environment but are nonetheless able to multitask and adapt to any culture.

5.5.2 Scania
According to Per, business relationships are important and one must stay in contact with people when in African markets. It is important to visit people and understand customer situation to capture their needs. He further added that it is always very important to knock on customers’ doors and meet them in their home. Doing business with partners involves more personal meetings than when in Europe, where most business transaction are done over the phone and through email but “here you need to show your face, shake hands and have some coffee together. Get to know who you are dealing with; most people here don’t deal with anyone that is unknown. So, you really need to have a face so that they trust you.” Lars described business relationships in Tanzania as very friendly and easy going. It is very easy to meet with a business partner or a customer because people are hospitable. According to Lars, Tanzanian business partners are so flexible that one does not need to call before meeting them. However, Lars believes that this flexibility makes it unreliable when it comes to meetings because people do not have a strict schedule as in Sweden. For example, a business partner or a customer can miss an appointment without notice and this does not seem to be a problem for them.

Regarding whether results or relationships take priority when doing business in African markets, Per stated that because Scania is in Africa to do business, results are very important for the company. Nonetheless, he argues that Scania is a sales and service company and sales have a lot to do with relations which makes relationships also important. Per explains that even in the west, for example Sweden or Germany where results take priority over relationships, relationships are still important. Moreover, because Scania also wants to promote its products, having a good relationship with customers is imperative as it is easier to sell if you have a good product but a good product is not enough to be successful in Kenya, Tanzania or South Africa. In Tanzania, for example, Lars explained that Scania has a more relationship-based culture. Fredrik also stated that relationships are very important when doing business in Ghana. Further, all the respondents from Scania believe that trusting a business partner to help facilitate a business transaction requires a good relationship. When dealing with business partners in East Africa, Per focuses on strategic more than he does on operational activities, Per explained that Scania’s strategy is nonetheless adapted to the markets that it is operating in by the team in that market. Fredrik reinforced and stated that Scania focuses on both short term and long term goals in Ghana as they are both important for the company. Lars described himself as more of an operational manager in Tanzania. He explained that this is because Tanzania is a small market and he has an important role in meeting with customers.

Regarding whether Scania focuses on short-term or on long-term goals, Per explained that for some types of industries or businesses where the company needs to be in a specific country for only a couple of years, a short-term goal is aimed for. He gave an example that if there was a mine in Mali, where Scania is not currently operating in, and the government of Mali wants to buy 100 trucks for that operations, Scania may go there and do the services on the vehicles but as soon as the operation is completed, Scania will disappear from Mali. Per explained that this is because the
rest of the Mali market is not of interest for Scania at the moment. This is a possible scenario, but Per stresses that it is not very common because usually Scania will go in and sell their products where they “see a need for the products and then decide to stay afterwards.” For Scania, growing the market, by the market shares, selling more trucks, buses, spare parts and services to the customers, is important. For this reason, the company looks for long term goals when dealing with African business partners and this is usually the case when going into any African market. It is very seldom that Scania goes into a country to obtain only one deal and then disappear. When dealing with business partners in Tanzania, Scania focuses on long-term goals because the company competes with businesses that sell lower quality but cheaper products such as Asian businesses. There is a lot of education such as training the employees and showing customers the benefit of having quality products. This has contributed to Scania’s success in Africa in general.

5.6 Cultural Learning
The participants describe their international experience and if they experienced any culture shock.

5.6.1 Electrolux
Lorenzo has more than ten years of experience working in Africa and he said that this is partly why he was offered the job he currently holds. Therefore, he was not offered any preparation from Electrolux because of his pre-existing knowledge of the continent. However, Lorenzo feels that some preparation is needed and he provides some preparation for his team from his own experience. He gives them advice on how to act and behave in different situations that they might encounter.

Mark is a local of South Africa, but has studied overseas. This has provided him with a better understanding of different cultures, ethnic demographic and different ways of doing business. Hatem chuckled when he said, “it was the other way around, Electrolux taught us about the Swedish culture”. The company provided them with a series of lectures and courses during the acquisition and it gave the employees a hint of the Swedish way of doing things.

"Well, you always discover something," said Lorenzo when asked what he would like to have known before going to Africa that he did not already know. It is such a big area with many differences that it is impossible to know everything. Lorenzo believes that before one tries to do business in Africa, one needs to ask many questions and be humble in order to understand the situations. Many things in Africa are changing very fast and he believes that it is better to say, "I don’t know," and to ask questions even if one thinks one knows the answer. It is hard to be prepared for everything that can happen; therefore, he suggests that one should always follow one’s own personal values.

Hatem emphasised that it was a smart move of Electrolux to give the courses to the employees which gave him an inclination on what was to come and it was not anything special he would have liked to know before. Because the company should know about the Egyptian cultures, the employees should understand the Swedish culture such as how communication. This was very beneficial for Electrolux because it made the acquisition easier.

Hatem did not experience a culture shock because he has worked with other cultures before working for Electrolux and for 14 years, he only worked with foreigners so this was nothing new to him. He also believes that Electrolux is not a Swedish entity but has metropolitan of different cultures within it. When asked what the major differences that he experienced, he mentioned that
perception of time and the democratic way of managing things were quite different because the company he worked with before was a family business, where the managing director was the owner and made all the decisions.

5.6.2 Scania

Scania is a worldwide company that is always offering their employees and their family the opportunity to participate in a cultural training program before their assignment. According to Per, all major Swedish companies provide a similar program for their expatriates. In the cultural training program, Scania has people who know about the culture, that the employee is going to, and they try to prepare the employees mentally for the changes and challenges that might occur.

Per, who has over 40 years of international experience and lived and worked in Tanzania for five years before he obtained his current assignment in Kenya. He declined the cultural training program that he was offered because he has already established experience from working internationally in Tanzania. He points out that it is equally important for the family and spouse to be prepared just like the employee, because it will also be hard on the family. Because of his vast experience of international environments, he sometimes feels that he knows more than the teachers in the preparation programs.

Lars has a similar mind-set as Per, because of his many years of experience and traveling internationally and his own investigation of Tanzania, he did not feel that it was necessary to participate in Scania’s training program. Lars felt that the program Scania is offering will not be enough to really prepare the expatriate to the cultural differences they will experience in the host country. He believes that it is important that the expatriates prepare themselves before going on an assignment abroad. Lars himself contacted many of the former Managing Directors in Tanzania to share their knowledge and experiences. He added that most cultural differences will happen during the first week and they will be learning experiences.

Fredrik felt like his colleagues; the cultural training program was not for him, because of his previous experiences working and living in Ghana. However, Fredrik did participate in the program before his first expatriate assignment many years ago, but he agrees with Lars that one or two days was not enough to prepare him for how a country works. He felt that having more time to learn about the differences and then experience them at first hand is the best way to learn how to handle them. Fredrik believes that keeping one’s own ideals is important. His intention is not to become a local, but to adapt the Swedish way more towards the Ghanaian way while keeping the Swedish aspects in a different environment.

Because Per has already lived in an African country before, he was aware of what might happen and said, "I knew what I was getting myself into," when asked what he wanted to know before his assignment in Kenya. However, Per believes that it is important for newcomers who enter East Africa to be prepared before they arrive. Lars said, that he did his own investigation before going on the assignment and that he cannot think of anything that he wished he would have had known before going to Tanzania. He ends with, "I knew a lot about the job and Tanzania, so it was nothing obvious". "No, not really," Fredrik said thoughtfully, "I can't think of any example at the moment." But he felt that his own previous experience made it easier for him during this assignment. He had a similar job in Tanzania 15 to 20 years ago; the experience he acquired back then has helped in his current assignment in Ghana.
Per stated that he has lived most of his life outside of Sweden and travelled to Asia so he cannot say that he remembers anything specific about experiencing a culture shock. However, there are always incidents where trouble occurs if one is not used to a situation. "Some people adapt very quickly and some other people never adapt and for those people it is better for them to go back and work in Sweden," says Per. One thing that makes westerners uneasy when they come to Africa would be the poverty. According to Per, about 80% of the population in Africa are poor and there are many of children and disabled people on the streets which is not so common to see in European countries. Some people feel very uncomfortable about this when they see it and it becomes the biggest problem when they realize that this is the reality of Africa. Lars said, “I’m not the kind of person that gets shocked,” when asked if he has experienced a culture shock. He believes that the biggest shock that happened to him was how different the concept of time is and how slow a lot of things are. When he travelled to Tanzania on vacation, he experienced the cultural differences as much greater than how he perceives them today when he lives and work there.

Fredrik said that he experienced his biggest cultural shock in Germany during his first assignments abroad, because he did not believe that there would be any large cultural differences between Sweden and Germany. Scania did not prepare him for potential cultural differences and he experienced the working environment to be very stiff, slow and impersonal. He describes it as going back to the 50’s or 60’s in Sweden when one addressed a colleague as Mrs and Mr. One aspect that shocked him was that even young people are very respectful and called each other Ms, Mrs or Mr, even if they had worked with each other for years. When he went to Tanzania for the first time, he expected the cultural differences to be large, but learned quickly that there were more similarities than he thought. Fredrik believes that when the expectations and experiences of the expatriate do not match, this is when cultural shock happens.

5.7 Cultural Adaptation
The participants describe how they and their company adapt to the African business culture.

5.7.1 Electrolux
"When you come here, you need to be a pioneer," said Lorenzo, when asked how he adapted to the African business culture. What helps Lorenzo to adapt to a new culture is reading up on the history of the country he is visiting to be able to understand where they are coming from and what motivates them based on their history. For Lorenzo, it helps to know these things when conducting business in the new host-culture. He clarified that it is sometimes necessary to adapt to the new culture that one intends to enter, but emphasised the importance of keeping one’s personal principles and values. One’s own principles and values combine with the company’s values which contribute greatly to running a successful business. Lorenzo said that the adaptation should be a part of one’s DNA and that when he is doing business with the locals, he tries to act and behave like them instead of acting like a westerner. If a person has trouble adapting to new cultures and want it to be the same as in Sweden, he suggests that they should stay in Sweden.

Hatem sees no areas that he sees adaptation needs in Egypt, because of the similarities when Electrolux acquired the company it was just business as usual for him and the team. There is no specific area in general that needs adaptation because they are adapting very quickly to other things according to Lorenzo. Changes keep occurring, like when he visited South Africa some time ago.
and went back there a few months or a year later, it was different compared to what he remembered. Quick changes are not as common in the European countries.

When it comes to adaptation needs in Electrolux business culture in South Africa, Mark focuses on the local product’s adaptation needs. He provided an example about washers, where in Europe they are white, but in South Africa the customer’s want silver. While the laundry room is separate in Europe, in South Africa the washer stationed in the kitchen instead of a laundry room. It is perceived as a prestigious to own a quality brand.

5.7.2 Scania

When asked how Per has adapted to the African business culture in Kenya he explained that Scania is 125 years old with a lot of experienced and knowledgeable people within. The experiences are used for recruiting, for example, Per is from Sweden but the Managing Director of Scania East Africa can as easily come from another country such as Brazil or Hong Kong. Since Scania is a worldwide company, there are many people with different cultures who are trying to have a common Scania culture in every city or country they are operating in. The common Scania culture is communicated in the way Scania is doing and conducting business, for example with the employees in Africa. Per mentioned another aspect that as individuals, we are very different and that we should be reminded that everyone is different and treated accordingly as Scania culture describes.

Lars also expressed the importance of Scania's own culture and describes how his role as Managing Director is combined with the core values. It is not Lars’ intention to fully adapt to the Tanzanian business culture because his role is to live by and follow Scania's core values, policies, and mediate them to the Tanzanian employees. Lars believes in other areas, except for Scania's culture, some adaptation is needed because they are in a host-country and working with new people. One area is communication, something that he feels is important, because the way of communicating to employees is different compared to how it is done in Sweden. Lars needed to adapt his way of communicating to his employees so that they are comfortable enough around him, to give him the right type of feedback and not what they think he wants to hear.

Fredrik agreed with his co-workers on how important it is to keep and follow Scania's core values in Ghana. He continued to explain that he adapted to things he liked about the Ghanaian culture which is different compared to Sweden. Fredrik provided two examples. The first is about how he starts his day differently in Ghana compared to in Sweden and the second is that he values personal relationships more.

There are some areas of culture that Scania had to adapt to in the beginning. Scania has a daughter company called Scania Finance and it is the company handling the business transactions between Scania and their customers like a bank. Scania Finance is in the southern part of Africa and they are the ones evaluating each customer if they have the resources to pay for the products they order. The evaluation process is similar in Sweden with a financial background check. However, this process is not working in East Africa because of the mistrust towards the government and its institutions. In East Africa, it is important to understand and get to know the customers instead of the background check. Because of their mistrust to the government they do not show all their assets or what they own to the tax authorities so the background check will be incomplete and unreliable.
Per put forth that a customer might look poor on paper but can be rich which is why it is important to get to know the customers.

Some adaptation is always needed when entering a new market, explained Lars. Scania had to adapt its way of conducting business in Africa compared to Europe. They have changed their strategy in Tanzania, by limiting the solutions and products that Scania should offer, because of the small market sizes compared to European markets. It would be bad for business if Scania tried to continue with the European strategy in Africa, because it would not work in the long run. To be flexible with communications is something that Fredrik sees as important. As Lars mentioned before, the way of communicating in Ghana or in any other African country is different when compared to the Swedish way. Fredrik explained the way Scania's core values are communicated to the employees, and that it is important to use their method of communication. To be flexible when communicating with the employees and not assume that they understand everything at once, but take time to make sure that the message has been understood.

5.8 Recommendations from Respondents

We asked the participants on what recommendations they could give to Swedish companies that want to establish their business in Africa.

Lorenzo explained that prospective foreign investors should not try to force the Swedish ways on the locals, but to wait and see where it is going and follow in the beginning. He recommends prospective investors to accept the differences and work with them. It is also important to aim for short term goals because it takes time to do anything in Africa, much longer than it would in Sweden. Mark pointed out that in South Africa, it is important to get to know the local product segment and to sell relevant products that best fit and are adapted to the market. It is easy to take a standardised product from Europe but a specialisation is needed to be able to fit the market needs. In Egypt, Hatem explained that there are differences depending on which industry the company is in. In the electrical appliances industry, for example, the best way to access the market is to acquire pre-established company and use the relations they have. Some industries are easier to enter than others and Hatem suggests some potential markets to enter are the service, banking, and financial sectors.

All the respondents stated that there are several good business opportunities in Africa. They recommended conducting market and/or country analysis before starting a new business venture. For any Swedish business that wants to establish in African markets, Per recommends buying the services of Business Sweden because they have good experience and are experts in their area. They help small and medium sized companies establish themselves in African markets at a reasonable cost. Lorenzo and Lars also suggested that it is very important to use reliable local partners because they know how things works in that country such as the market and rules. Doing a country or market analysis and talking to people who know how to conduct business in the region can help Swedish companies handle uncertainties in African countries.
6. Analysis and Discussion

This chapter presents the combined codes and themes derived from analysing the empirical data. In the process, we will compare our findings to the previous literature presented. The themes presented in this chapter are: conducting market and/or country analysis, reasons to adapt, reasons not to adapt and how to adapt.

Figure 5 is as a result of our thematic analysis in which we present brief descriptions of the codes identified from the interviews, that we have arranged and organised into “combined codes.” The figure also presents the themes developed from analysing our empirical findings. Each theme identified will be analysed in detail. We begin by analysing the risks and opportunities as well as the variations and diversity in African markets. Next, we analyse the reasons why Electrolux and Scania adapt their business cultures when in African markets. This is followed by analysing why the two companies are not adapting to certain aspects of African business cultures. Lastly, an analysis of how Electrolux and Scania have adapted to the African business environments will follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combined codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are risks and opportunities in African markets</td>
<td>Conduct Market/Country analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African countries share many cultural elements but with variations</td>
<td>Reasons to adapt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africans generally have a relaxed attitude towards time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africans put great emphasis on relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption is against companies’ values and policies</td>
<td>Reasons not to adapt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong company values do not allow for certain changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go global; be a global company but acknowledge and respect local activities</td>
<td>How to adapt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use local talents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5 – Combined codes and themes from our thematic analysis

(inspired by Gioia et al., 2010)

6.1 Conduct Market and/or Country Analysis

In this theme, an analysis of risks and opportunities that was found from the empirical data will be presented combined with theory which has already been introduced.

6.1.1 Risks

In the background, we have discussed that there are risks of operating in Africa, such as corruption, bribery, large welfare gaps amongst the population, poor infrastructure and unreliable laws and
regulations. We found in our empirical findings that some of the factors were mentioned and new factors were highlighted. The major risks that we found were corruption, payment systems, legal system, population, and infrastructure.

**Corruption**
Corruption is a problem for Swedish companies in Africa. Sweden is on the top of the list when it comes to not engaging in bribery and corruption when conducting business. As mentioned in the background, 90% of African countries ranked below 50 (Africa Development Bank Group, 2014, p.30). The participants mentioned different risks depending on which area they are working in Africa. Different areas have different risks and this can be because of their different cultural patterns such as is discussed in Hofstede’s (1980) six dimensions. Holm et al. (1996, p.1049) has mentioned that the company’s survival is dependent on their relationship with their partners. To be sure not to step into the trap of getting swindled, it is important for any company to establish long-term relationships. Despite the time investment required to establish these relationships, the payoff of significantly reduced risk of swindling is deemed worthwhile. In the empirical findings, Hatem said that when Electrolux bought the company, they also had their long-term business relationships with already established trust between them. More specific in Egypt, there are no specific risks towards Electrolux than neighbouring countries but the risk is environmental such as political and economic, that will impact the company rather than corruption.

Both Electrolux and Scania have a no tolerance policy regarding bribery and corruption (Scania, 2012, p.15; Electrolux, 2015), which they educate their employees about. This policy of no corruption has made it harder for Scania to do business in East Africa because they have previously lost business deals because of it. Shleifer and Vishny (1993) discussed how government bureaucrats impose bribe on private agents. Exposure to this type of environment, where the potential for bribery and loss of deals due to non-participation in such illegal activities, does not worry this study’s participants. They view it as part of “the game” in Africa, and enter the market prepared for it. One of Scania’s mitigation techniques is avoiding doing business with the government to as large an extent possible, due to the increased likelihood of bribery when conducting business with them. According to Getz and Volkema (2001, p.15), another reason for this high level of corruption may be the country’s uncertainty avoidance score. Uncertainty avoidance is one of Hofstede’s six dimensions, and is discussed in the theoretical framework.

We also found another unexpected aspect of corruption, when it comes to the handling of permits. It takes different times to gain, for example, a work permit in Tanzania than the neighbouring country Kenya. The time it takes to get a work permit granted depends on the bribe given to government officials, and because of the strict no corruption policy both Electrolux and Scania have, it will take up to a year to procure it. This difference between neighbouring countries may be due to their differing scores on Hofstede’s (1980) six cultural dimensions. The people might enjoy the way the system works, especially if they are on the receiving end of excess income and wealth. This unexpected constraint will interfere with the running of a company there, when it is hard to import workers into the country. The similarity of this problem can be seen from Electrolux’s side, when they have mentioned that their products might get stuck in the customs because of a new founded duty that should be paid. The empirical findings show that it is the government officials that are the largest villain when it comes to corruption. Some of the issues are: new founded duty, taking extra time to procure a work permit. To deal or do business with the government or private
parties is a risk that if the game is not played as they want it, will make it harder to run a business in Africa.

Electrolux respondents mentioned that corruption does not directly affect them and Hatem stated that this is because the company has built strong relationships with business entities, which voids the need to engage in unethical behaviours. However, both Electrolux and Scania are affected by corruption, either directly or indirectly, but in different areas of their operations in Africa. It affects Scania on an operational level by making it harder for them to conduct business and import employees. Electrolux is affected through disruption or delays in their distribution of products, which in turn makes it hard for them to keep their promises of delivery time.

**Payment systems**

A new type of risk that we found, is the risk of not getting paid that was described by half of the participants. Not getting paid was described as fraud and the risk of losing money. This risk is always an issue for a company no matter where they are in the world, but it seems that it is extra high in Africa due to the corruption level (Africa Development Bank Group, 2014, p.30). We believe that both Electrolux and Scania have been tricked several times in the past, because they found a solution to minimise the risk of not getting paid, by founding their own financial institutions. These financial institutions are working like banks, where the customers’ money is held as deposit in the institutions and are delivered to the assigned company when the customers have received their products. This is a very smart move, to use their own controlled financial institution to insure safety and stability to both the companies and their customers. Scania in Africa is using their institution to perform background checks to see if the customers do have money enough to purchase their products. However, the system is not perfect because of the high level of corruption from the government discussed above (Shleifer & Vishny, 1993), the population does to trust their government completely. In Kenya, we found that mistrust leads to people not reporting all their assets to the government which makes background check mute. The solution in this case is to go out and meet the customers in person and get to know if they have the money to purchase or not. This solution seems time-consuming but necessary. It was also mentioned that the risk of not getting paid derives from non-existing or poorly implemented legal systems in the country the companies are operating in.

**Legal system**

As mentioned in the background section, redundant regulations have limited the trade between Swedish companies and Africa for a long time (Wohlgemuth, 2002, p.47). We found similarities in our empirical findings when most of the participants described the legal systems in their country as unorganised and non-existing. It was also found that how developed or undeveloped the legal system is, depends on the country in question. One example we found was that it can differ depending on the region. In the north, Egypt’s legal system is unorganised and rigid with a long bureaucracy time to implement the laws. In the east, Tanzania’s legal system is relatively stable but how the government enforces them changes very often. In the west, there is a mix of stable and unstable legal system in Ghana.

The undeveloped legal systems are making it harder for the companies to conduct business in these areas. By not knowing or following the changes, the companies can end up in trouble with the government. When there is no or little information of what is legal or not, will make it easier to accept bribes than with a strong legal system. So, without a stable legal system, corruption will
grow and make it harder for companies such as Electrolux and Scania to conduct business there. These factors such as corruption, and weak legal systems can be a reason why Electrolux and Scania are not present in some countries in Africa. Another reason can be that the market is too small for them to survive there (Wohlgemuth, 2002, p.47).

**Population**
Not all countries in Africa have large populations. Smaller countries may provide larger risks than their large counterparts due to their smaller market size of potential customers. The risk both Electrolux and Scania may face is to establish themselves in a market that is too small to keep their operations sustainable. We found in our empirical data that large markets are countries such as South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, and Egypt, while the smaller markets are Mali and Gambia. The empirical findings show that both Electrolux and Scania are using the same method in managing a large or small market, even though they are established in two different markets. They are both using agents in the small markets and establishing their own business in the large markets. The size of a market is a subjective viewpoint, however, and changes depending on the company. Electrolux has a base of operations in Egypt, where they know there is a large enough market for them to remain sustainable. Scania, on the other hand, is operating in Egypt purely through an agent. Even though Egypt is a large population, the potential customer base depends entirely on the type of market the company wishes to enter. Both Electrolux and Scania define sustainable as a market where the cost of establishing their operations should be covered by the entered market alone. This argument, we found, was why Electrolux has focused on two base of operations in Africa, one located in South Africa and the other in Egypt, which are both large markets. Scania is on a similar path, where they established their base of operations in Tanzania and Kenya, both of which are larger markets, and in Ghana, a smaller market. They have also established a hub in South Africa (Ekengren, 2017c), which is covering the southern region of Africa.

**Infrastructure**
Poor infrastructure is named as a constraint by Sime (2012, p.2) for businesses in Africa, especially when it comes to getting access to rural areas and business partners. In the empirical findings, we found that the participants agree with this statement. Both Electrolux and Scania did mention the poor infrastructure as a risk, however they did so in different settings.

Electrolux supplies electrical appliances. For them to work, electricity is required. The generally poor level of infrastructure found in Africa (Cavusgil et al., 2016, p.245) means that access to this required electricity is not always a given. Lorenzo provided us with an example. Cairo has many potential customers, but only in certain areas. Many of these population are dense areas but do not have readily available access to electricity due to their level of poverty. Instead of being large markets for Electrolux to target, these dense areas become a hindrance, cutting off major markets for them to establish in. Therefore, Electrolux is forced to focus on the areas that have a booming middle class (African Development Bank Group, 2014, p.2), and an upper class that has access to electricity.

Another aspect of infrastructure that affects both Electrolux and Scania in a similar manner is the lack of well-integrated roads. Africa is a large continent and the distance between the cities are vast, we found that sometimes without a major road connecting them in empirical data. This causes major problems with transport of goods to customers. Electrolux did mention this as a risk for them since they use large and heavy trucks when delivering their goods, and the trucks cannot drive off-
road. So, by not being able to transport their goods to the buyers, it limits their customer base in remote. Scania is mentioning this as one of the reasons why they are not establishing in the central area of Africa. We assume that central Africa is severely limited in terms of roads according to the participants, and we believe this is a reason for why Electrolux is not yet established there either.

The lack of proper infrastructure is a risk for Electrolux when conducting business, but provides Scania with a marketable opportunity instead. As Scania’s main business in Africa is the provision of trucks and buses (Ekengren, 2017a), Electrolux’s loss may turn into Scania’s gain. Scania is already providing major city centres with their products, as was found in the empirical data. Therefore, expanding this business to more rural areas is a business opportunity Scania may yet explore.

6.1.2 Opportunities

Africa has a growing middle class which provides great opportunity for investors and companies (African Development Bank Group, 2014, p.6), as discussed in the background. In the empirical findings, we found support that the population is one of the strongest opportunities in Africa, but also that there are more industry specific opportunities as well. The new factors we found are: infrastructure and low competition.

Population

As has been mentioned before, the population in Africa, and especially in terms of the middle class, is growing (African Development Bank Group, 2014, p.2). This will provide great opportunity for both Electrolux and Scania in different ways.

For Electrolux, the growing middle class means a growing consumption of goods that are outside of necessities (African Development Bank Group, 2014, p.6). This provides them with many new potential customers. We found in our empirical findings that Egypt and the surrounding countries have a large population size with a growing middle class. This opportunity can be one reason for why Electrolux established one of their bases in Egypt; to get access to the growing, marketable population. We found a new customer segment in our empirical findings called Black Diamond in South Africa. The term Black Diamond is a growing black middle class that is a product of Black Economic Empowerment program that the South African government started at the end of the apartheid in 1994. This segment was in 2010, 10% of the 22 million 18-years and older population that spend up to 40% of the spending at that time (Goyal, 2010).

For Scania, the rising population is also seen as a future business opportunity. Currently, they have established a base of operations in Ghana, which is a small market with great potential. Their plan is to use their base in Ghana to expand to new potential markets in the western area of Africa. These expansion plans, combined with their current business in Ghana, will help sustain Scania and provide them with new potential markets. With the growing population and the pressure to improve the current infrastructure, another opportunity is presenting itself through the selling of transportation products.

Infrastructure

To improve the infrastructure has been one long-term goal for Scania when it comes to expanding and selling their products in Africa. The infrastructure in the city centres, which in the empirical findings we found was chaos and unstructured, is an opportunity for Scania. They have quality
products that complements improved infrastructure, such as providing buses and service packages. Scania has already started taking advantage of this venture through the establishment of their base in Ghana, and are hoping to continue in the surrounding major cities. This will provide Scania with an increase in current and future sales. Pressure from the growing population may influence the government to improve the roads around the country as well. As Cavusgil et al. (2016, p.245) mentioned, South Africa had well-integrated infrastructure, which can be the reason why Scania has established their hub there and Electrolux one of their bases. The development of infrastructure will present itself as an opportunity for Electrolux by being able to reach new customers. The “want” for an improved infrastructure by the middle class may expand their potential reach through the provision of electricity to areas such as those around Cairo. This will make it possible for Electrolux to expand their customer base in that area and reach populations which were previously unreachable.

Less established competitors
A new factor found in our empirical findings is the lack of well-established competitors in the African market. In areas such as Europe, competitors are abundant for both Electrolux and Scania. In Africa, few competitors have established themselves, specifically in the western regions. Compared to areas such as Europe, we found that West Africa has significantly fewer established businesses and manufacturing plants, as well as overall competitive businesses. A reason for this lack of competition may come in the perception outsiders have of the African continent. The Economist (2000) described Africa as hopeless and backward, which according to Gordon and Wolpe (1998, p.52) creates an undesirable image of the continent. These factors can make Africa seem hostile towards foreigners and their businesses. However, in our empirical findings, we found that this is not always the case. To establish a business in Africa takes time, not only to employ the company but also adapt to the cultural differences that Hofstede’s six dimensions are describing. We found that if successfully integrated in the local market, the company will be successful when expanding to other markets as well. An exception to the previously mentioned lack of competitors can be found in South Africa, where the market is a gateway to the rest of Africa (Business Sweden, 2017) and is therefore seen as much more desirable than the rest of the continent.

6.2 Variations in African Cultures
All the respondents from both Electrolux and Scania expressed that there are many differences between Sweden and African countries. During the interviews, there seemed to be a consensus view that Africa is diverse and should not be treated as one country. This is in line with Taylor’s (2012) view that Africa is culturally diverse despite the monolithic caricature. According to our empirical findings the differences among African countries can be argued in light of their work ethic, religion, communication style, business laws and regulations, corruption and infrastructure. These are important to know before conducting business in African markets.

Work ethic
From our empirical findings, there are differences regarding work ethic in Africa depending on what country is in question. For example, it is the company’s core values that dictates how people work in Egypt. The implication of this is that in order to instil a strong work ethic in employees in Egypt, a company should employ principles that encourage behaviours such as motivational policies, into the company’s core values. In Ghana, Scania has very dedicated employees but the Ghanaian work ethic has been described as mixed. This means that good or bad work ethic is not as a result of a general cultural phenomenon in Ghana. Also, one needs to remind, check or pressure
employees to get the work done, which requires patience and understanding from top management. This seems to support the argument by (Nnadozie, 2001, p.56-9) that African workers have a positive work ethic but that they tend to be relatively less productive. Furthermore, unlike Egypt where the company’s core values govern how people work regardless of the segment, it is generally challenging in South Africa to have affordable local manufacturers in the manufacturing segment because the working class mostly do not hold tertiary qualifications. This negatively affects the productivity level in the manufacturing segment. Consequently, companies in the manufacturing segment in South Africa need to invest in training as well as hiring qualified people in addition to having strong core values to achieve high productivity. Another interesting finding that exemplifies the diversity of Africa is that while Kenya and Tanzania are neighbouring countries, Kenya has more readily available qualified people than Tanzania. Whereas Per described Kenyans as hardworking, Lars described the Tanzanian work ethic as low and slow. One would have thought that Kenya and Tanzania would have similar setup regarding work ethic and productivity but this is apparently not the case according to our empirical findings. These findings reinforce Amoako-Agyei’s (2009, p.330) claim that sub-Saharan-Africa share many cultural elements but with variations.

Religion

Another aspect that makes Africa diverse is religion. Religion plays a very important role when doing business in Africa and an integral part of the African way of life. In north Africa for example, which is predominantly Muslim populated (Moran et al., 2014, p.515), one should be versed about religious traditions and practices. Ramadan is a very important month for Muslims and business may be conducted differently during this month. This will not be the case for South Africa as the country is not predominantly Muslim. Also, foreign business people doing business in the north should understand that their business partners need to take time off for prayers especially on Fridays. However, this will not be the case when in Ghana. As Per puts it, having diverse employees with different religious backgrounds can be an advantage for a business in Africa. This is because since Africa is culturally diverse, having a diverse staff enables a company to handle most customers and businesses.

Communication style

Another difference amongst African countries according to our respondents is that communication style can vary from country to country. In line with Hall’s (1976) examination of the role of communication in context, Managliso (2001) asserted that when Africans communicate, the meaning of the message is internalised in the person where very little is explicit in the coded message sent. Clearly, this is different from our findings because whereas South Africans and Ghanaians have been described as more direct when communicating, Egyptians have a more indirect communication style. Nonetheless, even these findings should not be generalised as there are nuances in communication style within a country. Therefore, foreign business people should understand that there are individual differences in communication style and gaining competence in intercultural communication can mean the difference between success and failure when conducting business in Africa. As Per has recommended, it is important for prospected Swedish business people to seek advice from Business Sweden because they have good experience in the African business environment.


**Business laws and regulations**

Business laws and regulations can vary from country to country in Africa. South African laws and regulation are organised and straightforward, but these laws are rigid and have a long implementation process in other countries like Egypt. Although the laws and regulations regarding business are disorganised in Egypt, it is nonetheless relatively easier to start a business in Egypt. As for countries such as Kenya and Tanzania, to get a business permit and work license can be extremely difficult and time consuming. This is in line with the World Bank report (2016) which mentioned that many African countries continue to become the least business-friendly when it comes to business laws and regulations. Based on our empirical findings, although many African economies have carried out reforms to improve the business climate, there still needs to be further reforms if African countries are to attract more foreign business investors. We infer from our findings that it is important to comply with business laws and regulations in African markets.

**Corruption**

As stated by Getz and Volkema (2001), collectivism which most African countries fall into, has been found to be associated with corruption. Our findings seem to be in line with this argument to a certain extent since all our respondents acknowledged that corruption is prevalent in African countries. However, South Africa is an individualistic country (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010) and corruption is nonetheless prevalent. Therefore, in line with the above argument, corruption cannot be only associated with a country’s cultural dimension. This leads us to argue that corruption is a continental phenomenon in Africa rather than a national cultural dimension. The African Development Bank (2014) reported that 90% of African countries ranked below 50 in the corruption index. Further, modest improvements were made by countries like Botswana and Cape Verde according to Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (2017). The simple act that Botswana and Cape Verde are ranked high on the corruption index goes to show that although prevalent in many African countries, corruption varies in severity in African countries. This was exemplified in our findings by Fredrik who mentioned that Ghana was ranked higher than its neighbouring countries in terms of corruption, and by Mark who stated that South Africa was ranked higher than most African countries. These differences should be considered by prospective investors, as a strategy adopted for dealing with corruption in Somalia may be redundant when in Botswana.

**Infrastructure**

Our empirical findings show that infrastructure development vary from country to country in Africa. Although South Africa has a functioning infrastructure and an established market (Cavusgil et al., 2016, p.245), this is not the case for most African countries especially in the Sub-Saharan region. Further, businesses in markets such as in west and central Africa are plagued by risks and challenges due to poor infrastructure such as poorly integrated roads, transportation network and poor power supply. This is in line with Cavusgil et al.’s (2016, p.245) statement that the infrastructure in many African countries are generally poor. These systems are vital for businesses. In this globalised age, sufficient power supply and well-integrated roads and transportation are essential for efficient business operations. One can say that lack of a good transportation system could be a reason why most Africans are barely on time for business meetings. This, in turn, negatively affects the economy of African countries. It is therefore important for African governments to invest in good infrastructure that will allow businesses to flourish as this will also reduce income disparity (World Bank Group, 2016, p.11). Good infrastructure could be the main reason why South Africa is Sweden’s most important African market.
6.3 Reasons to Adapt

Our empirical findings show that although Africa is diverse and culture varies widely from country to country, there are some commonalities (Amoako-Agyei, 2009, p.330). The perception of time and relationship are themes that are similar in all African countries, which is different from Sweden. Sweden has a monochromatic culture in which time is treasured and people tend to be oriented towards planning and scheduling (Hall, 1979, p.150). The value that Africans put on relationship and the different perception of time they have are so deeply rooted that foreign business people need to understand, respect and adapt to succeed.

**Relationships**

In the theory section, it is stated that individualistic cultures tend to be result oriented while collectivist cultures tend to be relationship oriented (Varner & Beamer, 2011, p.113). If this is to hold, South Africa which is an individualist culture as per Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, will be more result oriented. Nonetheless, this is not the case because just like the rest of Africa, South Africans value personal connections and relations when doing business according to our empirical findings. All our respondents reveal that Africans emphasis having personal connections and relationships. In addition, building strong relationships is essential for efficient business transactions. These findings support existing literature about the importance of business relationships in Africa (Ford et al., 2011; Fafchamps, 2004; Mangaliso, 2001, p.24; Amoako-Agyei, 2009, p.332). The implication of this for prospective Swedish investors is the need to invest in good and strong business relationship with African business partners before engaging in an actual business activity. This will ensure that they benefit from the advantages of business relationships. However, building business relationships may be challenging for prospective Swedish business people since they tend to be more result oriented. It is not to say that Swedish business people should totally ignore the result aspect of business but should respect and understand the value that Africans put on relationships.

According to our empirical findings, the importance of building business relationships in Africa is that it helps elevate the level of trust and respect among business partners. Our respondents expressed the importance of building personal relationships with business partners before engaging in an actual business activity. They revealed that this is because African business people need to trust their business partners and building a personal relationship through face-to-face meetings creates this trust. Therefore, it is important for prospective Swedish investors to send a person or a team that has already established a personal relationship and trust for business negotiations and meetings. Patience is required to build strong business relationship because establishing such relationships takes time with African business partners. In essence, who you are as a business person, will affect how you are approached and received by an African counterpart and this in turn will affect business outcome. Our respondents also stated that in addition to trust, having respect for business partners makes business transactions go smoothly. This finding is in line with what is stated in the theory section that Africans value trust and respect (Fafchamps, 2004 p.14). As our findings suggest, prospective business people should be trustworthy and respectful if they are to thrive in their business dealings in African markets. Having a good reputation facilitates the establishment of relationships and subsequently business transactions where one does not have to engage in bribery and corruption.
Ubuntu value system
Another aspect regarding business relationship touched upon by our respondents, which is also in consensus with what is stated in the theory section, is the emphasis that Africans put on harmony and cooperation. Our respondents have described that African business partners are generally friendly, sincere and hospitable. An aggressive approach to business will therefore hinder establishing strong business relationships. This shows that the philosophical thought system of Ubuntu, which embodies the values, norms and behaviours of people such as harmony, reciprocity, hospitality and treating others with respect and dignity (Mangaliso, 2001, p.24; Amoako-Agyei, 2009, p.332), is very much present Africa. As mentioned by Lorenzo, when in the northern part of Africa, if one wants something from a business partner in the future, just offer them something nice now and they will be obliged to reciprocate it in the future. In South Africa, retailers will offer loyalty in return for trustworthiness. From our findings, we believe that foreign businesses should be willing to incorporate the philosophy of Ubuntu into their organisation. Although a social rather than a business concept, Ubuntu will give competitive advantage because it promotes a sense of teamwork (Mangaliso, 2001, p.24; Amoako-Agyei, 2009, p.332).

Time
Africans have a polychronic time perception (Nnadozie, 2001); meaning that they use time as a flexible medium in which activities take place. All our respondents concurred to this claim and stated that Africans have a more relaxed attitude towards time. The implication of this is that one cannot come to Africa with a western mentality of time. Our findings show that there are sometimes differences between how time is perceived in the corporate environment and how time is perceived in the social world. Whereas people have a more relaxed attitude towards times in the social environment, people in the corporate environment usually try to be on time especially when dealing with foreign business people. In this globalised age, it is imperative to deal with foreign business people in the corporate environment and one can say that the African corporate environment is trying to adapt to the western perception of time out of respect. This shows that one should avoid generalising that all Africans have the same perception about time. It also shows that some African cultures are not only diverse, but are also dynamic.

As some of our respondents put it, the flexible attitude towards times makes African business partners unreliable when it comes to meetings. This is because Africans generally do not have a strict schedule as in Sweden (Hall, 1979, p.150; Nnadozie, 2001, p.56). On the one hand, this attitude towards time can be said to be deeply rooted in culture but on the other hand, one can say that poorly integrated roads, a limited transportation network and even insufficient power supply contribute to this behaviour (Cavusgil et al., 2016, p.245). Further, our respondents confirm that Africans usually carry out tasks simultaneously where different activities and several different people are involved which in turn makes them miss business meetings. When a meeting is set up with a native African business partner, they are either not on time or they do not show up at all and this seems to be reasonable to them. These kinds of behaviours can be frustrating for foreign business people and therefore require patience and flexibility when conducting business. In addition, our empirical findings imply that foreign business people need to accommodate their African business partners. They should understand that there are external circumstances like poor infrastructure that might affect the ability of their business partners to be present for a meeting on time. Also, foreign business people should also understand that African business partners may want to allocate time for nurturing relationships during business meetings and should therefore accommodate for this need.
Both Electrolux and Scania have strong core values and dedicated employees who have similar time perception as the west; a monochronic time perception. Nonetheless, in other organisations such as family owned organisations, a more relaxed attitude towards time is adapted and this poses challenges such a being late for a business meetings or being behind a project schedule. As stated before, the way of life in the business world is dictated by the way of life in society (Nnadozie, 2001) and foreign business people should understand this. Although multinational companies such as Electrolux and Scania may have a more western perception of time, the local people working for such companies or any other company are social beings and are therefore influenced by culture. In view of the challenges that companies face regarding time, our respondents have ways to handle these challenges. Visualising the company’s plans and making them simple and clear goes a long way in aiding employees and business partners to stick to schedule. It is also important to constantly check on the employees and business partners and make a follow up of the plans more often.

6.4 Reasons Not to Adapt

Our empirical findings revealed that Electrolux and Scania do not adapt to certain aspects of African business cultures due to strong core values.

**Strong company core values**

A theme that has been recurring throughout the interviews is keeping the company’s core values intact. The corporate cultures and principles of Electrolux and Scania in Sweden are the same throughout the world. These core values do not change just because these companies are operating in African markets; characterised by different cultural setup. Both Electrolux and Scania value the quality of their products as well as the wellbeing of their stakeholders. Both company respondents expressed that although people who hold top positions receive special privileges in the social environment and even in local companies, this is not the case for Electrolux and Scania. Holmberg and Åkerblom (2007, p.49) stated that the Swedish social structure is flat and both companies’ respondents reveal the same regarding their organisational structures. This is exemplified by the physical and symbolic structures of the companies. For example, in Electrolux, the offices are organised as an open space and everyone has an office. In Scania, the managers’ canteens were removed so that everyone can eat the same food and sit in the same location. Nnadozie (2001, p.55-6) mentioned that social organisations are hierarchical in African countries. Our respondents expressed the same adding that these rigid hierarchies do not always allow for the opinions, ideas and experiences of everyone to be respected or listened to. This gives rise to an authoritarian leadership style. Our respondents state that most African local companies tend to have an authoritarian leadership style but that this is not the case for Electrolux and Scania. Holmberg and Åkerblom (2007, p.49) stated that the Swedish social structure is flat and both companies’ respondents reveal the same regarding their organisational structures. This is exemplified by the physical and symbolic structures of the companies. For example, in Electrolux, the offices are organised as an open space and everyone has an office. In Scania, the managers’ canteens were removed so that everyone can eat the same food and sit in the same location. Nnadozie (2001, p.55-6) mentioned that social organisations are hierarchical in African countries. Our respondents expressed the same adding that these rigid hierarchies do not always allow for the opinions, ideas and experiences of everyone to be respected or listened to. This gives rise to an authoritarian leadership style. Our respondents state that most African local companies tend to have an authoritarian leadership style but that this is not the case for Electrolux and Scania. Both company respondents claim to have a democratic leadership style. Nonetheless, as Hatem expressed, the leadership style that Electrolux has is a democratic leadership with a restrictive framework. This is because at the end, the manager makes the final decision even if discussions have taken place with the employees.

As previously stated, in high uncertainty avoidant societies like African countries, managers focus more on operational activities than on strategic issues (Szymura-Tyc & Kucia, 2016). The empirical findings were mixed regarding whether Electrolux and Scania managers focus more on operational activities than or on strategic issues. Both Electrolux and Scania’s strategies are adapted to the markets that they are operating in by the team in that market. Therefore, the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980) does not necessarily determine whether a company will
focus on operational activities or on a strategic one. Rather, it is the attributes of the company such as its corporate cultures and principles, the capability of the team implementing the framework, as well as the characteristics of the market that determine what to focus on when doing business in African markets. For example, in South Africa, where Electrolux has specific supply criteria where they deal with premium brands, guaranteeing a certain profitability to retail partners and a level of exclusivity and differentiation, the company cannot strictly function on an operational basis. However, even when strategic aspects are focused on, short term operational activities need to be done very quickly followed by the medium-term strategy before the long-term goals are achieved. For politically and economically uncertain environments like Egypt, it is important for managing directors to focus on both strategic and operational activities. As for small markets like Tanzania and Ghana, it is important for Scania managers to focus on operational goals because it is important for them to meet with customers to establish a strong brand name and a long-lasting relationship.

Furthermore, in accordance with Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, African business partners will focus on short-term perspective more than long-term goals when doing business because African countries are short-term oriented. Again, our empirical findings suggest that just because Electrolux and Scania are operating in countries where people do not engage in long term plans does not mean that these companies will adapt to such phenomenon. Electrolux and Scania have strong core values that do not allow for certain changes especially when these changes go against the companies’ core values.

**Corruption**

In the Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, all the compared African countries score high on uncertainty avoidance and on power distance dimension. As previously stated, Getz and Volkema (2001) argue that high uncertainty avoidance and high power distance have been found to promote corruption. In uncertainty avoidant societies, matters are regulated in detailed regulations but they are not usually followed. In turn, people who want to achieve personal interest feel the need to go through informal channels which induces, a sense, bribery and corruption. The theoretical explanation regarding the relationship between high power distance and corruption is that government officials such as the police believe that it is their privilege to obtain personal benefits because of the status they have from their official positions (Getz & Volkema, 2001, p.14). The underclass may try to improve their positions or living standards through receiving bribes. Our findings seem to be in line with Getz and Volkema’s (2001, p.14) reasoning because our respondents expressed that while laws and regulations are rigid in many African countries, bribery and corruption are still prevalent. Moreover, our respondents have confirmed that the issue of corruption is not going in the right direction notwithstanding the efforts made to reduce corruption by African governments.

Consequently, foreign business people may face the dilemma of whether to conform and engage in bribery and corruption like every other local business entity or to adopt a more moral approach towards corruption. Both Electrolux and Scania have chosen the latter for the simple reason that their core values go against bribery and corruption and therefore corruption is not an option for them. According to our respondents, both companies have good ethos regarding conducting business in African markets despite the prevalence of corruption in the continent. While corruption does not seem to have direct negative effects on Electrolux’s business operations in Egypt, it affects Scania business operations in Tanzania indirectly by offsetting the competition. In Tanzania, this implies that businesses that do not want to engage in bribery and corruption may face challenges especially when they have a different cost system. Nonetheless, our empirical findings show that
managing to build a good relationship is the key to surviving hardships caused by corruption in African markets. For example, Electrolux takes advantage of relationships that have been built over years to facilitate business operations. This means that for foreign businesses to succeed in an African market, building good and long-lasting relationships with business entities pays off in the long run and can even be a good ‘substitute’ to corruption.

However, one should notice that Electrolux and Scania are both well-established companies in Africa with a good understanding of the region and the business environment, as such, one can say that these companies are more used to handling certain problems. Although both companies experience corruption at varying degrees depending on the country in question, the way they handle such problems is having efficient resources and well-integrated policies in their processes. Electrolux has a global ethics program designed to guide employees to do the right thing and to be accountable (Electrolux, 2015). The company also has a governance framework for risk assessments and labour relations management (Electrolux, 2015). Scania integrate guidelines on how ethics shall be handled in the company’s policies. Our empirical findings show that in at least East Africa, Scania avoids dealing with the governments and government officials. However, if they deal with governments, the company documents the whole process in such a way that it could be shown to authorities or auditors when the need arises (Scania, 2012). Therefore, corruption does not seem to be a barrier to establishing business in African markets. Furthermore, both companies have financial institutions that work like banks where customers deposit money before a purchase, which is later delivered to the assigned company when the customers have received their products. However, Electrolux and Scania are multinational companies and have been established in Africa for decades. Building long-lasting relationships as well as establishing a good reputation may be rather challenging for small businesses. Newly established or small business in the region may experience corruption differently. Therefore, it is the duty of the African governments to tackle this issue to give equal chance for businesses to compete in African markets. Such initiatives will reverse the negative effects that corruption has on the African economy.

6.5 How to Adapt
In this theme, an analysis of how Electrolux and Scania have adapted or not adapted to the African business culture as well as why it is important to adapt to certain aspects of business culture in African markets.

6.5.1 Going Glocal
The term glocal was mentioned by one of the participants when he described how to adapt and conduct business in Africa. This term was defined in the beginning of the study as: adapting business operations to fit the local market. We found that there are several different ways through which Electrolux and Scania have adapted to their local markets: cultural adaptation, market adaptation, operational and strategic activities, and through relationships.

Cultural adaptation
In the empirical findings, we found that the participants are willing to adapt to fit in the local business culture and market when conducting business in Africa, with certain limitations when customs clash with Scania or Electrolux’s core values (Scania, 2016b; Electrolux, 2017c). These values are ideals which the companies expect their employees to follow no matter where they are in the world. The willingness of the participants to adapt is in line with Templer et al. (2006), who state that the success of the adjustment is based on the individual’s own need to want to adapt to
the new culture. Both Electrolux and Scania have strong core values which are adhered to while operating in Africa. Both companies state that their core values come first, with adaptation being added where necessary.

Interest in adapting to a new culture is not the only important factor that increases success for a company. Knowing about potential cultural similarities and dissimilarities helps expatriates to integrate with locals successfully, a sentiment Selmer (2007) mentioned in his study. Selmer (2007) is not only saying that it is important to know the differences, but also to know the similarities between the cultures. He postulated that it is equally important to know what two cultures share, as otherwise they can go unnoticed and create problems. We found that Scania offers cultural training programs to the respondents in this study before they went to Africa.

Of all the respondents from Electrolux, only one was offered cultural training. This could be attributed to the fact all Scania respondents in our study are Swedes, because Scania only send expatriates to Africa for leadership positions. Electrolux uses local talents in their leadership positions in Africa, and for this reason, cultural training programs will be redundant. It has been discussed before that it is very important to get a cultural training before an expatriate goes abroad, but these programs are still voluntary, and some participants of our study declined to participate in Scania’s programs. Their reason was that they had international experience from before and that they knew most of the cultural differences and how to handle them. This is in line with what Deal et al. (2003) stated as an important factor for success: international experience increases the likelihood of success for global leaders. Fredrik did participate in Scania’s cultural training program during his first expatriate assignment in Tanzania, but found that the program did not provide him with sufficient information to fully prepare for the cultural differences that he experienced there.

Electrolux did not offer any cultural training program to Lorenzo and Mark but they did offer it to Hatem when Electrolux purchased the local Egyptian company in 2011. However, the training program was reversed; employees were thought about the Swedish culture instead, and how Electrolux is conducting business. This is a surprising finding, but one which follows what Temper et al. (2006); Winkelman (1994); and Jassawalla et al. (2004) described. Electrolux did train and provide knowledge about the Swedish culture, as well as their core values. This training did most likely help the local employees minimise the stress and frustration that can occur when the differences are unexpected, potentially leading to cultural shock and failure within international business. This shows that Electrolux has long experience with dealing with international business, and that it can be just that factor that made them chose this path. According to Deal et al. (2003), international experience is an important factor that will increase the likelihood of success for a company like Electrolux.

Market adaptation

In the empirical findings, we found that it is important for Electrolux and Scania to adapt their products to the current market they are in. Both companies have introduced changes in their products and their operations to fit with the African markets. They have adapted to the market size and the different needs and wants from the customers, but in different ways. Scania has changed their operations by limiting the products they are distributing in East Africa due to the smaller market size. What they have kept and not changed are the focus on distributing quality products which is in line with their third core value "Elimination of waste"(quality) (Scania, 2016b). Electrolux has also done modifications without altering the quality in their products to be more in
line with the markets, such as in South Africa where their appliances are silver coloured instead of the usual white. This is in line with what Tomalin and Nicks (2007, p.2) argued; to use standardised models or products are not enough when working globally. Get to know the culture and to be able to catch the customer’s needs (Sime, 2012, p. 3). To be able to adapt the models and products to fit with the current market is needed for success.

**Operational vs. strategic activities**

We found that Electrolux and Scania adapt their strategy to the new market they are in, but how they do it depends on the country they are operating in. According to Szymura-Tyc and Kucia (2016, p.71), Swedish managers are more focused on strategic activities than they do on operational ones. This can be linked back to Hofstede’s (1980) six dimensions, especially the dimension of uncertainty avoidance. Sweden has a significantly lower score than the mentioned African countries (figure 3) because the future is more certain and clear for Swedes, so they will focus on the long-term aspects rather than the short term. This sentiment is entirely reversed for the population of the African countries.

We found that the activity that Electrolux and Scania are focus on differ depending on which region or country the participants were in, but the two companies follow certain overarching similarities. In Kenya, Scania’s focus is on strategic activities, with major resources being devoted to expansion. In Tanzania, Scania is more focused on the operational activities. This difference can be attributed to Tanzania’s location. Scania Tanzania is under the Scania East Africa’s umbrella, which operates with headquarters in Kenya. Therefore, it will have a different focus to fit with this differing market. It looks different for Scania West Africa, where both strategic and operational activities are in focus, but they operate under different timelines. The goal with the base in Ghana is to expand to the surrounding countries as a strategic activity and this the expansion cannot be done at once. They also use the operational activities as milestone like Electrolux is doing.

Electrolux has a similar focus to Scania West Africa in their operations in Africa. In Egypt, the focus is on both operational and strategic activities. This focus is shared throughout the rest of Electrolux’s operations in Africa. In South Africa, there is a different set-up for the activities and focus is most on the operational activities. They can be viewed as milestones that must be finished before the focus can change to strategic activities.

**Long-term vs. short-term relationships**

We have found that short-term and long-term relationships are not only related to business goals, but also to establishing relationships. This is in line with Holm et al. (1996, p.1049) who argued that the success of the company depends on its relationship with customers, suppliers and partners when operating in foreign markets. This concerns the fact that most African countries are collectivist societies (Hofstede, 1980), where relationships are more important than results. We have found that both Electrolux and Scania have adapted their view on the importance of establishing business relationships when conducting business in different settings.

Electrolux and Scania have both developed long-term relationships with their customers because they find it necessary for efficient business transactions. The participants have more personal meetings in their daily work in Africa compared to their work in Sweden. Per described the importance of knowing the customers in Kenya by providing an example of it in the empirical findings. Without the knowledge received from past relationships with customers, it would be hard
to know if they are potential future customers or not. To find the right partner, according Ford et al. (2011), is very important due to the benefits that comes with it. Scania has agents in smaller markets that are selling and distributing their products. It is important to find a good agent that has the right connections to the market to be able to sell these products. Most of the agents Scania uses are currently selling and distributing other products as well. Electrolux also uses agents in small markets. To minimise the risk, Electrolux purchased an already established company in Egypt that had long-term relationships with its suppliers, distributors and customers. Electrolux took over and continued with the same relationships that was established from before. Then they obtained reliable partners that they could trust when conducting their business in Egypt and the surrounding countries.

6.5.2 Local Talent

The term local talent is defined by Oxford Dictionaries as "Talent possessed by people in a particular local area" (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d). One of the challenges Sime (2012, p.3) describes when doing business in Africa is the lack of reliable knowledge that is recorded about the local markets. Using local talent, the knowledge required to establish a business in Africa may be acquired via methods such as partnership or employment.

Leadership positions

Electrolux and Scania are utilising local talents but in different positions in the company. Electrolux is using local talent for all leadership positions for their operations in Africa, such as Managing Director for their two bases in Egypt and South Africa. These local people provide Electrolux with the knowledge required to operate within African markets in areas such as local legal systems. One reason for this could be as Sime (2012, p.3) described, that there is not enough information to gather outside the market and gathering it might be too complex. Electrolux has therefore employed local talents that have the necessary market skills, knowledge and networking abilities (Sime, 2012, p.2) to reach the required customers.

Scania is using local talents in a different way. They are using expatriates as managing director while employing local talent for other leadership positions. It was described to us that the local talents in Scania have key positions, and that they are required to make it easier for Scania to conduct business in their region. Because of the unreliable legal system that is present in many countries Scania is operating in, they have employed local lawyers that will make sure that Scania is following the required laws. This includes the local tax system, duties required for operating in the local area, and how to avoid lawsuits. Putting this responsibility on the expatriates, to be fully knowledgeable in the legal system they are moved to, is a time consuming and, at times, impossible task. Another way we found that Scania is using local talent is when it comes to sales. Some of the customers are part of one specific tribe that only does business with another member of said tribe. For Scania, not to lose their business, they have employed local talent from those tribes to be able to continue conducting business with them.

In our empirical findings, we have found that using local talent when doing business in Africa is important, findings which are in line with Thornton et al. (2013, p.1161-2). They also state that the local talent will provide unique knowledge that will increase the success of that company, which is what we also found. The unique knowledge that Electrolux and Scania is gaining gives them access to new markets and customer segments that would have taken time to achieve by doing their own research. Following an example stated above, the knowledge that silver appliances would sell better
than their white counterparts is knowledge that would have taken Electrolux years to acquire on their own. Similarly, Scania utilise the knowledge of their local lawyers to avoid lawsuits and accidental misconduct due to not knowing the local rules.

**Qualified local talents**
To use local talent is an important factor to increase the chance for success, as we have established in the previous paragraph. In our empirical findings, we found to it is not always easy to get access to qualified local talent for the job. Scania did mention this new factor as an issue when they compared Tanzania and Kenya with each other. In Tanzania, it is hard to find local talent with the right qualifications, while in Kenya it is easy to find qualified local talent. This may have to do with the work ethics in these countries, as Tanzania is described as slow and in Kenya as hard working. We also found that one reason for this can be the country’s educational level, and that it is not many who go to school or continue to a higher degree.

Mark described the difference between blue and white collar workers in South Africa for Electrolux. To work in a manufacturing plant there is no requirement of formal education. However, to work in the corporate environment, white collar workers are required to have a high-school or professional degree. According to the Africa-America Institute (2015, p.10) only 6% of the young people in the SSA region attend higher education institutions. This is a small number compared to the global average of 26%. Due to this low level of higher-educated individuals, the difficulty in finding qualified workers for white collar jobs becomes apparent.

**6.6 Conceptual Framework**
We have developed a framework based on our findings from the themes that we have analysed and discussed in this chapter, and is in line with the purpose of this study. The framework contains the most important factors that we have identified during the analysis and discussion of the empirical data. It highlights the process that prospective Swedish companies in African markets should consider before, and during the process of establishing in an African market (see figure 6).

![Figure 6 - Conceptual Framework](image)

One important factor that was found in the empirical data is the importance of doing extensive research of the market and/or country that is the target market for the company. There are many cultural differences between Sweden and Africa. Consequently, the success of foreign companies in African markets highly depend local market knowledge and understanding. Research of how the
legal system works, market size, and cultural differences that can be a risk or an opportunity to the company. When the CEO has gain the knowledge for the market, he/she should travel to the country and experience it first-hand. Even after an extensive research, it is still in theory, and theory does not always conform to reality. Consequently, first hand practical experience complements cross-cultural competence and knowledge.

We found four major factors that should be considered to know about and adapt accordingly. In this study, we have discussed the different perception of time which if not adapted to, can make it hard to conduct business. Establishing relationships with customers, suppliers and partners can give a competitive advantage. This key factor can also help with unique local knowledge about the market that is hard to know for an outsider. All new findings should not be adapted, such as corruption. All over Africa there is common practice to engage in corruption but this is something we believe should not be adapted. This part of Swedish business culture should be kept intact. Corruption is commonly not accepted and it can get the company in trouble with the law if not careful. One factor that can help minimise the risk of being mixed up in corruption is to have pre-established strong core values that go against unethical practices. Building strong relationships can be a “substitute” for paying bribes. By following this framework as a guideline, we believe that many discomforts can be avoided.
7. Conclusions
This chapter presents the general conclusions of our research which will allow us to answer our research question with consideration of our research purpose. We then present the theoretical, practical and societal contributions of our findings. Lastly, we present and discuss the limitations that our study suffers from and finally give suggestions for future research within our research area.

7.1 General Conclusions
The purpose of our study is to explore how Swedish companies adapt their business culture when operating in African markets. To achieve this objective, a research question was formulated. *How do two Swedish companies: Electrolux and Scania adapt their business cultures when operating in African markets?* Our findings suggest that although there are some commonalities, business culture can vary widely from country to country in Africa and what is true in one nation might not be true in another.

Africa consist of many countries with different languages, culture and religious backgrounds. Even between neighbouring countries, cultural differences exist in business environments. The way that Electrolux and Scania adapt to the diverse African markets is through conducting a market and/or country analysis before entering a new market. Further, our study show that Electrolux and Scania face risks and opportunities when in African markets some of which are related to corruption, low population, and poor infrastructure. Population and infrastructure are also business opportunities for Electrolux and Scania because the growing population and middle class would mean more consumption of Electrolux products. Pressure from the growing population may influence African governments to improve the infrastructure which would present opportunities for Scania to provide transportation services. Furthermore, from our study, we can infer that hat relationships are very important to establish before conducting business in African markets. Both Electrolux and Scania find building business relationships valuable when operating in African markets and therefore adapt accordingly. Moreover, our findings show that Africans generally have a relaxed attitude towards time. Nonetheless, one should note that in some African countries such as South Africa, the perception of time is gradually changing. There are indications that there exists a difference between how time is perceived in the corporate environment and how time is perceived in the social environment. The corporate environment has a more western perception of time. Although Electrolux and Scania are Swedish companies, the management of both companies understand that time perception can be an issue in Africa and consequently try to be flexible, patient, understanding and accommodating.

However, our empirical findings show that there some aspects and attributes that both Electrolux and Scania do not change or compromise due to strong core values. These core values remain intact regardless of cultural difference. Some of these core values are product quality and treating employees equally and with respect. Moreover, the companies’ strong core values also do not allow engaging in unethical behaviours such as bribery and corruption. Therefore, we make the conclusion that Electrolux and Scania rely on their strong core values in dealing with negative factors such as corruption in the African business environment. Although very similar in how they adapt their business culture in African markets, there is one major difference in how Electrolux and Scania manage their businesses in African markets and this concern how local talents are used in leadership positions. When Electrolux has sales operations in a country, expatriates are not sent to
that country to take leadership positions, local people are instead appointed to take leadership positions. Scania sent expatriates to the countries they have business operations in.

In a word, our findings suggest that Africa is culturally diverse and has a unique business culture environment. This uniqueness requires managers to have a sense of flexibility and freedom in managing business to respond to the subtle or major differences in the various and diverse African countries.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions
As previously identified, research in international business has limited focus on Africa (Yang et al., 2006; Kamoche, 2011). Most specifically, there is a little focus on Swedish companies doing business in African countries. For this reason, we believe that an examination of the subtle ways in which culture affects international business in African markets is imperative in this global age. Our research theoretically contributes to international business literature from a cultural perspective by further elaborating that although there are commonalities in terms of national cultures among African countries, Africa is nonetheless culturally diverse (Amoako-Agyei, 2009; Kamoche, 2011; Kuada, 2010). Previous literature in international business suggest that just because a business model is successful in one African market, it may not be successful in another due the cultural differences among African countries (Tomalin & Nicks, 2007; Koku, 2005), which is in line with our findings. The present paper expanded the body of knowledge on African business culture related to understanding the importance of business relationships (Mangaliso, 2001; Fafchamps, 2004; Ford et al., 2011; Acquaah and Eshun, 2010; Moran 2014) by showing that building strong business relationships facilitates business transactions without engaging in bribery and corruption. Previous research has shown that Africans are generally polychronic; they have a more relaxed attitude towards time and view it as flexible (Hall, 1979; Nnadozie, 2001), but not how foreign businesses can practically deal with this cultural difference. Our study provides new insights regarding the African perception of time by showing that there is a difference about how time is perceived between the corporate and the social environment. Furthermore, this study shows that although cross-cultural training is important for adapting in a new culture (Winkelman, 1994), real life practical experience is equally, if not more relevant.

7.3 Practical Contributions
Practically, this research has offered insights into how two Swedish companies deal with the cultural differences that exist between Sweden and African countries. To start with, our study suggests that similar Swedish companies conducting business in African countries need to have a greater sensitivity and understanding to African cultures to facilitate business transactions. This current study clarifies and provides necessary information about aspects that are relevant for business transaction. For example, regarding time, Swedish business people should not go to African markets with a western perception about time, rather they should be patient and flexible with time when dealing their business partners. Such insights provide necessary information that management consultants and prospective investors in Africa could use to effectively deal with management challenges for business improvement and profitability. Further, the implications of such insights will also give Swedish business people an incentive to exploit opportunities and establish themselves in African markets. Moreover, our study suggest that prospective Swedish investors should invest in relationships with their business partners, customers and suppliers when doing business in African markets. When Swedish business people invest in relationships, it can facilitate trust and commitment which in turn will influence the likelihood of successful business
operations with African business counterparts. The framework presented will provide improved understanding of the important aspects of adapting to African business culture, which could be used to turn challenges such as corruption into opportunities by prospective investors.

7.4 Societal Contributions

Our study has many societal implications for African countries in general and for countries cited in this study. Our findings can be used by both African and prospective Swedish business people to facilitate business to business transactions. As previously mentioned, the insights gained from our study will give Swedish business people the incentives to exploit opportunities and establish themselves in African markets. This will subsequently contribute to the growth of African economy. Our findings should also be useful to the governments of African countries, for example, knowing that Swedish companies do not associate themselves with corruption, African governments can enact and enforce stronger anti-corruption legal frameworks to attract more Swedish investors into the region. This study should serve as incentive for African governments to instil a sense of public service as well as moral commitment for government bureaucrats against corruption. Education of this manner can be through seminars, workshops and training courses. It is our to understanding that showing a positive image plays an important role in improving society. The conventional perception about Africa is of a country plagued by poverty, low economic growth, poor infrastructure and corruption. This current study has shown that after all, Africa is not a “hopeless” continent notwithstanding challenges. We have shown that although Africa still has a long way to go, the continent has great business potential with a growing workforce and middle class. These developments provide even greater opportunities for the continent especially considering the global economic changes.

7.5 Limitations

There were many limitations faced during our degree project. The general limitations concern time and resource constraints. Because of these constraints, our study covered only a relatively small sample size which also causes limitations. First, only two companies agreed to participate in our study within a good timeframe. Second, we only interviewed one respondent from each country and these respondents represent one of either company. We could have interviewed both Electrolux and Scania respondents from each country. This way, we would have had more in-depth answers regarding the specific countries and this would have allowed to us see if there are patterns or specific differences regarding how these two companies adapt their business culture in a specific country. Further, we only interviewed respondents from multinational companies (MNEs) and therefore, our findings may not be relevant for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Moreover, some respondents are natives of the country they are currently located in, but some are not. This may have affected the level of objectivity and reliability in the respondents’ answers in one way or the other.

Due to time constraints, we were not able to research deeper into important areas such as language and negotiation. This would have provided more practical relevance to our study. Further, because the company respondents that we were interested in interviewing were not located in Sweden, we were bound to conduct the interviews at a distance. Geographic, time and resources constraints did not allow us to travel to the location of the participants and conduct the interviews face-to-face. Because the interviews were conducted via Skype, WhatsApp and AT&T teleconferencing, our study may have suffered from limitations of distant interviews such as missing visual cues.
Although we audio recorded and took notes, the distant interviewing may have restricted the interactivity between us and the respondents, which may have affected our interpretations.

7.6 Further Research
Considering the significant economic, political and social developments in African countries, research is needed to address more international business related issues from a cultural perspective. Further research with a quantitative approach, possibly based on our findings, will give a more objective perception of our findings. This could be conducted employing a survey strategy such as questionnaires or structured interviews using a large sample size. Moreover, a triangulation method where different data collection techniques are used will ensure more concrete and holistic data findings. Such methods will allow for generalisation that our research method did not allow.

We mentioned in the limitation section that we only interviewed MNEs and that our findings may not be relevant to SMEs. Considering this, conducting a research on how Swedish SMEs adapt their business culture in African markets will give a different dimension to understanding how Swedish companies adapt their business cultures. This will contribute to international business research in Africa and could be done by focusing on multiple case companies in a single country or on a single case company in multiple countries.

In our empirical findings, it was shown that Asian businesses are one of the biggest competitors to Swedish companies in Africa. As one of our respondents stated, Asian companies offer products and services at a lower price, even though the quality of their products are usually lower than that of Swedish counterparts. It will therefore be interesting to compare how Swedish and Asian companies adapt their business culture given that they are competing at different levels in terms of price and quality. This could be done in a similar way we conducted our study; two Swedish and two Asian multinational companies conducting business in many African markets, or many Swedish and many Asian companies conducting business in a single African market.

One of the findings in our study is that the Swedish MNEs studied are not established in some African countries such as the Gambia because of the small population size. It would be interesting to investigate more in depth other reasons why multinational companies are not operating in such countries. Findings from such studies would be useful to the governments of these countries to find ways to counter such impediments. It would also be interesting to research how African business people perceive their Swedish business counterparts. This gives insights into what aspects of the business practices Swedish business people need to adjust, maintain or stop. Another interesting area to conduct a further research is whether and to what extent African perception of time is changing. Our current study can also be extended to focus on many Swedish multinational companies conducting business in a single African market.
8. Truth Criteria
In this chapter, the criteria for evaluating our study will be discussed from an interpretivist and constructivism stance. Two primary criteria will be used for the evaluation. The first primary criterion is trustworthiness, which has four sub-criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and. The second primary criterion is authenticity and is a suggested additional criterion to trustworthiness and will be discussed from an interpretivist and constructivism stance.

8.1 Trustworthiness
The quantitative criteria, reliability and validity, stand for that it is the scientists job to reveal the absolute truths about the social world. Scholars have argued that there are more than one truths about the world (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.395). Therefore, it is suggested that two criteria; trustworthiness and authenticity to be used while performing a qualitative study and its these we are going to use in this evaluation. Trustworthiness has four sub-criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity is a suggested additional criterion to trustworthiness (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.396-398).

Credibility
Credibility is about how close to the truth the research is describing each participant’s perspective. There are more than one social reality and is the research describing the aspect in a feasible or credibly way that will be accepted by others. This is found in that the researchers can show that the study has been performed according to good practices and that the perceptions of the participants has been understood and displayed correctly in the study. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.396).

There is always a risk of misinterpretation of the information gathered when performing interviews. We have put in a lot of efforts in decreasing the risk of misinterpretation of the interviews we have performed. Both of us has been present during the interviews and has been taking individual notes about especially important facts during the interviews and we have recorded the interviews to be able to interpret the information accurate. We have listened to the audio from the interviews and transcribed them within 24 hours to be sure to not miss anything. The transcripts were then shared amongst us where the other has read through them. The information we have gathered during the interviews has helped us better understand the business environment for Electrolux and Scania in Africa which has helped us in providing a more accurate transcription. This is to further minimise the risk of misinterpretation to make sure that we both has interpret the information gathered in a correct and unified manner. Another way of decreasing the risk of misinterpretation is that the interviews were conducted in English, which made that the transcripts present an accurate representation of word for word from the interviewees. Majority of the interviewees do not have English as their native language nor do we, which can make the risk of misinterpretation to increase. However, this risk is not big because the interviewees have worked in an international environment for many years and are therefore comfortable to express themselves effortlessly in English. Similar argument applies to us researchers; we have studied in English at University level for four years and we can be viewed as bilingual. This shows that we have the knowledge and capacity to give a fair interpretation of each participants described in the empirical data.

Transferability
Transferability is described if the findings will hold in another setting or different time than the original setting and if the study is generalisable. Usually when conducting a qualitative study, it is
focusing on a small group or individuals that share the same characteristic and the findings tend to be more towards a unique setting of the social world that is studied. Therefore, it is encouraged to focus on getting a thick description, which is a rich perception of the details of a culture. This will provide others with a kind of database to make their own judgements of the transferability of the data into other environments. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398)

The aim of this study is to get a deeper understanding of business culture in African markets and not in a generalised manner. To get the results we seek we are using a qualitative method with an inductive approach for our study. We want to increase the knowledge about business culture in Africa and it could be transferred to similar cultural characteristics. These characteristics can be from a high vs. low context culture perspective, Hofstede’s six-dimensions’ similarities, or other companies that are in similar types industries. However, the interview questions are tailored after the African mind-set, some change will be needed during the transfer to fit better with the new mind-set. The researchers, that want to transfer this study into a new context, should be the judges of the necessity of changes, as Bryman and Bell (2011, p.398) state above.

**Dependability**
Dependability is about the importance of keeping records of every stage of the study, such as participants, problem formulation and interview transcripts. The dependability is assessed by evaluating the documentation of the records over the research process (Bryman & Bell 2011, p.398). As mentioned before, our study is qualitative, we are using an interpretive stance with inductive characteristics and it has been conducted with semi-structured interviews. It will be difficult to obtain the same results from a new study. We have tried to document and present the research process in as much detail as possible, in relations to our personal preconceptions, the participants of the study, in what way the interviews were conducted and the process of analysing the data. To avoid the risk of misinterpretation between us as researchers of this study, we first reviewed the data separately and then together to be sure that we have interpreted the data in a similar way. When disagreement appeared, we went back to the transcripts, personal notes and the audio recordings to make sure the participants perceptions and statements whereas fairly represented as possible.

**Confirmability**
Confirmability states that the researcher should not be bias by letting theoretical inclinations or personal values affect the research and findings. However, it is recognised that it is hard, almost impossible to be completely objective during research in a qualitative study. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398). The confirmability has been evaluated when we present the findings and it is support in the collected data. As much information as possible was presented when it comes to the data analysis. We have used the same structure from our interview guide when transcribing and presenting empirical data. This will allow the reader to view the data from where the original interpretations were made. We have also included the participants’ names in the analysis so it is easier for the reader to connect with the empirical data.

**8.2 Authenticity**
The second primary criterion is authenticity and is a suggested additional criterion to trustworthiness and will be discussed from an interpretivist and constructivism stance. Within authenticity, there are five sub-criteria: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.398-9), which helps bring
up a set of concerning issues that can impact the study. This criterion is about how the research displays the participants in the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.398-9).

**Fairness**
Fairness is about how fairly the research described the interviewees’ different viewpoints in the study. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 398). The transcripts from the participants is given a fair perception from their point of view. We followed our interpretivist approach by giving each participant as close to their original perceptions as possible. We have made these efforts by recording the interviews, transcribing the interviews word for word based on the recordings and reviewing each other’s work. If we felt that one of us had interpreted a participant’s perspective wrong, we, together, went back to the recording to discuss and interpret the words as close to the original perception as possible. However, sometimes the participants mentioned the same issue or subject, so to be sure that those participants got their perspective fairly represented, we emphasised that both participants had spoken about the issue or subject with some word for word differences to provide a fair representation.

**Ontological Authenticity**
Ontological authenticity is about if the research is helping the interviewees to come to a better understanding of the social environment (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 399). This study is taking a constructionism stance, which states that there are different realities based on an individual's own point of view. Therefore, we have tried to present our participants own perceptions and highlight the differences and similarities in those realities they are describing.

**Educative Authenticity**
Educative authenticity is about if the research is helping the interviewee to better understand the other member’s perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 399). We have, as discussed above, made great effort to give a fair representation of each participant’s perception in the empirical data. When the other participants are reading this study, they will gain an understanding of the differences and similarities that we have found based on the interviews.

**Catalytic and Tactical Authenticity**
Catalytic authenticity is about if the research has acted as an impulse for the interviewees to change their actions in their situations (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 399). Tactical authenticity is about if the research has influenced the interviewees to take certain steps to participate in the action (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 399). This study is not about how to change the participants’ actions, but to make them describe their reality and their perceptions of issues in the African business environment. We want to learn from people that have experience working in Africa because they can provide good information and facts that will help us answer our research question. Based on the empirical findings, we will use that knowledge in our framework to help other companies in their ventures to enter the African market.
References


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Appendix

INTERVIEW GUIDE (~60 minutes)

Introduction (2 minutes)
The aim of the interview is to create a deeper understanding of how Swedish companies adapt their business culture when operating in African countries. All the materials obtained from this interview will be used in our degree project and will be sent to the respondent before it is published. Thank you for accepting this interview and your contribution is highly appreciated.

Inform consent (1 minute)
- Do you wish to be anonymous?
- Do we have your permission to record this interview?

Facesheet (3 minutes)
- What is your position at the company?
- How long have you been in this position?
- How long have you worked internationally and on which markets?

African markets (8 minutes)
- Can you give us a brief history about your company’s operations in Africa?
- Which markets in Africa is your company currently established in?
  - For how long are they established in these countries?
- What would you describe as the major risks when conducting business in Africa?
- What would you describe as the major opportunities when conducting business in Africa?

Culture (9 minutes)
- How can you describe the African work ethics?
- How is the African leadership style different from Swedish leadership style?
- Do people who hold top position receive special privileges? How would you describe this?
- Is bribery and corruption an issue for your company operating in Africa. If so how?
- Which benefits do you see in being aware of the existing cultural differences between Sweden and African countries?
  - How important would you say these are?
  - Are there any differences that you find particular hard to accept?

Business culture (13 minutes)
- What do you think are the main differences in corporate culture between your company doing business in Sweden and doing business in African countries?
- Does relationship or results take priority when doing business in Africa?
- How are business laws and regulations perceived/handles in Africa?
- How is uncertainty perceived/handled when doing business in Africa?
- How is approach to authority handled when doing business in Africa?
- How is communication conducted in Africa?
  - Is it direct or indirect?
• How is the understanding of time different in African country X vs Sweden?
• Does your company’s managers focus on strategic or on operational activities in Africa?
• Does your company focus on short term or long term goals when dealing with African business partners?
• Is this different from corporate norms and values?

**Cultural learning (8 minutes)**

• Did your company prepare you in any way for the cultural differences that you could experience?
  o If yes, how did they prepare you?
• What would you have wanted to know before you entered the African market that you did not already know?
• Can you describe situations where you believe that you have experienced a culture shock in an African country?
  o How did you handle this?

**Business Relations (11 minutes)**

• How would you describe business relations in Africa?
• How do you experience that the African view of business relations differs from the Swedish?
• How does this different view on business relations in any way affect the relationship/corporation between your company and the African business partners?
• How does this different view on business relations in any way affect the relationship between your company and the customers in Africa?
• How does this different view on business relations in any way affect the relationship/corporation between your company and suppliers in Africa?
• What attributes and characteristics do you appreciate most with your African business partners, customers and suppliers?

**Cultural adaptation (6 minutes)**

• How did you adapt to the African business culture in African country X?
• Are there areas where you still see adaptation needs of the business culture?
• How has the cultural adaptation affected the way you do business in Africa?

**Concluding questions (2 minutes)**

• Any recommendations for Swedish companies who want establish in African markets?
• Any questions for us?

Thank you!