Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies

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_________________________________  ____________________________ 
Mayara Cristine Wandall    Matthias Hoffmann
Abstract

Title: Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies

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Keywords: Personal Selling, Sales Management, Sales People Management, Relationship Marketing, B2B Relationship, Intercultural Aspects, IT companies

Background: Given the situation that today’s companies establish deeper relationships with their clients, focusing on long-term collaboration and emphasis on mutual cooperation, the communication with the clients is increasingly based on one-to-one communication. Personal selling is described in literature as one tool of the communication mix. This tool of one-to-one communication has become very important. Several companies spend 8-15% of their net sales on personal selling to communicate directly with their clients, supporting them in evaluating specific needs and thus be able to offer the right product. The B2B environment is highly complex in its various characteristics. In regards to personal selling, the characteristics of intercultural aspects, B2B Relationships and Relationship Marketing has been chosen. The usage of personal selling could improve B2B Relationships.

Research Question: How companies use and manage personal selling to consolidate B2B relationships? What are the cultural differences in personal selling management regarding to the country of operation?

Purpose: The purpose of this master thesis is to identify how personal selling can influence and strengthen B2B relationships. In this evaluation, the authors like to examine the differences in personal selling management according to the country of operation. The objective is to arrive on implications for B2B companies, especially in the IT sector.

Method: The study uses an inductive research approach. The target is to arrive on new insights whether personal selling improves business-to-business relations. Within the qualitative research method four case-studies of B2B IT companies from Brazil and Sweden will be evaluated. Through semi-structured personal interviews primary data will be obtained from each company. Through the conduction of the interviews in two countries, the impact of cultural aspects will be evaluated simultaneously.

Theoretical Framework: The study evaluates literature about Cultural Aspects, Relationship Marketing, B2B Marketing and Sales Management in order to gain knowledge in accordance to the thesis’ research topics. B2B Markets are characterized by its complexity. The study uses those B2B characteristics which are influences by personal selling.
Findings & Conclusion: Through the evaluation of the case studies in two countries, it can be outlined that personal selling has a positive impact on the establishment of long-term business relation, increase market recognition and leads to mutual business cooperation with the customer, that is necessary for future business development and product development according to customer and market demands. Understanding hereby the cultural background of the client is evaluated as an advantage on the direct communication and establishment of business relation.

It is thus suggested to focus on personal selling, while providing technical advance solutions that require a high demand on communication.

Titel: Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies

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Nyckelord: Personlig försäljning, Försäljningshantering, Hanteringen av försäljningspersonal, Relationsmarknadsföring, B2B relationer, interkulturella aspekter, IT företag


Forskningsfråga: Hur företag använda och hantera personlig försäljning för att B2B relationer? Vilka är de kulturella skillnaderna i personlig försäljning hantering i respektive land?


**Resultat & Slutsats:** Genom utvärdering av fallstudierna i två land, kan man säga att personlig försäljning har en positiv påverkan att bygga upp en långsiktig affärsrelation, öka marknadens igenkänning och leder till ömsesidigt samarbete mellan företag med kunden, som är det viktigt för framtiden affärsutveckling och produktutveckling enligt kundernas och marknadens krav. Förståelse av kundens kulturella bakgrund utvärderas som en fördel för direkt kommunikation och uppbyggande av affärsrelationer. Man kan således anbefalla att fokusera på personlig försäljning, när man erbjuder teknisk komplicerade produkter som kräver intensiv kommunikationen.
# Table of Content

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Background .................................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 Problem Discussion ..................................................................................................... 2
   1.3 Purpose .......................................................................................................................... 4
   1.4 Research Question ....................................................................................................... 4

2. Literature Review ............................................................................................................ 5
   2.1 Cultural Aspects ............................................................................................................ 5
   2.2 B2B Marketing .............................................................................................................. 7
   2.3 Relationship Marketing ............................................................................................... 8
   2.4 Personal Selling ........................................................................................................... 9
      2.4.1 Salespeople .......................................................................................................... 10
      2.4.2 Sales help tools .................................................................................................... 11
      2.4.3 Salesforce Management ..................................................................................... 11

3. Methodology .................................................................................................................. 13
   3.1 Choice of Method ........................................................................................................ 13
   3.2 Research Strategy ....................................................................................................... 13
   3.3 Research Approach – Inductive ............................................................................... 14
   3.4 Research Design – Cross-Country Case Study ......................................................... 15
   3.5 Data Collection .......................................................................................................... 16
      3.5.1 Selection of respondents .................................................................................... 16
      3.5.2 Primary and Secondary Data ............................................................................ 17
      3.5.3 Interview Design ............................................................................................... 17
      3.5.4 Execution of Interviews .................................................................................... 18
   3.6 Data Analysis ............................................................................................................. 19
   3.7 Ethical Approach ....................................................................................................... 19
   3.8 Reliability and Validity ............................................................................................. 20

4. Empirical Data ............................................................................................................... 22
   4.1 Company A - Brazil .................................................................................................... 23
      4.1.1 Cultural Aspects ................................................................................................. 24
      4.1.2 Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships .............................................. 25
      4.1.3 Sales Management ............................................................................................. 26
      4.1.4 Salespeople Management ................................................................................ 27
   4.2 Company B – Brazil .................................................................................................... 28
      4.2.1 Cultural Aspects ................................................................................................. 29
      4.2.2 Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships .............................................. 29
      4.2.3 Sales Management ............................................................................................. 30
      4.2.4 Salespeople Management ................................................................................ 30
List of figures

Figure 1 Characteristics of business markets. Adapted from Kotler et al. (2016) and Fill & McKee (2012). Own Construction. ................................................................................................................... 8
Figure 2 Elements of Communication Mix. Adapted from Kotler et al. (2016). Own Construction. .............................................................................................................................. 10
Figure 3 Types of Personal Selling. Adapted from Fill & McKee (2012, p. 306). Own Construction. .............................................................................................................................. 11
Figure 4 Impact of personal selling on B2B characteristics ................................................................................................................................. 61

List of Tables

Table 1 Overview about interview companies and respective respondents .............................................. 23
Table 2 Analysis Brazil .............................................................................................................................................. 42
Table 3 Analysis Sweden........................................................................................................................................ 44
1 Introduction

In this introduction chapter, the Research question and the Purpose of this study will be presented, linked to the information acquired from the Background and the Problem discussion. The limitations are also discussed and presented at the end of this chapter.

1.1 Background

Significant changes are occurring in the ways in which companies are relating to their customers. According to Kotler, et al. (Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016), “Yesterday’s big companies focused on mass marketing to all customers at arm’s length. Today’s companies are building deeper, more direct and more lasting relationships with more carefully selected customers”. Beyond having more effective selection of customers, companies are now relating with chosen customers in deeper, using interactive approaches that help build customer relationships (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016). “The concept of value and the importance of providing it for customers has become an increasingly significant aspect of business and marketing strategy” (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012, p. 22).

In the current business buying process, the parties are often much more dependent on each other. Business-to-business (B2B) salespeople work closely with their customers during the buying process – from helping in define problems, to finding solutions and to supporting after-sales operation. (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016). However, suppliers now face a new issue: better-trained supply managers. Therefore, “companies must have well-trained marketers and salespeople to deal with these well-trained buyers” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 165).

According to Chunawalla (Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009), among several tools available to stimulate sales, the most important tool is personal selling. “Several companies spend 8-15 per cent of the net sales on personal selling as against 1-3 percent spent on advertising” (Chunawalla, Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009, p. 12). Sales people have to search for buyers, identify their needs, design good market offerings, set prices for them, promote them, and store and deliver them (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016). Sales personnel perform an important representational role, operating at the boundary of the organization. At the same time, they provide the link between the needs of their own organization and the needs of their customers (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012). “In B2B markets, the development and maintenance of positive relationships between buying and selling organizations is pivotal to success” (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012, p. 8).

In order to maintain these relationships, is essential to identify and understand the customers’ cultural differences. According to Kotler et al. (Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 169), “culture and customs can strongly influence business buyer reactions to the marketer’s behavior and strategies”. Culture determines the extent to which consumers across the world are similar or different (Doole & Lowe, International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012). Cultural differences have a significant impact on the way a product or service may be used in a market, and a failure to understand the social/cultural dimensions of a market can be complex to manage (Doole & Lowe, International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012).
The service sector fills an important part in B2B organizations. According to Fill & McKee (Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012), almost all B2B companies provide a service. Services have grown fast in the last years, and the service sector is represented for more than 70 per cent since 2009. In some countries the service share is even higher: in Sweden, Switzerland and Germany it is 73 per cent (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016).

The IT industry belongs to service sector. Taking IT companies into consideration, Park, et al. (2012) affirm that most firms are served by specialized IT service companies which are responsible for the development and maintenance of their business information systems, and due to this interdependence, service providers and clients interact throughout the project, exchanging information, sharing knowledge and making critical decisions. It is important to raise the level of customers’ relationship commitment during this service as their business continuity depends upon clients’ assessment.

According to Chunawalla (2009), in order to control and achieve all the relationship and sales objectives, it is necessary to create a suitable mechanism of management. Sales management is a respectable and admirable function, and its professional status is as high as any other business function. “The planning, direction and control of personal selling, including recruiting, selecting, equipping, routing, supervising, paying and motivating as these tasks, apply to the sales management” (Chunawalla, Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009, p. 2).

1.2 Problem Discussion
For many years researches have focused on the process associated with developing new products, rather than services (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012).

Several researches stated the effect of positive sales behavior to customer satisfaction and trust to the sales person. Trust and customer satisfaction obtained through the relation with sales person are important intermediating factors in establishing customer loyalty and commitment (Pezhman & Shahin, 2013). Even for IT service providers offering professional services of high credence, it is not easy to gain trust and maintain long-term commitment from clients (Park, Lee, Lee, & Truex, Exploring the impact of communication effectiveness on service quality, trust and relationship commitment in IT services, 2012, p. 460).

Considering the definition of international marketing, in reference to the American Marketing Association it is stated as “the activity, set of institutions and process for creating, communication, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large” (Marketing News, 2004).

Companies spend 8 to 15% of the net sales on personal selling (Chunawalla, Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009). Surprisingly, despite the massive investment in personal selling by the companies, and nevertheless the importance of personal selling of IT products and services offerings, marketing and sales management scholars have paid meager attention to both the act of selling IT products and services, and to the management of the sales people in the IT companies. Nevertheless, many companies still following the selling concept, which holds that consumers will not buy enough of the firm’s products unless it undertakes a large-scale selling and promotion effort (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 16).
In literature the positive effect of personal selling behavior is outlined. But even if companies are aware of the theoretical impact, personal selling processes have to be continuously adjusted and managed to customers’ demand and behavior. The major challenge is that implications of academic research and practical implementation are sometimes focused by its mismatch. Researchers assumed that the interacting relation between the actual research approach and the real business environment should correlate in their theory-practice relationship. Theory must so reflect practical usages of concepts (Gummesson, 2014).

Because of the lack of specialized knowledge on IT from the client’s side, IT service is one of those professional services that demands high credence, where it is not easy for clients to assess the service quality, even after delivery (Sharma & Patterson, 1999). Thus, an essential component of the IT service relationship must be the communicative actions between IT experts and clients. IT service providers are evaluated based on how well they understand and meet their clients’ needs. It is through extensive and interactive communicative action that the service provider can apply what it has learned from client to the actual implementation of required systems and technologies (Park, Lee, Lee, & Truex, Exploring the impact of communication effectiveness on service quality, trust and relationship commitment in IT services, 2012, p. 459).

Engaging in such an intensive communication and service and product development, companies needs to achieve even more loyal customers. In the framework of the rapid developing service industry, customer loyalty has shifted from tangible products to the intangible service sector. Companies have become aware, not only from a theoretical perspective, of the importance to obtain loyal customers. In recent researches the connection between customer satisfaction, customer trust and establishment of long term relationships are outlined. Studies lined out in this context the importance of the salesperson (Pezhman & Shahin, 2013). In those considerations it has practically outlined how personal selling processes can be managed to gain a deeper understanding how to improve relationships with the customer to maintain profitable associations.

The establishment of trust is carried out as significant tool for improving company relations (Alrubaiee, 2012). Researchers emphasis that trust is a key factors for success for businesses (Coulter & Coulter, 2003). Especially in the service sector the establishment of trust is important as the product is intangible, but also have its certain characteristics and value for the customer (Jerry Holm, 2011).

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1.3 Purpose
The purpose of this master thesis is to identify how personal selling can influence and consolidate B2B relationships and also examine the differences in personal selling management according to the country of operation. The results of this study can be used as an implication for B2B companies.

1.4 Research Question
This study aims at answer to the following research questions:

How companies use and manage personal selling to consolidate B2B relationships? What are the cultural differences in personal selling management regarding to the country of operation?
2 Literature Review

In this chapter relevant theories about Cultural Aspects, Relationship Marketing, B2B Marketing and Selling Management will be studied in accordance to develop knowledge about the thesis research topics. It will be evaluated each research attribute in detail and investigated how those are theoretically interacting.

2.1 Cultural Aspects

According to Kotler et al. (Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016), culture is the most basic determinant of a customer’s wants, being the sum of learned beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct consumer behavior in a particular country market (Doole & Lowe, International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012). Social and cultural factors influence the aspects of consumer and buyer behavior, and the variation between these factors can be a central consideration, because differences in social conditions, religion and material culture all affect consumers’ perceptions and patterns of buying behavior (Doole & Lowe, International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012). Matsumoto (Culture, context and behavior, 2007) defines culture as an information system, shared by a group and transmitted across generations that allow the group to meet the basic needs survival and to achieve a viable existence and to transmit successful social behaviors. Therefore, “every group or society has a culture, and cultural influences on buying behavior can vary greatly not only from country to country, but also within countries, and failure to adjust to these differences can result in ineffective marketing or embarrassing mistakes” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 129).

In addition, Doole & Lowe (International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012) believe that culture is made up by three different and essential components that influence the marketing mix, being:

- **Beliefs**: mental and/or verbal processes, which elucidate knowledge and assessment of products and services;
- **Values**: indicators that serve as guides of appropriate behaviors. Tend to be enduring, stable over time and widely accepted by particular market consumers or niches;
- **Customs**: clear behavior modes that establish culturally acceptable manners in specific situations, e.g. birth and marriage celebrations, funerals, and year events as Christmas, Ramadan.

There are several social and cultural influences that determine the values, beliefs and customs and combine to create a cultural identity which influences the process of decision-making when buying products (Doole & Lowe, International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012). According to Doole & Lowe (International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012, p. 67) “This means that for a company to succeed in that market they often have to change ingrained attitudes about the way they do business.”

Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions was based on a study by Alex Inkeles and Daniel Levinson, who published a board survey of the English-language literature on national culture twenty years before. As a result of their research, common basic problems worldwide were
identified, with consequences for the functioning of societies (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

As Khan (Impact of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on subordinate's perception, 2014) reference, 160 thousand managers and employees from 53 countries throughout the world were involved in Hofstede’s comprehensive research, resulting 117 thousand of answered questionnaires. The national culture was a criterion for judging differentiation between attitudes and values within an organization. “From one country to another they represent almost perfectly matched samples: they are similar in all respects except nationality, which makes the effect of nationality differences in their answers stand out unusually clearly” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 34).

Hofstede, et al. (Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, 2010) also affirms that the statistical analysis of the answers revealed common problems, but with solutions differing from country to country. In consequence, Luthar & Luthar (Using Hofstede's cultural dimensions to explain sexually harassing behaviors in an international context, 2002) argue that he identified four independent dimensions of national cultural differences, being: 1) individualism versus collectivism; 2) power distance; 3) uncertainty avoidance; and 4) masculinity versus femininity. “Because Hofstede’s research used large samples of individuals across many different countries, the framework developed is extremely useful for understanding cross-cultural differences in behaviors and perceptions” (Luthar & Luthar, Using Hofstede's cultural dimensions to explain sexually harassing behaviors in an international context, 2002, p. 272).

Thus, a more detailed explanation is given so the four dimensions of culture can be fully understood:

**Individualism x collectivism**

Represents the degrees that individuals are supposed to look after themselves or remain integrated into groups (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). “Individualistic societies tend to have a self-focused view that only extends to his or her immediate family; whereas societies high in collectivism have a people-group view from cradle to grave of lifetime protection in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (Migliore, Relation between big five personality traits and Hofstede's cultural dimensions, 2011, p. 41). Doole e Lowe (International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012) explains that very strong ties between individuals and tight integration define low individualistic societies while high individualistic societies display loose integration. Hofstede, et al. (Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, 2010) noted that groups in collectivist societies expect loyalty from members because of the protection offered by the group.

**Power distance**

This dimension is defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 402). Khan (Impact of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on subordinate's perception, 2014) explains that Power Distance is based upon the measure of the interpersonal power and influence between a subordinate and superior. Due to unequal distribution of power, employees may face and endure some undesirable and/or abusive behavior from their superiors in high power distance cultures (Kang & Jensen, 2009). “It is interesting to observe that in Hofstede's sample, almost all developing countries tend to rate high on both collectivism (low individualism) and power distance” (Doole & Lowe, International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012, p. 78).

**Uncertainty avoidance**
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Uncertainty avoidance is defined as “the extent to which members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 403). Doole & Lowe (International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012) affirm that uncertainty avoidance shows how a society deals with uncertainty about the future. Luthar & Luthar (Using Hofstede's cultural dimensions to explain sexually harassing behaviors in an international context, 2002) argue that individuals in high uncertainty avoidance countries are emotionally resistant to change, while individuals in low uncertainty avoidance countries are greater risk takers and experience less emotional resistance to change.

*Masculinity x femininity*

The masculinity versus femininity dimension refers to the different roles assumed by men and women in a society (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Doole & Lowe (International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012) argue that masculine societies present values stress making money and the pursuit of visible achievements. In more feminine societies, both men and women exhibit values as emphasis on people rather than money.

In addition, Hofstede, et al. (Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, 2010) explain that an example of masculinity is societies dominated by males, assertive, tough and competitive driven, while femininity societies are dominated by the values of caring, nurturing and concern for relationships and living environment. “Feministic societies overlap the gender roles – both men and women are expected to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Migliore, Relation between big five personality traits and Hofstede's cultural dimensions, 2011, p. 41). “In feminine countries where relationships are more highly valued, the supplier–client relationship is seen much more as a partnership than in more masculine cultures. Thus, the affective aspects of the business relationship are seen as of vital importance” (Doole & Lowe, International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012, p. 78).

2.2 B2B Marketing

Business-to-Business (B2B) Marketing is characterized by its complexity. In B2B business connections, suppliers are highly specialized and the relations between companies are characterized on competition that is based on tenders and contracts, tailor made with the required specifications. Reputation, capacity, quality, delivering conditions are among other factors selling drivers (Gummesson, 2014).

On the other hand, Kotler et al. (Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016) explain that a business purchase usually involves more decision persons and more professional purchasing agents, who determine which products and services their organizations need to purchase and then find, evaluate and choose for the best buy options.

According to Fill & McKee (2012), B2B marketing is different from consumer marketing due to the fact that buyers do not consume the products or services themselves. The business market comprises many types and sizes of organizations that interact selectively and form relationships with one another, and these organizations have to work together to varying degrees in order to achieve their goals. As a result, diverse marketing strategies and operations are required to reach and meet the needs of business customers.

To clarify the differences from consumer markets, Kotler et al. (2016) and Fill & McKee (2012) identified main characteristics of business markets (figure 1).
2.3 Relationship Marketing

According to Palmatier (Relationship Marketing, 2008, p. 4), “relationship marketing is the process of identifying, developing, maintaining and terminating relational exchanges with the purpose of enhancing performance”. Moreover, Grönroos & Helle (Return on relationships, 2012) express that relationship marketing is based on a thought that two or more parties establish a business engagement enabling a win-win situation. According to Kotler, et al. (Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016), marketers must first gain fresh, deep insights into what customers need and want in order to create value. Furthermore, the perspective is seen as a long term, envisioning a form of constant collaboration between the buyer and seller (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012). Going deeper in business marketing concept, B2B relationship marketing englobes a wide range of relationships, not just with customers, but also with suppliers, regulators, government, competitors, employees and others (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012).

Concerning aspects within relationship marketing, attracting and retaining customers can be a difficult task, due to the fact that customers often face a wide range of products and services from which to choose (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012). Therefore, the quality of the relationship and the manner of communications influence buying decisions. “If the relationship between organizations is trusting, mutually supportive and based upon a longer-term perspective then the behavior of the buying center may be seen to be cooperative and constructive” (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012, p. 77). Thus, there are some factors which are essential to build, support and consolidate meaningful relationships: perceived value, satisfaction, trust and commitment. The key to building customer relationships is to create superior customer value and satisfaction (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012).

First, value is a customer’s estimate of the extent to which a product or service can satisfy their needs, by considering alternative solutions and the costs associated with the needs (Kotler,

Second, customer satisfaction is the dimension to which a product’s perceived performance matches a buyer’s expectations. “Satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal customers and to give the company a larger share of their business” (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012, p. 19). Therefore, they will buy again and tell others about their good experiences (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016). However, on the other hand, if the product’s performance does not meet the expectations, the customer will be dissatisfied. Thus, “higher levels of customer satisfaction lead to greater customer loyalty” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 20).

Third, “trust exists when one party has confidence in reliability and integrity of the other party” (Park, Lee, Lee, & Truex, Exploring the impact of communication effectiveness on service quality, trust and relationship commitment in IT services, 2012, p. 461). According to Fill & McKee (Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012), risk, power and dependency are some of the characteristics of trust. Trust can reduce uncertainty in order to develop effective relationships. When participants in a relationship trust each other, it is easier to resolve difficult issues such as conflict and low profitability (Park, Lee, Lee, & Truex, Exploring the impact of communication effectiveness on service quality, trust and relationship commitment in IT services, 2012). Regarding B2B relationships, companies create mutual business advantage that allows the degree of confidence that one organization has in another.

Last but not least, Park, et al. (Exploring the impact of communication effectiveness on service quality, trust and relationship commitment in IT services, 2012) conceptualize relationship commitment as the representation of the highest level of connection among participating parties and refers to how deeply organizations or individuals are involved in a relationship and the extent to which they maintain the relationship over a long period. Effective customer relationship management creates customer delight, and delighted customers remain loyal and talk favorably to others about the company and its products (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016).

2.4 Personal Selling

Personal Selling is one of the arms of communication mix (figure 2) and is the only communication tool which uses one-to-one communication focused directly on the target audience (Chunawalla, Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009). “Personal selling can give very important feedback to the company” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 365). Despite personal selling being the most effective element of the communication mix at certain stages of the buying process (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016), it is also the most expensive one, thus the use of a sales force should be a very carefully considered element of an organization’s promotional activities” (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012).

Kotler, et al. (Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016) emphasize that in more complex selling situations, personal selling is more effective than advertising, for example.
Salespeople can examine customers’ attitudes in order to learn more about their problems and then adjust the marketing offer and presentation to fit the special needs of each customer. “In companies that sell business products and services, the company’s salespeople work directly with the customers” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 375).

Advertising and public relations cannot always convey benefits in the same way as personal selling, when companies face a high complexity offering. “Personal selling allows explanations to be made about particular points of concern to the buyer or about the environment in which the buyer wishes to use the product” (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012, p. 310).

2.4.1 Salespeople

“The people who do the selling go by many names: salespeople, sales representatives, district managers and sales consultants, to name just a few” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 374). Salespeople represent the company to customers and, at the same time, also represent the customers to the company. Therefore, customers may become loyal to salespeople as well as to the companies and products they represent (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016). An important aspect is that sales people must have intimate product/service knowledge and domain to carry out their job (Chunawalla, Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009).

Organizations adopt a mix of personal selling activities (figure 3), based on the proven methods according to their type of business. “It is normally assumed that the sales force seek out, negotiate, collect and bring into the organization orders from customers wishing to make purchases” (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012).
These types of personal selling represent people who have a customer-facing role and who are expected to participate in customer interaction. “It is the depth of customer contact that provides the real measure of customer interaction” (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012, p. 306). A salesperson might be largely an order taker or an order getter, whose position demands creative selling and relationship building (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 374).

### 2.4.2 Sales help tools

Interactivity is becoming increasingly important as companies need to know more about customers than in the past. “Only by being customer-oriented and delivering great customer value can the company be sure that what is being said about it contributes to its marketing in a good way” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 13). Internet may be helpful to identify the customer satisfaction. Today’s technologies have empowered consumers to give feedback to firms and other consumers by providing information on web forums (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016).

Segmentation is a crucial aspect of marketing theory and practice. “It has even been argued that segmentation is the core idea of marketing: by dividing customers into different subgroups, the company might create customer offers that serve individual needs and wants, thus serving each subgroup better” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 183). Applying segmentation, the company can reach more customers by developing a broader range of offers, it can get more satisfied customers due to the offers structured in accordance with the preferences of a particular segment and it can be more profitable, since customers are willing to pay higher prices for products that fit with their needs and wants (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016).

### 2.4.3 Salesforce Management

A sales manager is a decision-maker less concerned with planning, and more with action. They usually make tactical sales plans of a short duration. Therefore, sales are related to the present while marketing to the future. A good sales manager must have experience, and have to feel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order takers</th>
<th>• Salespersons to whom customers are drawn at the place of supply</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order getters</td>
<td>• Operate away from the organization and attempt to gain orders largely through the use of demonstration and persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order collectors</td>
<td>• Attempt to gather orders over telephone, through email or Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order supporters</td>
<td>• Support salespeople in that they are involved with the order, usually by supplying information</td>
</tr>
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</table>
the pulse of the problems and their possible handling. His decisions would affect not only the sales but many other departments. He should be imaginative in exploring several possible alternatives and takes decisions under conditions of uncertainty and risk (Chunawalla, Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009).

However, “The most important function that takes maximum time of a sales manager is the management of the sales force” (Chunawalla, Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009, p. 154). According to Kotler, et al. (Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016), at the heart of a successful sales force is the recruitment and selection of good salespeople. In a typical salesforce, the top 30 per cent of salespeople may bring 60 per cent of the sales. Top salespeople are excellent customer problem-solvers and relationship-builders. On the other hand, poor selection results in costly turnover. “When a salesperson quits, the costs of finding and training a new salesperson – plus the costs of lost sales – can be very high” (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016, p. 375).

Sales training programs should be designed to emphasize the importance of developing and maintaining customer trust and highlight the benefits of adaptive relational behaviors (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012). The main idea behind training is to identify the best out of a candidate regarding the performance on the job. The more training, less the time required to learn on the basis of experience. In addition, training helps to reduce the sales personnel turn ratio (Chunawalla, Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009).
3 Methodology

This chapter provides considerations regarding to the methodology strategy and design, in order to conduct and establish this study and which decisions have taken into account. The authors like to state their methodology choices to the overall objective of this study and how theories and data collection have been used within the data analysis.

3.1 Choice of Method

The academic research includes several interviews within the focus area of this study, to understand the topic of personal selling process and its impact on business – to business relations in an intercultural framework. The empirical data was gathered through case studies of several companies within the IT service and technology branch. According to (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009), case studies are in favor to gain an extended understanding of a specific research area. As the authors interviewed several companies, the research design was chosen to be conducted as multiple case study with evaluation to possible cross-national impacts. Referring to (Bryman & Bell, 2011), a selection towards the research strategy as to be done, whether a quantitative or qualitative strategy like to be conducted. The study has been operated in accordance with a qualitative research strategy with an inductive research approach, to obtain new impacts on both practical implications and theories on basis of the empirical data. The authors focused mainly on semi-structured interviews in regards to gain a deeper understanding to the specific research area, outlined by the stated research question (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

3.2 Research Strategy

Basic consideration for researchers is the decision on whether to conduct a quantitative or qualitative research. Even if nowadays it is discussed whether a choice of the research strategies should apply or a mix structure should conduct, a determination of the research strategy helps business researcher to structure their work. According to (Bryman & Bell, 2011), the distinction between those two different research strategies provides a helpful umbrella concerning issues involved in business research. In general, the selection of the method has to reflect the estimated result of the research, because the strategies apply in a different manner (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In general, quantitative research refers to measurements and qualitative to collection of information through verbal communication. Quantitative research can be established as a research strategy, which focuses on quantification on basis of collection and analysis of data. As this approach basis on existing data and references, it is often linked with the deductive approach. The deductive approach arrives the research strategy from existing theories and test them with gained data. The result will be either an approval or rejection of the theories. The quantitative research, processes the research from an external view to existing theories.

In contrast, qualitative research strategies focus on a quantitative approach of statements, rather than on figures and statistics. In the qualitative approach, authors collect a spread of information for deeper understanding of a certain topic. Subsequently this strategy relates often to the inductive approach, as theories are established on basis of the collected data and emphasis on the relation between theory and research. The qualitative approach takes a constantly changing social reality into consideration, grounded on the constantly individuals’ creation. Nevertheless, in reality to develop the research strategy becomes much more complicated. Often in praxis it is a mix between both a quantitative and qualitative approach, leading to
mixed methods research strategies. Despite of, while establishing a framework for operating a research, it is helpful to have a certain research strategy in mind (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 26f).

The research strategy of this thesis follows the qualitative approach. In reference to the overall objective of this study, the authors like to gain an deeper understanding regarding specific topic. The authors like to arrive on new theories and practical suggestions, in reference to the research question of the impact of personal selling on the relationships within an intercultural framework. The collection of data will be conducted in a qualitative manner by several interviews, to create on this basis considerations for new practical suggestions.

3.3 Research Approach – Inductive

The choice of research approach reflects decisions about the priority, being given to a range of dimensions of the research process, and research methods are associated with different kinds of research design (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 40f). Referring to (Bryman & Bell, 2011), two research approaches are emphasized, the deductive approach and the inductive approach. Using the deductive approach, the research project will test existing theory, based on the hypothesis, to adopt the qualitative research process and aspects of the data analysis. In differentiation to the deductive approach, the inductive approach will build up a theory that is grounded in the gathered data (Yin, 2003).

The deductive approach requires that existing theory has been used to formulate both the research questions and objectives. Theoretical propositions have to take into consideration to describe the research framework and the way of organizing and conduct the data analysis (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). According to (Bryman & Bell, 2011), the outcome of the deductive approach will either confirm or reject the theoretical assumptions, as data is tested in reference to the theory. The advantage of the deductive approach is, by conducting the work from a theoretical view, the research will have linked to the existing vast framework of knowledge in a certain subject area. Designing a deductive research, it is necessary to identify main characteristics, components and issues within the research project and the predict relationship between them (Yin, 2003). The described theoretical framework enables the researcher to directly step into the analysis of the gathered data (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

A contrasting approach to the deductive one is the inductive approach. The concept of the inductive approach is to arrive on a new theory, taking into consideration existing theories and the relation to the gathered data analysis. In distinction to the deductive approach, the collection of data will be the basis of the research process. Gathered data are explored and referred to a specific theme or issues to break down them to a specific theoretical outcome (Strauss & Corbin, 2008); (Yin, 2003). The risk in this approach is that data collection will be conducted in an unstructured manner, without assessing to which themes data will related. Therefore, it is required to analyze the data as they are collected and construct a conceptual framework. Data collection have to follow the overall purpose of the research. This is important as the outcome of such a research will be new theories or explanations that are based on the gathered information both of the existing theories and gathered data. The advantage of the inductive approach is that a study can be conducted without an into- detail clarified theoretical framework. The focus in this type of research approach is on the provision of relationships between the collected data, the constructed research questions and hypothesis. The result of this kind of approach is expected to be theories that are grounded on the data collection and analysis (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).
The purpose of this academic research is to contribute with general applicable theories and explanations, to improve business-to-business personal selling process in an international framework. The authors’ preference is in favor for the inductive approach, as there is still a mismatch between theory and praxis. The choice of approach relates both to the expected overall outcome and personal preference of the authors (Hakim, 2000). Through the research it is expected to provide possible guidelines and new theories on business—business personal selling and its impact on relation with the customer, taking into consideration the intercultural background. The construction of the new theories and possible practical guidelines will be based on examination of the collected data of the respondents, taking into consideration existing theories.

3.4 Research Design – Cross-Country Case Study

For research purpose, many different research designs can be used in terms of exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research (Yin, 2003). Some of the research designs belong rather to the inductive approach, others more to a deductive approach. Independent from the chosen design, the main issue is the evaluation whether the design is suitable to answer the research question and meet the objectives of the overall research. The choice of the research design will be thus guided by the stated research question, objectives, amount of time to conduct the research, existing knowledge about the specific topic and other available resources. Further should be taken into consideration that single research strategies are not solely existent. If usable, the construction of combinations might be as well suitable to arrive on the research objective. The research design is also driven by the research approach, in its considerations for an inductive or deductive approach (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Among other research designs, case studies are suitable when an investigation of a particular phenomenon in real life context like to be evaluated, using several source of evidence (Robson, 2002). In reference to (Yin, 2003), the relation between the case which is studied and the phenomenon that like to be investigated are not clearly evident. This approach is thus different for a research design like experiments, where the provision of data happens in a controlled framework (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). The case study approach is most suitable when the authors like to gain an in-deep understanding of the context and the process involved (Morris & Wood, 1991). The evaluation of case studies replies in particular to questions of why, what and how processes and certain phenomenon are acting as they do in real life. The case study approach is thereby often related to explanatory and exploratory research design and include interviews, observations and documentary analysis. The research design as case-studies favors qualitative data collection. While collecting qualitative data, it has to be insured by definition of qualitative data, that the data collection refers to the expectation of the theoretical research. Semi-structured interview is in this consideration a valuable way of triangular data gathering, between the personal influence of the author, constructed questionnaire and data from the respondents (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Regarding to (Yin, 2003), case studies can be structured according to two dimensions: Single case versus multiple case and holistic case versus embedded case.

In the current research design, a multiple case study is conducted. The objective is that the findings of the several case studies might be summarized and if there are general applicable to all organizations. In contrast to the single case study where only one organization is investigated and therefor a vast justification for the choice is required. The decision for conduction a case study may lead to the possibility to discuss existing theories and provide new knowledge in a specific area (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).
The research design focuses on the data sample on more than one country. Data has been gathered from Brazil and Sweden. Cultural differentiation has taken carefully into account. Nevertheless, the set of four companies in two countries is rather small due to the limitations of this academic research. Nevertheless, the relevance of a cross-national analysis has still its relevance, making understood that this research design has to be understood as a first step into this specific area (Cadogan, 2010). The purpose is to understand the impact of cultural differences in similar business area.

The authors of this thesis conduct the research according to the commonly used business and management research method of a multiple-case study. As the case studies are evaluated in a qualitative manner, it will be outlined what could be considered as common and unique by comparing several cases. It provides in return the possibility to evaluate common used methods and whether theoretical approaches are reflected (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 63).

The conducting of case studies provided a deeper understanding of the specific research area and the evaluation of the phenomenon described in the focus of the research questions. As in the explanation about the research design stated, the usage of multiple case studies is in favor of the qualitative research strategy, as data is collected independent from the theoretical framework. Collected data will be tested against the stated theory to arrive on general practical implications and new theoretical approaches. The authors conducted several interviews with respondents involved in the IT-Service and Technology. The objective is to gain an understanding of how personal selling in the business-to-business process is conducted and which impact personal selling has on business relationships, considering the international framework. The evaluation of case studies from both Brazil and Sweden, enables the triangular approach of both authors expectation through existing theories, insights in real life business in relation to the construct of the questionnaire. Further the authors like to provide a view on cultural differences. The companies are therefore chosen from the sector of IT service and technology to have a common working framework and enable a cross-country comparison. The objective is to understand the strategy and process of personal selling in an international context. The outcome is discussed with the provided theoretical framework to provide further aspects that could improve relationships through personal selling.

### 3.5 Data Collection
#### 3.5.1 Selection of respondents
The sample of the respondents will be chosen purposively. The researchers will use their own contacts to choose people who personal sells their services or technology on a business-to-business basis internationally. “The goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those samples are relevant to the research questions being posed. […] (the samples) are selected because of their relevance to understand a social phenomenon.” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 442). According to the stated research question, the focus of this study is to evaluate the impact of personal selling behavior on business relations for business to business operating companies. To make the approach comparable, the authors focuses on the branch of IT service and technology companies. Following the recommendations indicated by Healey and Rawlinson, one has to identify who is most likely for the objective of the interview in concerns to availability and knowledge of the specific research area. That requires the establishment of the contact in advance. Healey and Rawlinson emphasis a dual approach, which includes the request of an interview in advance, that could be done via telephone or written communication (Healey & Rawlinson, 1993).

At the first step, a market research of relevant IT service and technology companies were conducted in Sweden and Brazil. As the objective is to evaluate personal selling perspectives,
the function of the respondent should be involved experience in selling management. The resource at companies who has both experience in personal selling and management refers to the Key Account Manager of a specific area. A further requirement to the company of the respondent is, that the company operates in more than two countries, to correspond with the statement to evaluate an international operating company. The first contact with the company were done via mail. After sending the mail, with some days in between, a telephone request for an interview was done directly, as most of the companies did not reply to mail requests. Through the telephone communication the adequate respondent for an interview was lined out. In case the company was willingness to participate voluntarily on an interview either personal or via telephone, an appointment was set up. Required information was sent in advance to the correspondent firm via mail. The authors focused due to time limitations on four case studies; two from each country to be able to address an intercultural aspect. The gathered data were analyzed and linked to the provided theory in chapter two.

3.5.2 Primary and Secondary Data
In order to obtain empirical data to analyses a certain research question of the study, there are two approaches of data collection – primary data collection or secondary data collection. Primary data collection is generally understood as the data sampling of the research itself, while secondary data is obtained through data collections of other researchers or organization. The advantage of secondary data is that in contrast to gather data through interviews, it is less time consuming in archiving data for the analysis. Secondary data are, depending on the resource, reliable and offer a high quality. The consideration to use secondary data should be done by each researcher. Many approaches use a combination of both primary data and secondary data. This provides the advantage to arriving quicker at a specific research area, but still with the personal engagement in real life and personal contacts and discussion while conducting interviews.

The study uses both primary data and secondary data. Secondary data is first of all used for the construction of the research question, establishing the existing theoretical framework and as well to design the overall strategy of the study. Primary data is collected through non-standardized interviews with respondent in the relevant research area (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.5.3 Interview Design
According to the definition of (Kahn & Cannell, 1957), interviews are defined as purposeful discussions between two or more people to gather valid and reliable data within a specific research area. Interviews are probably the most used source of data sampling. If properly applied, they lead the research to collect more detailed and relevant information from the interviewee since it is a flexible process (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Any interview should be consistent to the constructed research question, objectives and purposes of the study (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). The qualitative approach may include so additional questions, established while the current interview. For the current purposes, a structured interview could omit some important aspects and mislead the qualitative approach while an unstructured interview presented by a broad approach (utilizing one main question) may not cover all the concepts or themes. Therefore, in this research, the interview will follow a semi-structured approach, although, there will be list of questions the respondents will be encouraged to answer the questions freely, allowing the interviewer to grasp some relevant aspects stated by the interviewees in order to interact with the respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The qualitative research strategy provides the possibility to arrive a special topic from several angels, while having the freedom of changing wording of questions and follow up to replies. In distinction to a quantitative approach, semi-structured provides the advantage of assume predefined schedule, but not a standardization of the questions. The interview could thus have conducted as a dynamic process. The semi-structure provides the possibility to conduct the
Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies

2016-05-20

interviews by several people as topics are specified in the interview guide (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In accordance with the semi-structured design, a list of themes and questions is prepared in advance. The semi-structured approach allows the interviewee to vary in the conduction of the interview to react to new impacts from the respondent and enable a flow through the interview itself (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

In theory, there are several approaches of conducting an interview. To the category of non-standardized interviews belongs the one- to one interview which is possible to operate as face-to face interview, telephone interview or interview through internet.

The authors found it most suitable to conduct the interview thought the establishment of the personal contact as face-to face interviews and telephone interviews when geographical distance is unfavorable for a personal appointment. The interview is constructed as semi-structured approach. In reference to the significance of the research area, interview guide is constructed. The possibility to operate a semi-structured interview may lead to discussions and insights that are not covert by the constructed items. Thus the authors gain a deeper understanding in the research area (Silvermann & Strauss, 2007). Further companies are more likely to conduct a short interview than filling a questionnaire, as through the interview the respondent have the possibility to gain new impacts and reflect the approaches to the current methods (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

3.5.4 Execution of Interviews

The interviews were held with sales managers from international operating IT service and technology companies. The function of the respondent refer to Key Account Managers and Area Sales Managers to be able to contribute with their knowledge in accordance within the specific research area of this study. The respondents have expertise in international sales and personal selling management. (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009), emphasis that trustworthiness respondents are important to gather both valid and reliable primary data through interview. The selection of companies and interviewee has thus done carefully in regards to both the research objectives and the background of the respondents and referring organization (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

In order to obtain a reliable outcome of the interview, questions were structured in an easy understandable manner to the key items of personal selling process, Marketing Relationships and intercultural aspects in intercultural communication with customers. In preparation of the interview questions were structured with the space for new outcomes while conducting the interview in accordance with the principle of a semi-structured approach. The interviews were held both on a face-to face basis and though telephone interviews.

Telephone interviews provide the possibility of rather fast access to companies and data, with a high speed in obtaining data to rather low costs involved. Telephone interview are a good alternative when the geographical distance is to wide and costly. Nevertheless, telephone interview has some disadvantages against face-to face interviews. Through the lack of trustworthiness, respondents might be less willing to go into details within an exploratory discussion. Further the research misses the opportunity to discover non-verbal communication while the interview is conducts, that sets the answers obtained in a specific context. The respondent also may spend less time on a telephone interview and might avoid answers to more complex questions. Both in preparation of telephone interviews and face-to face interviews cultural norms both of the interviewer and interviewee have to take into consideration as they have an impact on the response obtained (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Before the interview takes place, the interviewees will have an explanation regarding the subject of research and how it will be conducted. During the interview these themes will be explained followed by the questions. The interviewees are free to answer or avoid the questions
and if the interviewer perceived that the interviewee is having any kind of doubts, further explanations will be given. The interviewers will be advised to behave positively and stimulate the interviewee’s interaction, if necessary, by quoting the same words used by the interviewee. The whole process will be properly recorded in order to collect all relevant information (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviews were scheduled for a duration between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the time offered by the respondent. The interview guide was used as a guideline, which has it focus on the overall outcome. Thus it was not necessary to go into depth of each item constructed.

3.6 Data Analysis
Shortly after the interview took place, the gathered information will be analyzed as they are still “fresh” in mind. The interview is recorded which will insure the overall quality in the quantitative research. (Bryman & Bell, 2011) stressed out that not only the information content is important, it is also important the way the information was provided. After the interview took place, general circumstance of the interview has been noted, such as the overall conduction of the interview, the time consideration and other external factors to set the gathered information into a context in addition to interviewees’ answers.

The records will be done with a mobile phone. The quality is sufficient and the whole interview will be transcribed. That make it possible to have a detail analysis and opens the possibility to re-use the interview in other frameworks. Through the recording answers are presented in its context and are more reliable as the statement in lose phrases selected by the author (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The conducting of the interview follows the principle of a triangular research design, between the author, constructed interview guide and the respondent which is recommended for qualitative studies (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). The gathered data is linked with the provided theory in chapter two to state its relevance and further aspects of previous findings to reply to the overall research structure of a qualitative inductive research design (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.7 Ethical Approach
Conducting a study with the gathering of external data, ethical considerations and limitations must apply. Regarding the research, ethical considerations are generally understood as the agreement on principles and rules in which the research is conducted. The issue of anonymizing the respondents name and treat data confidentially has to be insured and is a requirement, when conducting interviews and obtain external data (Charles, 2011). Traditional approaches according ethical considerations refer mainly to the method of participant, evaluating ethical questions of right and consequences while obtaining external data. (Sieber, 2004), expresses in addition the importance of the ethical influence of the researcher itself.

To conduct the interviews, the respondents’ agreement is a requirement. The authors provided any requested material and information in advance to the respondent to treat the communication process as open as possible. Terms of confidentiality has to be discussed in advance and anonymization offered if this is required. Even the decision to not conduct an interview due to direct competition of two companies applied after discussing this issue with the possible respondent in advance. The participation of the interview is voluntary; thus no person or company should suffer of disadvantage through their participation. Referring to the overall approach of collecting empirical data, the possible respondents were contacted in advance by phone to decide on an appointment for an interview. The subject and the content of the interview was stated in advance either verbal or by email communication. The participant is
offered to receive the result of the study if desired. Regarding the interview, recordings were done in compliance with the respondent, insuring the anonymity and careful handling of data.

### 3.8 Reliability and Validity

Operating a study, it is important to state the reliability and validity of the empirical data collection, the relevance of the overall findings and considerations whether the study is able to replicate and which limitations have to be drawn. The outline of reliability and validity are core issues while conducting a scientific research. On basis, it deals with the issue to reduce the possibility to get wrong answers (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Reliability takes into consideration to which extent operated empirical data collection and analysis conducted will led to consistent findings. The approach has to insure whether the study is replicable and led to the same results. Other observers might gain similar observations when conducting a likewise approach. During the description of the study, it has to be clearly stated how the analysis have been conducted and which raw material has been collected in which manner (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2008). (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982) differentiate between external and internal reliability. External reliability considers whether the study is replicable. Especially while operating a qualitative study, this issue might be difficult to archive as it is impossible to operate on the same social setting, as social circumstances changes continuously. The study has thus conducted in the limitation of the short-term point of view. Internal reliability refers to the common agreement of the observers about what they see. The research group have to agree on the general outcome of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The issue of a validity of a study deals with the considerations whether findings and the relation between the variables have a causal fundament. Validity have to arrive from an extern and internal view (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). The requirement to measure validity applies first of all to quantitative approaches and concepts that take social scientific researches into consideration (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The external validity refers to generalizability. It stresses the research design to the question whether the research results are generalizable within the social context. This issue may become problematic when the data collection takes place within one organization or is based on a small set of case studies only. The target in such a study needs therefor a clear explanation about the limitations and explanation about the particular research setting. To draw conclusion or theory on such limited study is seen as unproblematic, as long as the short- term time consideration is stated (Sanders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Internal validity refers mainly to the issue whether variables have a causal relationship. While focusing on causality, it has to be evaluated if variable is independent from each other or stated as dependent. Internal validity relates findings and results to the existing theories and previous findings. It is thus highly important to state this relation, especially in an inductive research design, as theories and previous finding are tested with the gained empirical data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Regarding the external reliability, the timeframe of the current study has to be taken into consideration. As the research takes place in the social framework, which is continuously changing, the study is only replicable on a short- term perspective. The empirical data is collected from international operating companies within the IT branch to evaluate personal selling process and its impact in business- to business relationships. Already next year the results might be differ from this study as the approaches adjust and develop over the time. A further limitation is drawn to the rather small set of case studies and arrive on common findings.
One advantage in this context is the rather slow development in business development, which lead to a more replicable approach.

The internal reliability is insured through in deep-discussion between the authors and within the critical evaluation within the research group. Through ongoing communication while conducting the study the researchers agree and discussed the approach and the empirical research.

Through the usage of the multiple case-study approach, data has been gain from several organizations within an intercultural context. Similarities and differences have been analyzed to arrive on general factors that are the bases for further practical implications and development of new theory for the personal selling behavior and the impact on relationship of business to business operating companies. The study is conducted according to an inductive research design. By its definition of this design, empirical data collection has to be linked to existing theories and previous findings. Through this relation internal validity is insured.
4 Empirical Data

The fourth chapter provides the obtained data from the companies in Brazil and Sweden. The interviews were conducted personally. Due to the large distance and time difference the conduction of the interviews with the Brazilian Companies took place by telephone. Both Swedish Companies have their head quarter in Halmstad. The interviews took place as face-to-face interviews in Halmstad.

To obtain empirical data is the basis to obtain insight in real business operation and is thus the basis of the conduction of this study. In preparation of the interviews a semi-structured interview guide according to four B2B aspects in regards to the communication tool of personal selling has been established. The four B2B aspects has been outlined through the literature review in chapter two. Further secondary information about the respective company has been obtained online and through the annual reports. The interviews in Sweden took place as face-to-face interviews and responses were recorded and subsequently transcribed in the corresponding languages Brazilian, English and Swedish. The transcripts are provided in the attachments of this study. According to suggestions of Bryman & Bell (2011) conducting an interview, the face-to-face interview is suggested in regards to gain in-depth information and intensive communication. The willingness of conduct longer interviews by face-to-face communication is high than on telephone interview. In addition, when the meeting is schedule, it is rather unlikely to change the appointment. At telephone interviews, that happens much more often. Further the interviewer can obtain non-verbal reactions of the respondent and may change and adjust questions on a mutual communication basis. Below a table is provided, showing the interviewed companies and the respective respondents. Due to the fact that it was now that all companies will allow to show their name, the study works with letter references instead of the corresponding names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Companies’ Name</th>
<th>Product/Service</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Respondents’ Function</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Company A Sistemas</td>
<td>Software for industrial, human resources, accessibility and corporate performance management</td>
<td>Anderson Felício</td>
<td>Commercial &amp; Sales Planning Manager</td>
<td>2016-04-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Company B Systems</td>
<td>Personalized solution for e-commerce</td>
<td>Anderson Nielson</td>
<td>Customer Care &amp; Sales Director</td>
<td>2016-05-04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Company A - Brazil

Company A provides solutions for all size companies and has expertise in 13 different industries. The portfolio of products is wide, ranging human resources management, ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning), accessibility control, corporate performance and a full package of implementation, customization, consulting and support on IT (Case company A, 2016).

Founded in 1988 in Blumenau – SC, Company A aimed to be recognized as a software house with specific applications for personnel management. Nowadays, recognized as one of the largest Brazilian software enterprises, company A has 10000 customers, more than 90000 active contracts and 1270 employees, working in an own five-floor building headquarter, 6 subsidiaries and 3 business units that offer services in security and logistics. Furthermore, indirect sales are performed by 100 distribution channels throughout Brazil (Case Company A, 2016).

Company A operates predominantly in Brazilian market for two main reasons. First, because of country’s dimension, Brazil has around millions of companies that probably need at least one software for management (Case Company A, 2016). Second, all management software’s have to be adapted to the complex laws from the region of operation and any Brazilian state have their own laws. If company A wanted to sell their software to other countries, they would have to spend much more effort to be able to offer a good and usable product (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

Although company A has all size customers, small and medium size companies are their market focus. that has standardized and embedded systems. Regarding to the sales process, 64% are direct sales while 36% are indirect sales from distribution channels. According to Respondent-A, the more complex the software is, the longer is the decision of purchase. The sales process of standardized systems takes 1 to 3 months while the complexity of embedded ones takes 6 months or more. “Is difficult to prove that we are the right company with the right software because customers are afraid to invest due to the price and the complexity of a management software”. In order to acquire more customers, the sales force has always been encouraged to exploit the value chain, using the network to access new opportunities (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

Respondent-A, commercial and sales planning manager, is specialist in commercial routine planning and monitoring of sales performance, as well as team performance management and people development. Consolidated experience in negotiation, contracting and implementation of IT solutions, Respondent-A is working in Company A since 2007. After graduate in Information Systems, he added two Master’s degree in Project and Business Management.
The interview took place as face-to-face Skype interview on the 19th April 2016.

4.1.1 Cultural Aspects

Because of the country’s dimension, cultural diversity is a decisive factor. Therefore, companies have to adjust the sales force according to the operating region to succeed, offering the service correctly. Due to 28 years’ sales experience, company A was able to identify and emphasize the crucial differences according to the region as values, preferences, behavior and approach that best suits for the concerned customer. The way that they interpret and understand the supplier’s products and services impact the buying decision (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

Considered as different countries, the behavior of companies varies according to the state of operation. Respondent-A identified some challenges in certain regions of Brazil. The market of Rio Grande do Sul, state situated on the extreme south of the country, has a peculiarity of strong mutual partnership between companies of the same segment. Agribusiness companies for example have a cooperative where entrepreneurs conduct regular meetings to discuss important issues in the area such as economics, suppliers, improvements, innovation and process optimization. Therefore, if the supplier does not meet the expectations of one of these companies, is difficult to acquire new customers because of the reputation that has been damaged. Another state that has particular characteristics in purchasing behavior is Rio de Janeiro, in the southeast, where insecurity is intensified when the supplier is not local. In this case, companies which have at least one branch installed in Rio gain competitive advantage. Similarly, a study was conducted to identify the failure in sales in northeastern Brazil. The market has a very strong and distinct behavior of the rest of the country, and whether a supplier wanted to win a customer in these conditions, they need to adapt completely to the local customs and habits. Whether the company does not meet the cultural requirements, customers will close themselves in social circles and the possibility to sell a product under this situation becomes impossible (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

Besides of behavior variations identified in accordance to the region, Respondent-A also emphasizes the differences according to the size of the company. However, the selling approach can change completely because the sale will be performed only if customers identify their needs on the service and the product concerned, which must solve the problems that they are facing at the moment of the sale (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

According to the respondent A, is necessary to conduct an exploratory process that identifies the customer needs and requirements to know how to better deal with the insecurity and uncertainty of a customer. Company A is developing new tactics on the sales process. In this new process, the seller seeks to think of all the answers, already building all the possible questions that the customer could ask to have the information ready and then demonstrate safety and mastery for them. Furthermore, the seller needs to induce the client to acknowledge the major problems using sales techniques and then making key questions that facilitate argumentation. From the first contact, the seller tries to present all the advantages exemplifying with stories and cases according to customer needs, preventing eventual objections at the time of purchase. However, is easier to perform a sale using approaches with no objections in order to focus on the contract signing. Thus, it is important to build a relationship with the customer, especially at the negotiation stage, that relationship intensifies because all solutions have been presented and questions have been solved (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

In order to complement the explanation about customers’ understandings and points of view, if seller does not use proper attire and language, or even how to present the material in accordance with cultural issues, the company will be simply discarded. According to the Respondent-A, understand the culture affects communication, and not only the seller needs to have knowledge.
and be aware of this process. The responsible team for sales promotion may eventually develop an amazing promotional material but sometimes does not fit all the actual customer business interests and expectations. For this reason, the sales director is requesting positive campaigns that meet customers properly (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

The respondent emphasizes that the decision-making in overall customers is decentralized because the systems that company A sells is integrated solutions that impact in several departments of a company, thus the sales cycle is more complex and time consuming. For this reason, the solution first has to be approved and meet the requirements by all departments and then be directed to upper management or final decision maker (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

4.1.2 Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships
In order to strengthen the bonds of relationship, Company A provides a loyalty program where customers accumulate points that can be redeemed for goods and services as system expansion, consulting services, trainings and monthly payment discounts. The actions that provide points include recommend the company's services to other companies, as well as accept eventual visits from potential future customers in their places in order to demonstrate how the system works in practice, with the entire structure in operation. Another way to accumulate points for the loyalty program is the provision of testimonials that are transformed into articles and cases in order to promote the products and services from Company A.

Another action that intensifies the loyalty between customer and supplier is a program called “The client’s week”. It is a whole week devoted to lectures given by customers to employees from Company A, allowing interaction between people who are “in front and behind the stage”. The client presents the company's business and demonstrates how the processes were optimized using statistical data, and emphasizing the benefits of being a customer of Company A. This event motivates employees from Company A, who realize the importance of their work for the success of companies. According to the Respondent-A (2016), the willing of the company was to promote more of such programs, but the corresponding budget does not allow more activities.

Customer segmentation also provides more targeted and personalized relationship. According to Respondent-A (2016), several projects were undertaken in order to define the parameters and categories of segmentation. Tuition fee, buying cycle, number of solutions and opportunity to generate new business are some of the criteria used to define the customer profile. Through this project, the company decided to define two profiles: relational and transactional. The difference between them is the level of interaction, and the relational have an interest in maintaining closer contact while the transaction are those who prefer not interact much with suppliers. In addition to the division by level of interaction, the company realized that it was necessary to hold another differentiation according to the purchasing power and size of the company, and then each profile has received two subcategories defined by R1 and R2 (relational 1 and 2) and T1 and T2 (transaction 1 and 2). Along with the segmentation process, it was also created the service menu, which consists of the administration of periodic visits to customers according to their targeted category. R1 customers are obviously those who receive more visits, and consists the following scope: they receive a visit from a specialist once a month, the company's director of business every 3 months and every 6 months the president's visit. To improve and prioritize the service to customers R1, the tool called "service time clocks" was created, where is possible to monitoring and performing the prioritization in the implementation of proposals and services in general (Respondent-A, 2016).

The Respondent-A (2016) clarifies that the relationship is a vicious circle, because if the client is not satisfied with the care provided by the supplier, probably will not have the commitment to help them in recommendations and other partnerships. Thus, the reward is only achieved if
the customer's expectations are exceeded. To improve this process, Company A will now study the ways on how you handle the new planning project, called "Excellence Program", in order to reach the level of excellence in customer service. The great challenge of this and other programs relating to the relationship is to demonstrate the financial return they provide, since it is something intangible and complex (Respondent A, 2016).

The Respondent-A (2016) stresses that often customer buy a product not only for the sake of being the best product but because of the gratitude and recognition, and it is through relationship that the sale takes place. "People buy through people. Companies buy from companies, but the decision to purchase happens through person to person" (Respondent-A, 2016). Based on this, the company is committed in the relationship sector in order to identify needs and solutions for customers. "This exchange is not a proposal but for a relationship, being a debt ratio" (Respondent-A, 2016). The only challenge is the fact that although relationship is essential to have a mutual understanding and commitment from both parts, is very difficult to measure and financially prove the results obtained from these actions. Recognized as an intangible factor, companies also have to invest more than other programs (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

4.1.3 Sales Management

The sales department in company A is composed by a Market Director, Commercial & Sales Planning Manager, a National Sales Manager and 6 Sales Managers (one in each subsidiary) (Respondent-A, 2016). It is through these professionals that the management of sales is performed. As with the salespeople, the management team also has goals and obligations under the scope of operation. For the Respondent-A (2016), it is extremely important have harmony between the managements so that the focus remains the same and the company can grow according to the plans. To be able to achieve this harmony, there are regular meetings (monthly, quarterly and half-yearly) in order to discuss the future and progress of sales targets, as well as finding solutions to eventual problems (Respondent-A, 2016).

As previously mentioned, the enterprise is one of the largest software companies in Brazil. Therefore, a detail that gets special attention is the fact that the company has shareholders and investors that demand a lot of expectations on results, demanding the return of investments in accordance with the profit margin planned for them. According to the respondent A (2016), these board investors only remain with the capital invested in the enterprise if it generates more results than the same amount invested in a bank, for example. For this process to occur, the investor makes a market study in which he analyzes the profit opportunities outside the company A. With the results in hand, he defines his desire and profit margin expected at the end of the year that is sufficient to maintain the capital invested in the company (Respondent-A, 2016).

In order to achieve the expected results, the sales targets are set through various studies and sales analyzes in previous periods, as well as the numbers and expectations requested by the investors. The first phase of planning is to define and display the growth projection for the year, which should always be higher than the previous year (Respondent-A, 2016). After this definition, they apply a survey of cost versus revenue. The interviewee The example: "if in 2015 the company spent to accomplish real x y in 2016 will spend x + 20% to make y + 30% in the case is the value we want to achieve” (Respondent-A, 2016).

With the values of the defined sales planning, is necessary then carry out the distribution of goals per employee. As in the previous case, the division of the goals is also performed according to the capacity and performance of the previous year’s sales teams. Another decisive factor in the distribution analysis is the market performance and the purchasing power of the
region, which can increase or decrease the value specified (Respondent-A, 2016). After this study, the goals are delivered to the responsible manager of the region. With the subsidiary’s correspondent values, the manager performs an analysis of how to succeed with the team. This distribution decision is done by a board consisting of all sales managers, where they define the individual final goals. It is presented the growth analysis of the region and the performance of each seller in previous years. In addition to the targets per employee and region, it is also decided the targets by product line. Each product / solution has its own goal, also proportional to the return required by the market analysis. This division per product line is required because the price of each vary, and all the software’s have to be profitable (Respondent-A, 2016).

The Respondent-A (2016) emphasizes that every year the sales strategy changes, according to the sales growth and the company's strategic planning. Development of new products, acquiring new businesses, investment in startups and the country's economic situation are some decisive factors for the planning of sales strategies. Through this control, the sales growth was 16-22% per year on the last five years (Respondent-A, 2016).

In relation to the sales process, Company A has 6 steps that need to be followed over time (Respondent-A, 2016). Phase 1 is known as prospecting, where a specialized team has the function to identify and attract potential future customers through trade shows, phone calls, advertising and market research. In phase 2, the potential customers have already shown interest to know the company's services A. At this time, the seller makes a detailed research about the customer and its interests, and after this he can recognize it will be interesting for the enterprise to continue with the sale process. If the seller identifies that the target company does not have financial power for the purchase or does not fit on the customer profile, it is discarded and the sales process does not continue. Phase 3 is called demonstration, when specialized professionals are called in order to demonstrate the system in operation. If the customer keeps interest after the demonstration, the sale advances to phase 4, known as proposal. With the delivered proposal, the sale proceeds to phase 5, negotiation. The stage 6 is known as sales close, even with the sale performed or not (Respondent-A, 2016).

Comparing the number of customers gained and lost, Company A has a tolerance considered normal according to the national average. Measuring rates were set according to a market study. The numbers tend to vary according to the month of action due to external factors, but ultimately the effective value is within tolerance (Respondent-A, Personal Communication, 2016).

4.1.4 Salespeople Management

For the respondent A (2016), a seller must meet some basic skills and requirements. It should be optimistic, determined and disciplined to know how to manage the sales correctly. In addition, 54 direct sellers must be able to perform a sale with the knowledge to argue, listen and behave as reliable and admirable professional. The turnover of average sales staff is within the average of the same industry, and is more motivated by the company due to poor performance. However, if the seller demonstrates a beneficial potential for the company, its effort is reflected in the options presented by the career plan of the enterprise, and it may become a seller of key accounts, coordinator of any sales groups or even sales subsidiary manager. The sales team is divided into two groups, one focused on selling services to current customers – upgrade, for example - and the others focused on new customers.

Regarding trainings, a process for integrating the company's policy is started on the same day that the seller is hired. All sales professionals need to be commercially certified to be able to act according to the values and objectives of the company. “Commercial Certification” consists of a training package of products and enterprise services as well as training on behavior and
selling and argumentation techniques. This training package is updated every two months with new courses. In addition to this form of training, enterprise performs every Friday an online program aimed at sales of specific techniques for any services and new products, in order to boost sales segment in question. With the same objective, business meetings are held periodically in order to discuss new market opportunities and also to interact sellers with different specializations in order to share information that enables increased sales. At these meetings the sellers given the opportunity to develop the group, improve their skills, learn new techniques and teach others sellers to have a greater role in sales (Respondent-A, 2016).

In order to monitor the development and performance of the sales force, the enterprise conducts weekly meetings between the subsidiary manager and the respective sellers in order to verify and analyze the sales forecast and discuss the next steps. Monthly, meetings are held between the national manager and the entire sales team in order to analyze the results obtained in the month, the losses and the new challenges for the next month (Respondent-A, 2016).

4.2 Company B – Brazil

Company B provides solutions for e-commerce personalization by transforming artificial intelligence, data mining and machine learning into very effective personalized recommendations. The personalized recommendations are internationally renowned and generating proven results. The services include personalized search, recommended showcase and e-mail marketing. The personalized search service enables the company to display different results for the same search. With the processing of store information and navigation data, the customized search generates a ranking for each search. According to the recommended showcase, the most relevant offers for each consumer are displayed in several windows - located at strategic points of the website - that facilitate the discovery and choice of products during the shopping experience. Through real-time monitoring of consumer actions, the service of e-mail market identifies the specific behavior of each customer and send personalized offers at the right time according to their interests and navigation (Company-B, 2016).

Founded in 2009 in Florianópolis – SC, Company B launched a pioneering system in the country that recommends products to users of virtual stores. With no use coming registration information, the team maps in real-time consumer preferences and presents the on customer page similar products that might interest them. Company B is a very new company but already shows increasing and remarkable growth in the last five years. The company has expanded 16 times the number of people - 10 employees in 2011 to 160 in 2016. One of the company's challenges is to provide a system that is robust and reliable, even with hundreds of thousands of simultaneous accesses (Company-B, 2016).

The company B area of operation covers customers in Brazil and some Latin American countries. Nowadays, 07 of the top 10 online retailers in Brazil are already customers, and at least one of the top 3 online retailers in other countries as Argentina, Mexico, Chile and Colombia are also customers from Company B (Respondent-B, 2016). For this case, with the aim of obtain market share, medium size companies are their current market focus. Regarding to the sales process, 100% are direct sales, and 3 to 9 months are necessary to perform a sale (Respondent-B, 2016).

Respondent-B, Customer Care and Sales Director and responsible to manage 40 people, is specialist in strategic thinking and planning, several computer languages, team management and people development. After graduating in University of Santa Catarina, he added a Master's degree in People Management (HR).

The interview took place as face- to face Skype interview on the 04th May 2016.
4.2.1 Cultural Aspects

Company B covers customers in Brazil and some Latin American countries such as Uruguay, Argentina, Peru, Colombia, Chile and Mexico. Because of the consolidated sales experience, today the company does not have a hard time arguing both in Brazil and abroad. However, the Brazilian reality is different in comparison to the other concerned countries (Respondent-B, 2016). One reason is the fact that the Brazilian e-commerce market is on another level of maturity compared to other Latin American countries. Respondent-B (2016) emphasizes that as in other countries like the United States, Britain and Japan, Brazil received a growing movement of willing consumers purchasing over the internet. Thus, when company B tries to perform a sale in another country, they facing a similar situation of Brazil 4 years ago. Companies are interested in acquiring e-commerce services but without an established structure, based only on trial, belief and desire of the owners. Therefore, the way to approach is completely different and the salespeople have to back to behave as professionals facing the same challenges as the national level in the past. The sales in this case are more time-consuming, because the seller has to provide an education process explaining in details all the advantages to purchase this kind of service and then companies realize the importance of e-commerce for their business (Respondent-B, 2016).

The Respondent-B (2016) argues that they use some sales tactics to deal with the uncertainties and customer uncertainty. The most used tactic that does more effect is large customer cases, thus demonstrating greater credibility and confidence in the service. Another way to make the customer more confident is provide access to platforms for a certain period of demonstration in order to make the customer feel the need to stay with the service, purchasing with no more objections. This type of demonstration was widely applied in the beginning with Brazilian companies and now with the companies belonging to other countries (Respondent-B, 2016).

Regarding to decision-making power, in general the decision process begins with employees that will use and manage the system, but the final decision is made by the directors or owners. However, the company B participates in many events and fairs, and in this case the contact is already done with directors and business owners. Usually after the presentation of materials and sales arguments, the directors pass on the information to those responsible for each department so that an analysis is carried out together in order to see if the product will be beneficial for the company.

4.2.2 Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships

Company B has no customer loyalty programs because they believe that what makes a loyal customer is the fact that be satisfied with the service and sales results achieved with the tools that were offered to them to optimize sales. However, the respondent B emphasizes that they are always aware of the results generated by the work tools so that they are increasingly rewarding. According to the respondent B, when they perform quality work, the feeling of Commitment, and customer satisfaction is inevitable.

Tools are used to measure customer satisfaction in company B. One is the quarterly satisfaction survey with the customer base, using the Network Promoter Score – NPS – methodology, which measure parameters of satisfaction with a scale of 1 to 10 (Respondent-B, 2016). This range identifies 3 customer profiles according to satisfaction. From 1 to 7 are detractor customers, 7 to 8 are neutrals and 9 to 10 are promoters. With the calculated score, the company must perform a mathematical operation (promoters - detractors = x) which will result in the company's satisfaction index, also called NPS factor. Several companies use this procedure, so then is possible to make a comparison with the market situation (Respondent-B, 2016).

In addition to the NPS survey, Company B has a specialized service team that closely monitors all customer sales progress. The team consists of commercial consultants and technicians who
work together in a certain customer base, monitoring the performance of the sales (Respondent-B, 2016). These professionals also have the function of presenting the platforms sales results as well as hear needs and complaints in order to strengthen relations and create a bond and loyalty commitment with customers. Through the critical remarks received because of this relationship, the company B seeks to meet the requests in coordination with the development of new products and improvement of existing ones (Respondent-B, 2016).

Segmentation is another factor that enables closer relationships with customers of the company B. Actual and potential revenue are the two determining factors for the customer division in specific segments, allowing for a more targeted and personalized service according to each category (Respondent-B, 2016).

4.2.3 Sales Management

The time-consuming of a sale varies between six and nine months but eventually some sales take place in a period of three months. The interest at the beginning was to attract large customers, and when the company realized that had won most of them, changed the focus to mid-sized companies (Respondent-B, 2016).

Company B has a clear and structured sales process, starting with the exploration stage which can be active or reactive. Active exploration is the direct contact of the company B with the potential client. On the other hand, reactive contact is the customer own initiative to contact the company, which probably received any indication or interested in any marketing materials released to the media. From that contact, professionals perform the solution overview stage where they analyze the possibilities to take the correct form of client to then proceed to the next step where the company sends more materials and conducts visits in order to demonstrates the platforms. After the demonstration, the proposal is drawn up and starts the negotiation process and subsequent closing of the sale.

Regarding the division of sales targets, Respondent-B (2016) emphasizes that the objectives for the year are decisive factors for the development of goals and its values are divided quarterly. This division is also held by the seller, where the sales management decides the values based on the experience of each professional of the team. Overall, the company has a challenging but feasible goal. Company B has a system of sales staff distribution according to the operating region, and some sellers are assigned to carry out sales in Brazil while another team is responsible for making sales in Latin America (Respondent-B, 2016).

According to Respondent B (2016), the best strategy to win a customer is maintaining the reputation of the brand. The company has always acted clearly and honestly with customers, acquiring more reputation over time. In relation to sales strategies, the respondent argues that for being a company that deals with technology and innovation, they need to adapt quickly to the market demands. Economic crisis, the emergence of new competitor and new product inclusion in the market are some factors that induce change in sales strategy, and this strategy changes at least once a year (Respondent-B, 2016).

Company B, as well as most technology companies with the Startup format, was founded only by the partners. As a partner was focused on the technical side and in product development, the other was dealing with the marketing and sales strategies. Because the company has grown very fast in such a short time, adjustments were made quickly and teams of product development, marketing and sales started to be structured (Respondent-B, 2016).

4.2.4 Salespeople Management

Respondent B (2016) explains that every new employee was conducted to have a tour of all departments of the company, in order to become familiar with the values and business processes in general. Especially in the commercial area, the new seller also comes to some customers
with other professional who already has sales experience in the company. Training sessions are also conducted in order to show how the market works and reacts in different situations and also in order to present and exemplify the characteristics of the product (Respondent-B, 2016).

According to the Respondent-B (2016), the average turnover of the sales force, as well as other areas, is around 25% per annum, considered acceptable in the region and in technology industry. The main reasons that concern this percentage is the performance below expectations and the different views that make some people do not agree with certain values of the company (Respondent-B, 2016).

In order to meet customers admirably, sales staff is divided into two categories, where one has the focus on new customers while the other is responsible for the existing customers. Similarly, regular meetings are held in order to monitor and avoid any problems in the sales process. Target definition and distribution meetings are held quarterly, while weekly meetings are held in order to monitor the sales situation (Respondent-B, 2016).

According to Respondent-B (2016), it is not the company's responsibility to make a motivated and happy professional. "We do not like to create mechanisms in the commercial area to motivate sellers, because if they work in this role is because they like to sell, then it should be pleasurable for them to convince the customer to buy the product and then he is paid for it." (Respondent-B, 2016) The company only has to offer a pleasant and challenging work environment, being committed to employees and offering a quality product that make them proud. It is inevitable, people perform tasks waiting to be recognized with intellectual or financial return, and likewise the companies expect employees to work motivated and happy to be able to acquire income and profitability (Respondent-B, 2016).
4.3 Company C - Sweden

Company C provides communication technology for industrial automation equipment on a global range. The mission is to provide reliable, flexible and easy implementable solutions for industrial communication and remote control. The company operates with local offices in 11 countries at the main industrial centers and distributes products to more than 50 countries all over the world. The company established out of a thesis project at the University of Halmstad in 1988 and grew since then to an international recognized and global active company with 450 employees. The company is today registered at the NASDAQ-OMX Nordic Exchange and generated in 2015 a revenue of 702 M SEK. (HMS Industrial Networks, 2001-2016)

The customer range reaches from large automation vendor, manufacturers of devices and machines and system integrators in the segments of factory automation, power energy, transport and Infrastructure and process automation. Business partners are among others Siemens, Schneider Electrics, ABB, Toshiba, Sony to name some of them. The business aim is to provide and develop software and hardware for industrial communication that connect devices with each other. With their three core brands, solutions are provided to connect automatization devices like robots, sensors, control systems and motors with different industrial networks and control systems. The company can deliver turnkey projects to the extent of product development, manufacturing and support for their clients. (HMS Networks, 2015)

The most important market is with 50% still the field of factory automatization. Onside growing markets in the sector of building and process automatization (10%), power and energy (20%) and power and infrastructure (20%) became important too. Through the global organization the company is present at the main industrial centers and accessible through their distributors world-wide. The company marketed their product under three different brands. Products are sold through their own sales channels in 11 countries and through partners and distributors in additional 50 countries (HMS Networks 2001-2016, 2016). The brands are divided according to its function and purpose. One segment is focusing on the multi-network connectivity within fieldbus and industrial Ethernet. Those products have the function to enable the connection between any industrial device to any industrial network, both wired and wireless. The second product group provides products for communication solutions of machines, safety and automotive. The third segment offers technical solutions and product for remote management of industrial equipment to monitor and control field equipment and machinery online. Developing products and solutions, the company mind next generations requirements within the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) in their product development and offering of technical solutions. IIoT will make the usage of provide data of the technical components itself more effective and enables real-time control of manufacturing processes. With the gained knowledge since 1988, the company is an experienced provider of innovative technical solutions, products and services and focuses on ongoing product development. The company is focusing mainly on international sales, as 95% of the sales is generated abroad (HMS Networks, 2015).

Respondent C, works since 2010 for the company. Since two years he is in charge of the position as sales and marketing manager for the Nordic Countries. His working field includes the Nordic Countries of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland and as well the responsibility for sales through distributors around the world in countries without a local office such as Australia, South East Asia, Brazil, Spain, Portugal, Africa, Middle-East, East-Europe and Russia. Previously he gained his working experience at Eriksson in Gothenburg. Currently he is responsible for 13 persons within the sales organization with its main focus on international sales (Hoffert, 2016).

The interview took place as face-to-face interview at the companies’ headquarter in Halmstad on the 21st April 2016.
4.3.1 Cultural Aspects

The company describes itself as *global player*. The company is well-established on the international market. 90% of the sales are generated by exports. The firm operates 11 local offices and covers thereby all primary key markets. The local offices adapt sales, marketing and technical services to local requirements of the corresponding country. The company can be thus described as firmly established on the international market. Through the local presents and an independent distribution network, reaching further 50 countries, the firm is able to provide their client with proactive and efficient sales and technical service in their local language. The local presents are understood as condition for further international growth (HMS Networks, 2015).

In the interview, it became clear that one is aware of cultural differences and different characteristics of the customer needs and expectations. The importance of cultural differences is hereby not only specified for far-east relations – cultural differences are outlined significantly also between neighbor countries to Sweden, for example Denmark and Germany. The respondent, provided examples of cultural differences of Denmark, England, Germany and Japan in comparison with the companies’ country of origin, Sweden. The company provides for example a technical support tool, where the registered user can send logs non-personally to the company or receive support by mail. The system is accepted in Sweden and Germany but doesn’t work well in Denmark and England as most of the customer prefer personal communication on the actual case.

Through the company is aware of cultural differences, marketing, sales and support actions are adapted to customers’ demand. Nevertheless, according to the respondent, one should not generalize too much either. The interviewee noticed that most of the adaptation regarding the customer is learned through doing business and experience in local offices, for example in England and Japan. The local offices are also responsible for the communication with the client, depending on their expectation by telephone, mail or face-to-face correspondence. Which expectation the clients have, is mostly evaluated by the salespeople. The experience and awareness is thus depending basically on individual experience through the daily business in the corresponding countries and values of local employees.

Through regular internal sales manager conferences and communication between product managers, experience is shared, how to sell and communicate with the customer in the best possible way and whether there are customer demands that have not fulfilled yet. The cross-country communication is especially important for the company, as the product development is mainly done in Sweden and for some parts in Germany. It is thus highly important that information and customer demand is collected locally and transferred to the head organization and product development in Sweden.

According to the sales manager, the sales process involves usually many people in the overall process, but the selling action is normally handled by one person. It has to be taken into consideration, that the one who is responsible for the purchase, might not the person who has chosen actively the products and services of the selling company. Often the company has been selected by the clients’ Research & Development department, that has a specific need for a technical communication solution and evaluated in advance, which solution might fit best for them or to solve the problem on their own. When the decision for a communication solution has been made, the sales process is conducted in responsibility of one of the clients’ sales representative.

Insecurities, at the point of sales, are often based on technical reasons. In order to lower insecurities, the sales person of the company has the possibility get support from a companies’ engineer to explain the customer, how the ordered solution will work. Mostly the suppliers’
sales representative has a broad knowledge about the products and how implementation of the products worked for other customers in similar projects. He is thus able to explain most of the concerns directly towards the client. To lower the extend of uncertainties, required a high demand of communication and the understanding of the related customers’ problem. The respondent lined out that the customer need a certain amount of coaching for a certain technical solution. (Hoffert, 2016)

The company train their stuff thus in their own international network. Employees have the opportunity to join a special foreign exchange program within the companies’ offices around the world to work in the international context and gain additional knowledge (HMS Networks, 2015).

4.3.2 Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships

In the annual report of the evaluated company, five core shared values are outlined. The firm focuses on commitment to their customers, operation within a long- term perspective, being innovative and efficient and believe in building relationships. The company has especially the focus to be recognized as reliable supplier within the market (HMS Networks, 2015). The interviewee emphasized in particular to provide products that have a high reliable quality, that works once that they are implemented and installed within their specification. The most important factor that the customers will purchase a rebuy, is to provide products and services with a high quality and a wide product range oriented in the needs of the customer combined with a good support (Hoffert, 2016).

The company focuses on five sectors: factory information, industrial information, transportation, energy, life- science and building. When a new product is launched the product department evaluates which market to address and which kind of customers within the value chain should be addressed with marketing actions. The direct marketing is conducted through online and offline advertisement, fairs, roadshows, free webinars and workshops (Hoffert, 2016).

As the hardware and software of the company is highly specialized, customer loyalty establishes on basis of the first decision to choose the hardware and software of the company, that is implemented as a part in their own technical products. Once the solution is implemented and works in the purposed environment, it is rather unlikely to change a working solution. Referring to the interviewee, the reasons to terminate a cooperation are mainly based on the technical specifications, for example when the customer changes his technical solution or demands a certain technical network or protocol that the company has not in their portfolio. Another reason would be that the customer decides to produce the communication component on his own. This applies rarely for embedded design, but may occur through changed strategies of the customer, thus the component has become a main part of his technical product and is unlikely to work together with a third partner. On the standardized product side, the price has become an issue due to market competition (Hoffert, 2016).

Marketing actions and establishment of customer loyalty are perceived as independent. Marketing is first of all the method to establish market attraction but does in the opinion of the respondent not linked to establish loyal customer relation. Reliable products with a good quality and technical support is stated as the reasons that customers purchase a rebuy. In order to be able to provide interesting and demanded products, in the opinion of the respondent it is important to listen to the market and offer products that the market demands. The sales staff provides the company through their interaction with the customers with various information. A part of those information will be recognized and transferred internally, first of all to the product development. The main input of information is provided out of face- to- face communication with the several customers. On side a CRM system is used as well. The CRM system is used to maintain information from telephone calls and analysis of reasons when an opportunity failed. But mainly the direct personal communication both external and internal is the primarily
communication path, directly from the sales people to product chef and further to the product development (Hoffert, 2016).

The first contact between the supplier company and the demanding company, is primarily done either by telephone or by mail enquiry. The company provides direct access by telephone to their employees that have the possibility to connecting forward to the responsible sales person or specialist. The customer can call to both to the switch board or to a special sales line. At the sales line the customer gets connected with the seller, who was free longest. As regional differences have been taken into consideration, the company established selling by region of the customer. The customer will be served in the related language with the services of the seller who is closest to the customers’ place. Customers are thus segmented both geographically and to their demand of products and services at the company offers both standardized products and advanced turnkey solutions with their own software. The Danish customer will be provided with a Danish sales person, and the Swedish one will connected to a Swedish seller (Hoffert, 2016).

Evaluating the statement of the annual report 2015 and the talks onside of the actual interview, currently the emphasize on selling through distributers is investigated for standard products. Those products are estimated to require much less communication and adjustments as for example embedded systems. For advance system development and long-term projects, face-to-face selling is the first choice of interacting with the client. The method of direct sales stands for 87% of the overall revenue distribution and is thus perceived the most efficient method for the company (HMS Networks, 2015).

Sales have been stable and significant increased over the last 5 years by 18-20%. The sale strategy has not especially changed, but adapted to new conditions. The company bought two companies with corresponding products. The sales strategy has thus extended to the characteristics of the new products (Hoffert, 2016).

4.3.3 Sales Management
The company offers different products for different technical solution and applications. As different the product range is, as different the selling has to be. According to the respondent the company distinguish their sales into Regular Sales and more complicated sales. To sell standardized products, for example a Gateway, does not requires specific adjustments of the products to the clients’ demand. Thus the selling can be conducted in around 5 minutes. The interviewee considers this kind of selling as rather uncomplicated. Once the customer has selected the product, in most cases he will buy it at a certain price. Competition on the market at this field is considered as rather low. Nevertheless, the amount of sells is rather unpredictable, which may be a challenge (Hoffert, 2016). The standardized products are manufactured according to customer order and sold either via the of a network of around 300 independent distributers, reaching around 50 countries or through direct sales of the responsible local offices (HMS Networks, 2015).

More complicated are embedded systems and technical turnkey solutions, that cannot be solved with standard products. The technical solution has to be adapt to the clients’ requirements. For certain large customers, hardware and software solutions are offered entirely customized. This is thus much more complicated and time consuming. Taking into consideration an embedded design, customized for the client, takes in averaged a development time between 9 and 12 months. Conducting such long projects, the customer will be evaluated in advance (Hoffert, 2016). The business collaboration is based on framework agreements and is typically conducted over 10 years characterized by a relative long development phase and steady long-term revenue. Such advanced solutions require intense communication during the whole process and are thus sold through direct sales (HMS Networks, 2015).
As diversified the products are, as diversified as well the customers, from a single- person company to large global companies like ABB. Embedded system design are mainly sold to large companies that produce other technical solutions and a demand for a technical solution from a supplier. The average revenue varies regarding to the product segment very much. Whereas a customer buying an embedded system design is estimated with a revenue of a half- million Swedish crones per year, the regular customer spends only some thousand crones per year.

The largest share of the sales is done with existing customers. The company has currently around 1200 customers in the Nordic Countries. As international growing company, the focus for the sales department is as well on gaining new customer. The target is to gain 70 new clients on a three- months basis (Hoffert, 2016).

4.3.4 Salespeople Management
In regards to the companies’ annual report 2015, employees are perceived as most critical force for companies’ overall performance. The realization of being a successful innovative dynamic growing organization relies on motivation and employees’ commitment. Employees become skilled both in accordance to their technical knowledge and within the companies’ network of international contacts that provides various career opportunities. The company offers an internal culture of shared values, education and working with own responsibilities. Employees have the possibilities to participate in in- house training and foreign- exchange program. 87% of the sales revenue are generated by direct sales. The management of salespeople is thus an important part of the company (HMS Networks, 2015).

Referring to the information of the conducted interview, to become a successful sales person, one has to provide both the characteristic to like to sell technical products and provide sophisticated technical solutions to the clients. To be able to conduct those tasks independently from product managers, a high degree on technical knowledge is required, based on basic technical education. Even if the company have not a dogmatic career schedule, an idea of a certain career plan exists. Usually the sales person starts as junior inside sales, taking care about regular sales, offering and aftersales communication. The next step would be the responsibility within the outside sales towards a Key Account Management position. The company provides also the possibility to change between certain departments (Hoffert, 2016).

In order to skill the sales stuff, the possibility to participate on sales trainings is offered annually. As long as the sales target is reached, participation is obligatory. Sales people are not only important for the actual selling process. Through their direct communication with customer they gain an insight in their needs and can provide important information for the future product development. To evaluate the demand of the customer is an important task of the sales people and transfer that information into the organization. The current status of the sales situation is shared each second week in the department of the respondent. He lined out that it is important for the motivation of the sales stuff to provide them with internal information of the company that they perceive themselves as integrated part of the overall company. Further it is important to provide them with feedback both positive and negative (Hoffert, 2016).

According to the interviewee, the sales staff should be at the client three days a week. How many customers are visit depends also on the extension of the sales region. Usually two to three clients are visits per day. The amount of visits depending as well on the demand of the customer. Another way to come into contact with customers is the offer of mini- seminars, webinar, workshop and roadshows for example actually in Norway, and further the presents at the main trade fairs in the corresponding sales region (Hoffert, 2016).
4.4 Company D - Sweden

The second Swedish company we interview is active within the IT branch. The mother company offers high competency within system techniques, operation services, system development, web-education and business systems since 1972. The focus of all operations is to provide clients smart IT solutions for successful business. The offered IT solutions have the objective to ease the use of IT and support employees and business operation on the daily business. The head company is well-known in the IT branch and established vast technical expertise. Products and Services covers a wide range of products and services from System Development, Web Development, System Technology, Operational Service and IT Education. Projects and IT development is designed in close cooperation with the clients (dh solutions, 2016).

The respondent of the conducted interview work as Marketing and Sales Manager within a subdivisions of the mother company. This division can be described as a pioneer in the field of legal intelligence IT solutions. The mission of this division is to provide their clients with intelligent case management systems for brand protection that enables productive handling of anti-counterfeit operations and support for strategic decision (Zhang, 2016). The IT solution is developed in cooperation with Sony Mobile since 2007. Today clients benefit from a vast case management tool specialized on anti-counterfeit. The IT solution contains a web-based case management system, especially established to support IP owners and brand protection teams. Brand protection has become an issue to all kinds of companies. Large companies build up their own teams especially for this issue. The company found out that still many companies use the traditional decentralized method for anti-counterfeiting. The decentralized approach suffers from a lack of available information to the respondent team, have difficulties to exchange data between internal and external involved persons and is thus rather inefficient, also with the view to tracking the status of certain cases (dh anticounterfeit, 2016).

The company provides a turnkey IT platform in which both data of internal and external involved people can be collected and shared in a secure way. The platform enables to track information flows and exchange channels and identify trends and savings through the action of IP protection that will be the basis for strategic decisions. Onside of making anti-counterfeit operations more effective and visible, it also increases data-security. Access to the system can be enable, for example for external lawyers and authorities, who could up- and download certain information, but also limited access to only those persons who work with a certain case. The information flow is trackable and actual cases are managed by the system. The positive impact of the case management tool has been proven in industries of luxury products, household products, electrical and electronic goods, foodstuff, alcoholic and other beverages, games, automotive and clothes and accessories to name some field of application (dh anticounterfeit AB, 2016).

The anti-counterfeit IT solution will be customized implemented according to the customer needs, as well as involved persons are trained to use the system in the most efficient way. The sales strategy mainly focuses on large international companies (Zhang, 2016).

The interviewee of company D, gained her Master education in European business law at the University of Lund. Since 2014 she is working for the IT company within Marketing and Sales, specialized on anti-counterfeit solutions. The team consists of five persons with several functions according to marketing and sales, system development and project development. The company is mostly focusing on international markets and clients who especially have a demand for anti-counterfeit solutions (Zhang, 2016).

The interview took place as face-to-face interview at the 27th of April 2016 in Halmstad.
4.4.1 Cultural Aspects

Regarding to the interviewee, it has been realized that “different nationalities have different ways of handling things”. Communication from the beginning is thus an important and necessity requirement. Based on the nature of the product the firm offers, a set-up as project is most common framework to work together with the client. The collaboration with the client takes place over the several months. The communication is stated as different in regards of the origin of the customers (Zhang, 2016).

Germans are perceived to require an into detail clarified plan at first, specifying and negotiating all details in advance. In comparison, French customers are seen as more unspecified to the several planning steps, but need much more communication both in their internal and external communication to get everybody involved. Dutch people are considered as different as well in comparison to Swedish, Germans and French people (Zhang, 2016).

The sales strategy has thus to be adapt to the circumstance of the client. The sales person tries to adapt to the clients in order to evaluate the specific demand and to get the possibility to learn from the client as well. The company has a lot of cooperation with large companies, that are considered as leading companies in their specific market. The supplier tries to be humble in their treatment with the clients to obtain the possibility to both provide a solution that fulfils customer needs and likewise learn from the client as well (Zhang, 2016).

In response to the question how to deal with the different behavior of customers, it has been expressed that a certain adaptation according to the client will be done on basis of made experience from the past. Nevertheless, it does not exist general rules in the company how to handle different customers. The experience showed that Germans are perceive to have a more demanding manner and require thus quick responses and step-by-step clear communication. The sales strategy is thus very strict forward and proactive. In order to cope with the high demand on communication of the French customer, adaptation takes place to such a kind in order to listen more and give space that the customer have the possibility to express themselves. The sales strategy is considered as less proactive but with a higher emphasis on communication and negotiation (Zhang, 2016).

According to the respondent the sales process starts often by one key person of the client, who is responsible for the project. This person starts the communication with the company in order to gain information about the software solution. Nevertheless, the software itself will be used by the entire team of the client, so everyone involved have an influence on the project. Especially the IT department of the clients’ firm will at least evaluate the technical solution and is sometimes involved in the overall buying process. The clients’ IT department is thus considered as buyers as well by the supplier (Zhang, 2016).

4.4.2 Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships

Ongoing relationship with the clients is perceived in regards to the respondent as highly important. Although the company does not offer directly a customer loyalty program, to maintain long-term relationships is emphasized. It has been outlined that it is not only relevant to deliver a sufficient product. The ongoing involvement with the client has the objective to maintain satisfied clients and continue discussions after the sales. Especially Dutch clients are likely to continue the development and are interested in mutual growth. Other large customers take very much care about their suppliers. They know the correspondent strategy, evaluate the company and educate them. Nevertheless, the respondent referred those action less to culture and nationality, rather than to companies’ culture of the client. Keeping the relationship enables the company to obtain direct feedback on their services and technical solutions, that will be the basis for ongoing development. Relationships are maintained through personal visits, common
events, for example the so called Advisory Workshop and the presents on fairs and other events. A customer segmentation does not apply (Zhang, 2016).

Establishing long-term relations with the clients, also improved the recognition on the market. The first customer the company had, came through recommendation of mother companies’ clients, and the third one through recommendation within their internal network within the brand of the customer. According to the interviewee, networking works for sure. It is considered as most important and most efficient action within the specific industry. To establish well-recognized references is seen as a value for future sales and awareness at the specific market. The company have and use a CRM system as a tool to maintain customer relations. Nevertheless, as most important is considered the face- to face communication and direct communication by mail and telephone (Zhang, 2016).

4.4.3 Sales Management

The firm is focusing on one product, a Case Management System for anti-counterfeit solutions. In this framework the sales management have to be designed. The sales target is to get nine new clients in 2016, which are perceived as leading companies in their corresponding industry, that will be recognized as good reference on the market in the future. Thus, the selling focus is on large – leading companies on an international basis. Difficulties occur from the internal structure of large companies. The interviewee considers large companies as very complicated to handle and decision making process takes much longer time compared with less-leading companies (Zhang, 2016).

Selling technical solutions which are customized on the specific needs of the client involves a long development phase of two to three months with intense communication demands to evaluate clients’ needs and leading them into the right direction to find a specific technical solution. The sales process started on basis of marketing sources. The situation in which the customer finds the company on its own, has not happened yet (Zhang, 2016).

Marketing resources are references on the correlating market, presents and interaction at conferences and trade fairs and internet communication through marketing campaigns, email, websites and google adds. The presents at trade fairs and conferences is evaluated as best working as the contact towards the possible client is established personally and the customer get involved with the product directly. After the first contact the so called qualification process takes place. The actual need of the customer will be evaluated and investigated whether the technical solution suits the customer demand in his limited budget. Subsequently a demo will be provided, mostly as life demo directly at the clients’ place. Another way is the possibility to provide webinars. The respondent lined out that so far the personal face-to face communication and explanation within the framework of a demo works best and is in 80% of the cases provided. Subsequently the demo has shown, discussions and negotiations about the project takes place. The qualification phase is followed by the so called pre-study phase. Before the contract is signed the project has usually started at the clients’ site. The client has a 30 days’ free cancelation option. The system will be shown one more time, much more in detail as in the demonstration and questions of the customer will be answered. The product will be then adjusted and specified to the clients’ requirements. Before the contract is signed the customer will be evaluated through face-to-face communications, as such information are not able to be obtain online. A good structured contract between legal persons will insure mutual respect. Customers should be treated fairly and archive negotiated promises and the supplier should be paid fairly for the work conducted. After the configuration phase is conducted the product will be tested and implemented in the final working life (Zhang, 2016).

The division of the company is relative young. In 2008 the software started to be developed specifically for the first client. The development took almost three years. Since 2012 the
software is on the market. During the last four years the firm grew statically but slowly. In regards to the respondent, one of the main problem in the selling management is the limited human resource to reach the market target directly. The sales power is limited to 20-30 people gaining one to two clients at an event. Furthermore, direct sales are considered as really expensive. The company uses as well email marketing and provides their content on the website, but this has not been successful yet. On the other hand, the company have not lost a costumer. This might be also referred to the nature of the technical solution. Once the system has been implemented it is difficult to simply change to another system or simply stop using it (Zhang, 2016).

4.4.4 Salespeople Management

The team at the subdivision of the company consists basically out of five people, taking care about responsibilities in sales and marketing, system development and project development. An ideal sales person should be contributed with knowledge, contacts from the markets and have a selling positive characteristic. Ideally would be if the sales person already gained previously contacts in the target markets of the company for example as brand protection manager or successful lawyer and having insights in technical solutions. The career path will be not provided from the company in comparison as large companies do. The career establishment is an issue the employee takes care about himself. The company provides several possibilities for individual development and offers support of participation in certain workshops of the working field. The respondent has a background in legal issues, so that possibilities will be supported in participation in events about this subject. There is no fixed plan existing according to education. Nevertheless, a training for the entire company is offered at each kick-off events twice a year (Zhang, 2016).

The sales team has weekly meeting and the entire company monthly meetings in order to inform each other regarding the current situations within the company. The sales staff is important as they are the direct communicators with the client. Each client will be visit at least once before they will sign a contract. Existing customers will be meet at least once a year, either directly at their firm or at the events on conferences, fairs or further education. The sales staff divided responsibilities in accordance to existing and new prospects but do not split customers according to their region (Zhang, 2016).

The motivation of the sales professionals can be very different. One is the salary. The sales people obtain certain commissions connected to their salary. A further motivation factor is the style of the leader. Leaders should guide the sales people and provide them a perspective to the future of the individuals both career related and lifestyle related (Zhang, 2016).
5 Analysis

This chapter will elaborate the obtained empirical data, which were gathered through personal interviews in Brazil and Sweden. The chapter will combine and develop provided literature aspects given in chapter two in regards to personal selling in accordance to four focus areas in business-to-business: Cultural Aspects, Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships, Sales Management and Salespeople Management to find answers to the overall research question whether personal selling can influence and strengthen business-to-business relationships. The chapter will evaluate the four focus areas separately according to the country of collection, to arrive on a cross-national comparison and overall implication for companies that are active within the B2B framework.

In order to gain a first insight about the many aspects of the data collection, following tables are provided in reference to the country of the empirical data collection. The tables are separated to the four focus areas which have been the basis for the conduction of the semi-structures interviews. The tables are focusing on the main statements. The overall analysis is provided in the following sections.

Subsequently of the analysis of the four focus areas, implications to the regarded country will be given. The implications of the two countries will be then combined to provide answers to the overall research question, whether Personal Selling does strengthen B2B relations and which implications can be outlined for companies operating in the IT branch.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Cultural Aspects</th>
<th>Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships</th>
<th>Sales Management</th>
<th>Salespeople Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Company A** | Experience:  
- Cultural diversity in Brazil  
- All the differences identified  
- Brazilian regions with cultural peculiarities  
- Decision of purchase is decentralized  
**Adaptation:**  
- Correct conducts  
- Promotional material must be consistent  
**Factors for satisfaction:**  
- Loyalty Program  
- Interaction between customer and employees  
- Segmentation program  
- Customer satisfaction survey  
**Advantages:**  
- Personalized relationships  
- Recognition, commitment  
**Disadvantages:**  
- Expensive  
- Intangible  
**Sales Process:**  
- Salesforce divided into two groups: current and new customers  
- Weekly and monthly meetings  | **Difficult to operates abroad**  
- Small and mid sizes - focus  
- Investors intervention  
- Sales targets  
- Distribution of sales targets  
- Changes of sales strategy  
- Sales growth: 16-22% per year  
- Structured sales process  | **Sales Staff:**  
- Some basic skill requirements  
- Structured career plan  
- Training sales force  
- Interaction with all sellers  
**Sales Process:**  
- Salesforce divided into two groups: current and new customers  
- Weekly and quarterly meetings  |
| **Company B** | Experience:  
- Brazil - another level of maturity  
- Uncertainty - cases of current customers and free limited access to the platform  
- Decision of purchase is decentralized  
**Adaptation:**  
- Maturity of other Latin America countries = Brazil 4 years ago  
**Factors for satisfaction:**  
- No customer loyalty program  
**Advantages:**  
- Reputation  
- Good system that allow sales increase  
- Customer satisfaction survey  
- Monitoring of customer sales progress  
- Segmentation program  
**Advantages:**  
- Learning from the client  
- Personalized relationships  
- Commitment  
**Sales Process:**  
- Sales targets  
- Distribution of sales targets  
- Structured sales process  
- Cases and technological differentiation  
- Changes of sales strategy  
- 2500% of increased revenue on the last 5 years  | **Customers in Latin America**  
- Mid-size companies – focus  
- Sales targets  
- Distribution of sales targets  
- Structured sales process  
- Cases and technological differentiation  
- Changes of sales strategy  
- 2500% of increased revenue on the last 5 years  | **Sales Staff:**  
- Integrated department tour and real sales at the beginning  
- Specialized team  
- Motivation is not a company’s responsibility  
**Sales Process:**  
- Salesforce divided into two groups: current and new customers  
- Weekly and quarterly meetings  |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Σ Brazil</strong></th>
<th>Differences in regards to customers’ background has been found in general.</th>
<th>Company A have a customers’ loyalty program: Rewards are trainings, consulting, system extension; the customer gain thus knowledge about the product and create relationship with the company</th>
<th>Selling process should be structured which allows personal selling; thus possible to evaluated potential and needs of the customer and offer products to fulfill those needs</th>
<th>Sales People are perceived as representatives of the company and represent the customer to the company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences occur both in cross-border operation and nationally within the multi-cultural country Brazil</td>
<td>Loyalty is further related to admirable, good-quality products, recognition ad reputation on the market</td>
<td>Sales Strategy are change at least once a year</td>
<td>Important to establish relationship “People buy through people”; influencing directly the purchasing process</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples are outlined according to the differences of the Brazilian Market and Latin America; e-commerce is developed in Brazil, for Latin America rather new</td>
<td>Segmentation takes place in accordance to the size and potential revenue of the customer; further to willingness to create mutual relationship</td>
<td>Political factors may influence overall sales behavior</td>
<td>The ideal seller should have the ability in its characteristics and basic skills to conduct successful the mission. Especially technical knowledge is required</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Latin American Counties are less likely for changes; ERP solutions may modify all areas of companies’ operations; Communication can lower uncertainties and archive credibility</td>
<td>Commitment of the customer is perceived as highly important</td>
<td>Thus personal selling is implemented, sales performance can be managed directly.</td>
<td>The sales people bring direct market information into the company, thus regular meetings are held</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purchasing decision is decentralized; final decision is performed by on person</td>
<td>Through direct communication customized offers and learning possibilities from the client</td>
<td>Even when maintaining a wide spread of different customers’ size, focus on one segment is recommended</td>
<td>Enables the possibility to understand customers’ specific demand and learn from the customer and understand market demands</td>
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Strengthen B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies.

### Salespeople Management

#### Sales Staff:
- Technical skills required to provide technical complex solutions
- Responsible for evaluation of customer demand, communication, establish business relationships with clients and transfer of market information to the company
- Regular visits with the customers
- Provision of volunteer career path
- International in-house training
- Regular meeting; information

### Sales management

- Marketing action referred to market attraction
- Customer contacts company
- Direct sales line, handling in corresponding language and shortest distance to the client
- Segmentation according product and place of the customer
- Focus on the entire market with large product range

### Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships

**Factors for satisfaction:**
- High quality, reliable product, product range that fulfill customer demand, good support
- Product development according clients and market demand
- Experience through conducted projects
- Market attraction

**Advantages:**
- References and recognition at the market
- Mission through networking
- Learning from the client
- Joint development of products

### Cultural Aspects

#### Communication:
- Different demand on personal communication
- Different acceptance to use non-personal communication tools
- DK + GB high demand

**Experience:**
- Local offices; diversified employees
- Correspondence in referred language
- Representatives at local markets
- Face-to-face communication

#### Adaptation:
- Correspondence in referred language
- Representatives at local markets
- Face-to-face communication

#### Working habits:
- GER require detailed working plan

**Experience:**
- Face-to-face meeting; diversified employees

#### Adaptation:
- Sales strategy - proactive vs. more communication and negotiation

### Sweden

#### Company C

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<th>Communication:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Different demand on personal communication</td>
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<td>• Different acceptance to use non-personal communication tools</td>
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<td>• DK + GB high demand</td>
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<th>Adaptation:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Correspondence in referred language</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Representatives at local markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Face-to-face communication</td>
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</tbody>
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### Company D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• FR high demand internal+ external to involve all people of the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NL After-Sales communication desirable</td>
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<tr>
<th>Working habits:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• GER require detailed working plan</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Face-to-face meeting; diversified employees</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptation:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sales strategy - proactive vs. more communication and negotiation</td>
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</table>

### Table 3 Analysis Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Cultural Aspects</th>
<th>Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships</th>
<th>Sales management</th>
<th>Salespeople Management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company C</td>
<td>Communication:</td>
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<td>Factors for satisfaction:</td>
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<td>Advantages:</td>
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<td>Sales strategy - proactive vs. more communication and negotiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing action referred to market attraction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customer contacts company</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct sales line, handling in corresponding language and shortest distance to the client</td>
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<td>Segmentation according product and place of the customer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on the entire market with large product range</td>
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<th>Company D</th>
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<td>Advantages:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales strategy - proactive vs. more communication and negotiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing resources based on reference and awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct communication with interested clients takes mainly place at trade fairs, conferences and workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need for product attraction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structured sales process, requirement for international operating large-companies</td>
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<tr>
<td>One product focusing on large-companies; market-leaders to increase awareness</td>
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<th>Sales Staff:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Technical skills required to provide technical complex solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsible for evaluation of customer demand, communication, establish business relationships with clients and transfer of market information to the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular visits with the customers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provision of volunteer career path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International in-house training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular meeting; information</td>
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| Technical skills knowledge about the market |
| Support for education but no career plan |
| Regular workshops |
| ∑ Sweden                     | • Significant difference in communication preferences; working habits expectation on the supplier  
|                             | • Experience through doing business and direct communication at referred markets  
|                             | • Not to be generalized; no general rules  
|                             | • Depending on individual experience  
|                             | • Detailed explanation to lower uncertainty  
|                             | • Internal transfer of cross-national information for business and product development  
|                             | • Sales staff direct communicator; responsible to evaluate the demand of the customer and adaption to clients’ behavior | • No direct loyalty program; natural loyalty through products characteristic  
|                             | • Emphasis on personal face-to-face communication  
|                             | • Long-term business relation  
|                             | • Regular interaction with existing clients and new prospects  
|                             | • Customized technical solution need personal communication, education of the client and sales people  
|                             | • Personal selling most expensive, but most effective interaction with client | • Important right choice of communication channel and method  
|                             | • Selling Process on basis of preliminary marketing actions  
|                             | • Purchaser might not the consumer or user of the system  
|                             | • Personal selling is the only communication tool that focus on face-to-face communication  
|                             | • Different effect of online marketing due to the product and customer characteristic  
|                             | • Customized solutions require long-term business involvement with the client  
|                             | • Sales target clearly defined | • Sales people = main important representatives  
|                             | • Ideal Sales Person should have: selling-mind character, knowledge about product and market, work independently and provide suitable technical solutions  
|                             | • Regular education recommended  
|                             | • Regular meetings and information provision  
|                             | • Feedback = Motivation  
|                             | • Direct market information through sales staff |
5.1 Analysis Brazil

The empirical data was obtained through the conduction of two interviews by Skype with IT companies from Brazil. Although the companies are from Santa Catarina state, they are different according to the size and product. Company A was established in 1988 and provides management systems with expertise in 13 segments for all size companies, due to their portfolio of standardized and embedded solutions. The market experience of Company A resulted in 10000 customers, more than 90000 active contracts and 1270 employees, allowing them to be recognized as one of the largest IT companies in Brazil. On the other hand, Company B was established in 2009 and provide solutions in e-commerce personalization for medium and large companies. Pioneer on the area in Brazil, 7 of 10 largest e-commerce companies are their clients, and 95% of the online consumers already accessed their platforms.

5.1.1 Cultural Aspects

Matsumoto (Culture, context and behavior, 2007) defines culture as an information system transmitted across generations that allow a group to achieve a viable existence and to transmit social behaviors. Both companies identified differences according to certain regions of operation. Interviewee B emphasized that the maturity of electronic commerce in Brazil is higher than other countries in Latin America. This difference can be explained according to the culture of purchasing that started earlier in Brazil, being common faster than other neighboring countries. Then is easy to identify that the customers’ cultural aspects define the market behavior.

Referring to Kotler et.al. (2016, p. 129), “every group or society has a culture, and cultural influences on buying behavior can vary greatly not only from country to country, but also within countries, and failure to adjust to these differences can result in ineffective marketing or embarrassing mistakes”. This definition fits perfectly on cultural issues facing by Company A. Brazil is a multi-cultural country due to its size and a software management company must to be completely aware of these particularities to be successful. Company B does not have the same problem in Brazil because solutions for e-commerce are generally easier to sell due to its lower complexity compared to an ERP software, for example.

The uncertainty avoidance prevails on Latin America countries. Referring to Luthar & Luthar (Using Hofstede's cultural dimensions to explain sexually harassing behaviors in an international context, 2002), individuals in high uncertainty avoidance countries are emotionally resistant to change. Because platforms for electronic commerce are new for the other Latin America countries, Company B must to argue more and spend much more effort to demonstrate its credibility than in Brazilian market, which already has a consolidated e-commerce market. The same happens with Company A. As mentioned before, besides the high investment, a management software impacts and might modify all the areas’ processes of a company.

According to Migliore (2011), societies high in collectivism have a people-group view for unquestioning loyalty. Decentralized purchase decisions then define Latin America countries as collectivist countries. Even though the final decision is performed by one person, it has to be approved by the people who will use the system. Doole & Lowe (2012) also argue that almost all developed countries tend to rate high on both collectivism and power distance. Despite Latin America countries being considered underdeveloped or in development – as Brazil – countries, is easy to identify that the power distance is also included on purchase decision, because several employees freely give their opinions regarding to a new purchase.

5.1.2 Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships

Referring Fill & McKee (2012), the business market comprises many types and sizes of organizations that interact selectively and form relationships with one another. Besides
focusing in certain sizes, both companies have customers of many sizes. Company A increased even more the interaction with customers offering “The Customer’s Week”, enabling customers to show their opinion about the service and product.

Company A has a structured and successful loyalty program, where customers feel motivated to participate. They can acquire trainings, consulting services, system expansions and monthly payment discounts. “Satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal customers and to give the company a larger share of their business” (Fill & McKee, 2012, p. 19). To gain points, companies have to recommend Company A as well as allow and receive possible new customers visits in their structure. Kotler et. al. (2016) emphasizes that delighted customers remain loyal and talk favorably to others about the company and its products. They also provide cases and testimonials. Company B does not have a loyalty program. Interviewee B argue that an admirable and good-quality system that brings positive results for the customers already turn them loyal. Satisfied customers recognize and admit the reputation of Company B. Kotler et. al. (2016) defines that high levels of customer satisfaction lead to great customer loyalty. In accordance, both companies apply customer surveys in order to verify and monitoring the level of customer satisfaction.

Applying segmentation, the company can reach more customers by developing a broader range of offers, it can get more satisfied customers due to the offers structured in accordance with the preferences of a particular segment and it can be more profitable, since customers are willing to pay higher prices for products that fit with their needs and wants (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016). Both companies implemented the segmentation program in order to offer personalized services. Company B categorized the customers according to the potential of revenue whereas Company A segmented using more factors as potential of revenue, size and the willingness in create and develop mutual relationship.

Both companies recognize the importance of commitment. Interviewee A emphasizes that if the client is not satisfied, probably will not be committed to help the supplier when necessary. Park, et al. (2012) conceptualize relationship commitment as the representation of the highest level of connection among participating parties and refers to how deeply organizations or individuals are involved in a relationship and the extent to which they maintain the relationship over a long period. Company B has committed customers because of their specialized team that monitoring the customers’ sales performance. Interviewee B also discuss that with this program, the supplier can learn from the client and then is able to develop a more personalized product that meets their expectations.

5.1.3 Sales Management
In order to maintain competitive advantage, companies should develop structured and challenging sales strategy. IT companies, as all of the technological companies, have to be updated according to the market demands. Thus, both companies change or improve their sales strategy at least once a year. Many factors as strategic planning, development of new products, investment in startups, new competitors, new competitive products can change the strategy focus. Furthermore, Brazil is facing an economic crisis due to the government’s bad administration, and it is being a challenge to maintain a company alive on this situation.

Related to sales strategy, another factor that has to be taken into account is sales targets. Regarding to sales targets definitions, both Brazilian companies use sales information of previous years to define the next one. Company A has another challenging factor that impact the definition of sales targets. Whether investors valuate the balance sheet and realize that the return of investments is low, probably they will change their strategy investing in banks or stock. Thus, Company A has to adapt the sales targets according to their expectations and
requirements. Regarding the distribution of targets, both companies base on sellers’ performance. Because of the size of the company, the Brazilian market and the complexity of the several systems, Company A also base on the region’s purchase power and the type of system to define the distribution of sales targets.

Both companies have structured sales stages which allow personal selling to clearly understand and follow the phases of contact new customers, identify their potential and their needs, demonstrate the products and negotiate in order to perform the sales. With these stages implemented, managers can control and clearly identify eventual issues regarding the customer satisfaction, wrong procedures and bad seller performance.

At the beginning, Company B aimed to gain market share of large companies. The sales strategy suffered changes because they perceived that almost all of the largest Latin America e-commerce companies were current clients. Thus, they decided to change the market focus to mid-size companies in order to extended the market share and maintain their revenue and profitability. Although Company A has all size customers, they are focusing on small/medium size Brazilian companies. In fact, is a great opportunity to extend the market share, due to the fact that Brazil englobe almost 17 million small/medium size companies at the moment (IBPT, 2016). However, explore the market abroad can be a challenge because products from Company A are more complex due to the adaptation of local laws. In this case, the difference between the products from Company A and B is that Company B does not have to adapt so much their product to fits on customer’s needs as a management software from Company A is required. Thus, this is the reason that Company B has customers from different countries and have more facility to sell the product in Brazil.

The idea of e-commerce personalization was quite new in Latin America in 2009. Thus, this can explain the incredible revenue growth in the last 5 years – 2500%, compared to 2009. Company A also has good results regarding sales growth - between 16 to 22% per year – and probably the acquisition of the other two companies impacted on this growth.

5.1.4 Salespeople Management
Salespeople represent the company to customers and, at the same time, also represent the customers to the company. Therefore, customers may become loyal to salespeople as well as to the companies and products they represent (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, 2016). Respondent-A (2016) explains that often customer buys a product not only for the reason of being the best product but because of the gratitude and recognition, and it is through relationship that the sale takes place. "People buy through people. Companies buy from companies, but the decision to purchase happens through person to person" (Respondent-A, 2016). In fact, interaction is a factor that companies appreciate and makes the difference in a purchasing time.

An important aspect is that sales people must have intimate product/service knowledge and domain to carry out their job (Chunawalla, Sales Management With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009). In fact, on the manager’s opinion, a seller must be optimistic, determined, disciplined to know how to manage the sales correctly, and be able to hold a sale with the knowledge to argue, listen and behave as reliable and admirable professional. These basic skills are appreciable for a good seller.

Salespeople can examine customers’ attitudes in order to learn more about their problems and then adjust the marketing offer to fit the special needs of each customer. (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, 2016). Thus, Company B has a specialized team that monitor the customer sales process and this interaction enable mutual learning and commitment.
Monitoring sales improve and develop the sales timing and process. For this reason, both companies do weekly meetings to verify how is the situation of the sales and also monthly and quarterly for a managerial perspective. Respondent-A (2016) also emphasizes that the knowledge acquired by the salespeople is extremely important, because they can also share experiences and learn with the others. This kind of procedure enable companies to increase and improve the sales process.

Regarding to sales teams, both companies structured 2 sales groups. The first one is responsible for new customer sales whereas the other one is focused on current customer sales. The main reason to have people only focused on current customers is because the sales of other systems can be facilitated due to the fact that they already know the supplier and the quality of the products and services.

Improve the knowledge of the salespeople is an important action towards the quality of sales service. Both companies presented integration procedures and trainings that enable new employees to immerse and be aware of the companies’ products, services, politics and values. Because of the experience and size, Company A also has a Commercial Certification, one program with training packages that is updated bimonthly and enable the professional to know the complete portfolio and then be successful on sales (Respondent-A, 2016). The same occurs on career plan. Company B has growth career opportunities but does not have a structured career plan.
5.2 Analysis Sweden

The empirical data was obtained through the conduction of two face-to-face interviews with companies from Sweden. Both companies are active within the IT sector, although they offer different products and services. Further the size of the companies is different to each other. Company C provides physical products for industrial communication usages with integrated software. The firm provided both standardized products and turnkey solutions for their clients. During the last 28 years, the company grew significantly to a large-size company operating on a global basis, represented in 10 countries with local offices and active through distributors in 50 countries. Company D on the contrary is smaller than then Company C. The evaluated subdivision is active since 2007 and has still to be considered within their start-up phase. The subdivision offers basically one specific product. The company provides their clients with technical solutions and software for anti-counterfeit handling purposes. Both companies have their headquarters in Halmstad Sweden and operate on an international basis. The companies have experience on the European and Asia Market. The focus on the target customers diverging as well. Whereas Company C has the objective to provide their products to any kind of customers, Company D mainly focuses on large-size customers which are perceived as market leaders in the corresponding specific market.

5.2.1 Cultural Aspects

Referring to Kotler et.al. (2016), culture is the basic determinant of customers’ wants that serves directly consumer behavior. Both companies state significant differences of behavior of their clients in regards to their cultural background. Respondent D explained that, “different nationalities have different ways of handling things”. Cultural differentiation has in the perception of the respondents an impact on preference on communication, working habits and demand on operation of the supplier.

Through the conducted interviews it was possible to gain an insight of the perception towards the impact of clients’ culture within real business. It has been stressed out, that cultural differences do not only occur in business relation with far-east countries. The impact of culture is also noticed between neighbor countries, for example within the Nordic Countries. Respondent C provided an insight on the differences between Sweden and Denmark. Within the European Countries huge differences in the way of doing business and the referred perception of the suppliers’ action exists. It can be thus affirmed that social and cultural factors influence the consumer and buyer behavior. In comparison to Doole and Lowe (2012), differences in social conditions and respective culture affect consumers’ perception and pattern of buying behavior. Company C provided in the interview an insight of the different demand of personal communication with the supplier and the perception of clients’ willingness to use their non-personal technical support tool. Through the provided support tool, it is possible to send problems in the form of logs directly to the supplier directly through the system or by email. The system is accepted by clients in Sweden and Germany but unfavorable in Denmark and England as the customer demand to communicate with the supplier personally. Respondent C stress out the perception that Danish and English customers have a higher demand for personal communication with the supplier. It is explained that differences become even larger when operating businesses with customers in Asia. Respondent D provided an insight of the different perception of working habits toward clients’ country of origin. Examples of German, French and Dutch clients were provided. German customers are perceived to have a more demanding manner. The customers like to have an in-detail clarified and specified plan. Each working step has to be described and negotiated in advance. The French customers are perceived as less specific to each planning step but with a higher demand on communication both internally and externally. Dutch customers distinguish as well from other clients. The customer emphasizes on ongoing communication and collaborative development even after the successful implementation of the technical solution.
The perception of different cultural behavior is basically learned through doing business. Both companies stated, even if cultural differences exist, one should not generalize too much either. Each customer has its individual demand and need for his specific solution. Thus there are official no fixed rules within the companies. Company C experiences cultural differences mainly through business operations in the several countries and experience by their employees in the corresponding local offices in the foreign countries. Company D obtain their intercultural experience through business operation in the past and humble handling of their clients. Both respondents stated the importance of the face-to-face communication through the sales staff with the customer in order to evaluated specific demand and expectation on the supplier.

It can be summarized that the experience and awareness of cultural differences with the correspondent business behavior, depending basically on individual experience, obtained within daily business operations in the several countries and on values and cultural background of companies’ employees.

Referring to Doole & Lowe (2012), social and cultural influences create a cultural identity, which have influence on the decision-making process when buying products. It has been outlined that in order to succeed at a certain market, attitudes about the way of doing business have to adapted to market characteristics (Doole & Lowe, International Marketing Strategy: analysis, development and implementation, 2012). The way of doing business should be not only referred to the operation of the business, further to the entire value chain, from adapted Marketing, Sales, Communication and Support. Company C and Company D adapted those characteristics to the preferences of the client. At Company C the correspondent local offices are responsible for the communication with the client, whereby the communication method is chosen in regards to the preference of the customer by e-mail, telephone, personal support and face-to-face meetings in the corresponding language of the client. Such a wide adaptation assumes the capability of human resources within the company, which is more likely to be given at a large company than at a small company. Nevertheless, adaptation of handling the customers and communication method can be adapted regardless of the size of the company. Company D, adapted as well the sales strategy according to the perceived cultural circumstances of the client. As the German customer is perceived as more demanding and with a high uncertainty avoidance, as one dimension of cultural differentiation according to Hofstede (2005), the sales strategy is conducted rather strict forward in a proactive manner with quick response time to customers’ requests. In difference to French customer, where interaction is stated as less proactive but with a higher demand on communication, negotiation and time for expressing and explaining the actual demand of the customer by himself.

In addition to the external communication with the client, Company C explained the importance of the internal cross-country communication in accordance to develop products that fulfill market demands and customers’ needs. It is expressed, that especially when the product development is centralized, the different customer demands have to collected internationally and transferred internally from the sales staff to the product development.

As the example from company D showed, the acceptance of uncertainty in the purchasing process is different to the members of a culture. According to Hofstede, uncertainty avoidance is defined as “the extent to which members of a culture fell threatened by unknown situations” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 403). In the example from company D, French clients are perceived as less demanding of an in-detail plan and negotiations in advance, whereas experience with German clients showed the need for a specified plan to nearly all circumstance. As it is known that customers have different needs in the purchasing process, different perception of uncertainty avoidance have to be taken into considerations. Both respondents referred uncertainties of the client mainly to technical issues, as the technical solutions are highly advance and sometimes difficult to understand. The attempt to lower the level of
uncertainties is thus information and explanation. The respondent of company D highlights the importance of ongoing communication from the beginning onwards, adapted in regards to the origin of the client. Uncertainties occur mainly when situations are unknown. This might be also related to the understanding of how a new system will be work. The customer need to understand the several implementation steps and how the system will work in their specific business environment. Likewise, the supplier has to understand the specific demand of the client. Therefor additional education for the customer is required. Both companies offer a kind of education and knowledge transfer for their clients on their products. The sales people provide in addition their clients with experience from previous conducted similar projects and are able to explain how technical solution works for other clients. In order that sales people are able to provide and explain technical advance solutions, a high demand on technical knowledge is a requirement, as well as continuous internal education. It has been further stated in regards to respondent D that a balanced contract should be understood as basis for the business collaboration.

In accordance to conduct a successful communication with the client in the sales process, it has to be understood who the client is, whether it is a single purchaser or an entire team that decides for a certain solution. Both companies described that the communication starts usually with one key person, but that in the overall purchasing process many people are involved. In the case of Company C, the technical solution has been often chosen by the clients’ Research and Development Team in order to solve a specific technical communication problem. In the case of Company D, as a provider of a customized software, the IT department is involved as well and will evaluated the offered solution. Thus, the company consider all involved people within the sales process as customers too. Company C, stressed out that the one who actually purchases a product or service might not the one who selected the product and company. Taking the aspect of uncertainty avoidance into account, education and coaching have to apply for all of the users and decision maker.

5.2.2  Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships
Business to Business Relationships are characterized by often complex structures. According to the description of Gummesson (2014), within B2B connections suppliers are highly specialized and relations are often established on basis of negotiated tenders and contracts, customized with required specifications. Selling drivers are first of all reputation, quality and ability to deliver a certain product, solution or service (Gummesson, 2014).

Both investigated Swedish companies do not offer directly a customer loyalty program. Nevertheless, even in the view that the offered products of the two companies are different, they have one characteristic in common – the companies provide a technical solution, customized and implemented at the clients’ system, which is rather unlikely to change once it is successful implemented. In the nature of the product characteristic it is thus established a natural loyalty with the client. Nevertheless, the decision for a rebuy, is depending on quality of the products according to customer needs, ability to fulfill requirements of the customers and provide sufficient after-sales support. In accordance to the respondent of Company C, the reason to purchase a rebuy of the client is referred to a high quality and reliable products, a product range that fulfill the needs of the customers and market demand and good support. Both companies are focusing on long-term relationship with their customers, which is an essential in their overall business strategy. At company D, so far none of the business relations has been terminated. This desirable circumstance might occur due to the relative short establishment of the subdivision. Company C had some terminations of customer relation. Those were mainly referred to changes of technical issues, when changes in customer requirements change or the customer decides to produce the communication solution with their own resources.
According to Fill & McKee (2012), the quality of the relationship and the manner of communications influence buying decisions. A trustworthy and mutual supportive relationship based in long-term interaction is seen to establish cooperative and constructive customer relationships (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012). Both evaluated Swedish companies are focusing on after-sales relationship with their customers. The ongoing engagement provides the companies with direct market information, which are essential to understand a certain market, gain information for future business and product development and maintain satisfied clients. In regards to the respondent D, through continued discussions with the client it is possible to obtain direct feedback from the client, on whose basis companies’ services and technical solutions can be improved. In considerations that the clients are international large companies with respective international knowledge, the supplier obtain so the ability for ongoing development and learning possibilities from the client. In this way a mutual supportive business relationship can establishes. The possibility to learn from the customer is nevertheless not considered to the culture background, rather than to the company culture of the client. Also Company C gain experience within the business relation with their clients. Successful implemented solutions are a reference for future customers. The respondents of Company C and D emphasized on the benefit of maintain customer relations in B2B business. Through business engagement, the company receive market information from their clients and gain the possibility to establish recognition at the specific market, while establishing references for successful conducted projects. Positive market recognition and satisfied customers may be the basis for future mission from other customers within the market. According to respondent D, networking definitely works, especially within the industrial IT sector.

Both companies use a CRM system. Nevertheless, as most important resource is considered the sales staff, as they have direct personal contact with the client, and thus the possibility and ability to evaluate customers’ needs and specific market demands.

5.2.3 Sales Management

The sales process primarily focusing on techniques how a sales process is conducted in the most efficient way. Through the case evaluation it became clear that the actual sales process stats much earlier in the method of the right choice of the communication with the future or existing client and is thus based on marketing resources in regards with the specific business environment. Further, the sales process should incorporate who the customer is and on which customer segment to focus using the right sales channel. In this regard the sales target has to be defined.

As previous stated, the B2B market is characterized by its complexity, specialized supplier and customers with a much more complicated decision making approach in their purchases. Further it has to be taken into consideration that the actual purchaser is not the consumer of the final product. According to Fill & McKee (2012) diverse marketing strategies and operations are required to reach and meet the needs of the business customer. The B2B market is characterized by fewer but larger buyers. As the cases showed often customers operate on an international and global basis. Reputation and creating mutual trust is in this view a requirement for business collaboration. The more complex selling situation requires a higher scope of communication. Personal selling is hereby the only communication tool that focuses on the face-to-face communication. Through the direct communication the special needs of the customer can be addressed more detailed to fulfilling a certain demand. In addition, it has to be evaluated who is the decision maker for the purchase.

Both Swedish companies refer Marketing actions to the attraction of the company at the specific market. Company D refer their Marketing resources on gained reference and awareness from previous projects. The direct communication with interested companies takes mainly place at
trade fairs, interactions at conferences, different kinds of events and provided workshops and sometimes even road shows, as Company C carry out in Norway. Those interactions are often the point of the first contact of the becoming customer with the future supplier. Nevertheless, the first interaction may not only generalize to personal involvement. Company D has a highly advanced solution for one specific demand, to improve anti-counterfeit handling. This solution demand on the first hand side to gain market attraction and on the second hand detailed explanation to understand the core of the offered system. Customers of Company C often already know that they have a certain demand for a technical communication solution and contact the company thus directly. The first contact between the business partners can be different. This might be also explaining the different effect of online marketing and the way of the contact from customers towards the supplier. Due to the fact that customers of Company C are already aware of their demand, they search directly for matching solutions and use often also provided online material, whereas in the case of Company D the customers have first to be attracted and gain an understanding for the improvement for their business through the offered solution of the supplier. Generally personal business interaction through trade fair presents, events and workshops provides the possibilities to learn about clients’ specific problems and enables the company to provide a more customized offer. Despite of, the online presents in the corresponding language of the target customers is a hygiene factor today. It is important for the online appearance of the company and have to considered as one part of the overall marketing actions.

Clients of Company C can contact the company directly, either by calling to a known sales representative or through a special sales line or by email requests. The sales line uses a system that connects the client with the sales person who have been free at longest. The company divides their customers according their region and the demanded product. The firm distinguishes between Regular Sales and Advanced Sales of more complicated technical solutions that cannot be solved with standard products. Communication is provided in the respective language of the client. The first contact with the client of Company D is mainly established on interaction through trade fairs, events and webinar. In contrast to Company C, customers have to especially attracted to the rather new technical solution for anti-counterfeiting. The evaluated subdivision of Company D, mainly provides one core product and has thus no need to differentiate according to the provided product. Even if the subdivision is operated on its own responsibility, there should be a proper link between the mother company and the subdivision. In regards to the customer target, which is defined as international operating companies, the online appearance is recommended to be provided also in English language. Actually the web page of the mother company can be found in Swedish only. The link to the subdivision for ant-counterfeit solution cannot be found without directly searching for it. The communication with the client is separated to new customers and existing customers.

Both companies described that advanced technical solutions have often to be customized according to the working conditions and requirements of the customer and demand therefor an establishment of long-term business involvement. For such business collaborations, personal selling is considered as a necessity and considered as most effective while establishing the business relation. Both Swedish companies described the need for intense communication with the client during the entire process of the product development, implementation and after-sales communication. Customized systems involve long-term customer relations.

The experience of the Swedish respondent provided the insight that sales process of technical solutions and customized software are projects in itself. Also with the view to the clients, which are international large companies with their internal company structure, a certain process of both the purchase and several communication steps are recommended and partly a requirement of international operating customers.
Through the conducted interviews it was able to obtain an insight in the structured sales process in real business. The Swedish companies focus both on direct communication through face-to-face communication for their advanced technical products. After the establishment of the first contact, which has been described previously, the sales person evaluates the specific demand and customers’ problem to find a solution that fulfills clients’ needs. Simultaneously the company evaluates to some extend the customer itself as one part of the overall sales process. The investigation of the customer is often done through direct communication with the client. Respondent D expressed, *that information is not available online.* Referring to Kotler (2016), Sales people are confronted with complex selling situations and can examine customer to learn about their specific problems and provide products and services that fulfill the special needs of each customer. The companies, expressed, towards the personal communication, the ability of the sales person. In order to be able to provide the most efficient product and solution for the client, the sales staff have to have accordingly technical education and skills. After the companies found out a specific solution for the client, the idea and functions have to be communicated to the client. The client has to become attracted to the solution in order to make the purchase in the end. The cases showed that the communication focus might be different. Whereas the customers of Company C already know their demand, but need a customized technical communication solution, clients of Company D, has first to be attracted of the provided software that handle their communication and information in a more efficient way. In order to understand the specific need of the customer, face-to-face is demanded and communication, experience of the supplier to educate the customer. Workshops and Demo Versions are working communication tools in addition to the personal handling of the client. The negotiation and evaluation of the clients is regarded to the *qualification process* within the sales process. The companies investigate the problem of the client, their ability to fulfill clients’ needs and evaluate the capability of the customer. After the scope of work is negotiated, in detail information and collaboration with the client takes place. The price of tasks to conduct is negotiated at this stage. According the contracting, respondent D explained that a balanced contract is to be seen as basis of the positive long-term collaboration with the business partner. The structure of the contract should be balanced and negotiated promises from the supplier side should be fulfilled in time. On the counterpart the client should pay the supplier in time in accordance to the missions’ process.

When focusing only on the sales, the process would terminate at this stage. Nevertheless, taking into consideration ongoing purchasing of technical customizing projects for the clients, one has to take the following project steps as well into consideration. After the scope of work is negotiated the client get an in-detail explanation of the product. The client gets provided with additional education and coaching according to the specific product, which will be developed and implemented especially for the customer. Once the solution is developed, it will be implemented and tested on-site at the clients and customized to the working environment. Subsequently the product is successful implemented the communication with the client proceeds to obtain direct information of the function and further improvements for the product.

Conducting the sales process, it is important to have a view to the overall sales target. The sales target should be measurable and achievable. The target should include statements of how many new customers are planned to achieve within a given time and from which customer segment the client should be. In accordance to the size of the company the amount of new and existing customers may differ very much. Company C likes to obtain 70 new customers on a three-month basis. It as to taken into considerations that eight of 10 customers demand standardized products. 20 % of the customers are related to the so named “Complicated Sales” that demand customized technical solutions that are not standard products. Those customers are usually large-size international clients. In comparison, Company D plan to gain 9 new customers in
2016. Taking in consideration the limited human resource to target the market and the focus to
gain leading large-size companies in their markets the target can be estimated as realistic.

Company C reached a steadily increase of sale by 18-20% in the last 5 years. The sales strategy
has not change, but adjusted to new circumstance of the extension of the product range.
Company D lined out a static but slow growth, but no recessions. The sales strategy is focusing
on large-size clients which are difficult to target and demand a huge time span, before sales
are conducted. The sales target has not changed yet, but there are considerations to change the
focus to less leading companies in order to receive a faster revenue. The reason to focus on
large-size leading companies is related to the market recognition and establishment of positive
references in different markets. In distinction from Company D, clients from Company C
focusing on the entire market, from the one-man company to large-size global operating
companies, but with a wide range of products, reaching from standardized products until
advanced turnkey solutions.

5.2.4 Salespeople Management

Sales people are the main important representatives of the company towards the customer and
likewise also vis-a-verse. Through the direct communication customers may become loyal to
salespeople and represented company on basis of the provided products that fulfill their need
in the most sufficient way (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016). A successful sales person must have a selling-minded character
and provide the client with knowledge about specific solution (Chunawalla, Sales Management
With Personal Selling - Salesmanship, 2009). The evaluated Swedish companies refer exactly
to those attributes of an ideal sales person. The seller should be able to interact with the
customer independently and evaluated referring demand in order to provide a suitable solution.
In order to carry out this task the sales person need to have the required education and
knowledge about the specification of products and from the respective market. Company C first
of all require a high degree of technical skills from their sales staff, in order to be able to explain
and provide technical complex systems to the client independently from the product manager.
Company D wish that the sales person has prior knowledge from the respectively target market.
Through the related contacts of a seller the company is able to extend their network and obtain
customers of their interest. Further, specific prior knowledge regarding the product is an
advantage, both from the side of the technology and experience of the product specifics, for
example within product protection law or within brand protection.

As the employees of the companies are considered as most critical component of the business
operation, employees need to be motivated, continuously skilled and involved in the overall
business process. Company C generates 87% of their sales revenue through direct sales and
Company D almost the entire revenue.

According to Kotler (2016) top sales people are excellent problem solvers and relationship
builders. The Swedish companies consider especially the direct contact to the client as highly
important. The personal contact enables the evaluation of the demand and market condition.
The cases showed that sales people are perceived as important both to sell the products of a
company and gain and transfer market information into the company, which is considered as
important for ongoing business development and product development. The sales staff
communicates regularly with the clients. At Company C, the sales people should be at the client
three days in a week, visiting two to three clients per day. The demand of visits should, in
regards to interviewee C, take into consideration clients demand for meetings. Within the
qualification process, Company C divides their clients according to the demand of the product
and region to provide the best and most efficient service. Company D visit at least one time
the customer before the contract is signed. Customers are differentiated according to existing once
and new prospects, but not according to their region.
In order to provide vast technical solutions and meet ongoing changes in the technical development, employees of the company need to continuously skilled. As large size firm, Company C provides a career path. Even if not a fixed plan of career development exists, a certain idea of several steps to skill the employees is in mind. Usually a sales person starts at a Junior Inside Sales position and get trained and receive knowledge to conduct an outside sales position. The company provides also in-house training and international experience through internal exchange programs within their network. In contrast, Company D has no concrete career path for their employees and no fixed education plan. The career is established by the employees themselves. Nevertheless, the company provides possibilities to participate in workshops and support individual education of the employees in accordance their working field. The entire company participates regularly on workshops, twice a year at the kick-off events. It might be evaluated whether additional training on a regular basis should be provided to the employees on a volunteer basis. Company C provides possibilities for sales training for their staff, which is voluntarily as long as the sales target is reached. According to Chunawalla (2009) more training demands less time to learn on basis of experience. In addition to training, continuously exchange of information within the company provides further knowledge for the employees to offer improved solutions to their clients. Experience made from previous projects may help in conducting future missions. Company C have regular meetings on a two-weeks basis and Company D meets each week with the sales staff.

To maintain employees’ satisfaction at the company, the staff need a certain motivation. Motivation can be provided through provision of transparent information policy that the individual person understands himself as integrated part of the company. In the opinion of respondent C, it is especially important for the sales team, as they are mostly outside the office but provide the company with important information from the market. Motivation is in regards to interviewee C also connected with regular feedback, both positive and negative. The importance of the communication of the leader with the employee is also outlined by respondent D. A positive leader should provide the employee with perspectives. A certain monetary motivation in the form of sales commission is perceived as motivating factor as well.

5.3 Cross-National Comparison

As respondent D lined out “different nationalities have different ways of handling things”. The evaluation of the case studies from companies in Brazil and Sweden provided a deep insight in business operation and the importance to personal selling for Business-to-Business operating companies.

Comparing the countries Brazil and Sweden, already the size is significant different. Brazil is a wide county and highly diversified. Cultural differences occur thus to the several regions within the country itself. Referring Sweden to Brazil, the country would be rather appearing as a region than as a country. Through the evaluation of the case studies it has been shown that regardless of the country of operation, cultural differences have to perceived as important influencing factor on business operation and establishment of business relation.

For both countries it is similar that Marketing, Sales Strategy and Customer Support has to be adapted to clients’ demands and perception. In evaluation of Brazil and Sweden has been found out that in both countries the usage of the communication tool of personal selling enabled the evaluation towards customers’ needs and desires and their perception towards the supplier. On this basis it is possible to adapt the communication with the client, also in regards with the corresponding language, provide offers according to customer and market demands, adapt sales strategy and establish on basis of mutual collaboration long-term business relations.
In order to succeed at a certain business collaboration at a specific market, it has to be evaluated who the client is. According to the regarded customers’ needs and business operation, business operations have to be adjusted. The decision making process is different in Brazil and Sweden. Whereas the entire decision making process within the sales process is decentralized in Sweden, in Brazil the final decision is made by the owner of the company or president, nevertheless on basis of decentralized propositions. Knowledge about the specific market of operation is estimated as basis for operating business. Whereas the Western European countries are to some extend similar, the difference between Brazil and Latin America is much larger. Brazil is in comparison much more acquainted in electronic commerce than other countries of Latin America. In evaluation of the Swedish cases cultural differences are related to preferences on communication, working habits and expectation on the supplier. Specially to communicate with the client in the corresponding language is important for the intensive communication while offering technical advance products. Those products require intense communication in order that the client can formulate their need and the supplier can customize a solution that solves clients’ needs. In Latin America, the adaptation to the respondent language is rather easy as most countries speak either Portuguese or Spanish. In Europe a much higher variety of languages exists.

It can be summarized that regardless of the countries in the view of cultural aspects, knowledge about how to handle different customers with their appropriate cultural background has to obtained in order to gain the information basis for adaptation towards handling of customers, communication and sales strategy. The direct contact of the sales staff with the clients enable them to obtain that information directly from the corresponding market. The personal selling process should be thus also seen as important function to both gain information about individual customers’ demand with their regarded business operation and receive direct specific market information.

In literature and analysis of the Swedish case studies it can be evaluated that trustworthy and mutual supportive relationship with long-term intention establishes cooperative and constructive B2B relations. In this perspective the basis for customers’ loyalty has been investigated. Company A offers a customer loyalty program. All other companies do not provide such a program and relate their customer loyalty to the high-quality of the product that fulfills customer requirements and profession support. On basis of the evaluation it can be stated that a certain commitment is also established through the nature of the technical solution. Complex IT solutions require a huge work emphasizes to be changed, thus in the short and midterm perspective companies do not change a successful implemented working system.

The direct contact with the client in the corresponding language is thus a highly recommended way of communication. In order to lower occurring insecurities of the customer, the sales people can support with a variety of information and partly education for the customer that make it possible to gain an understanding of their problem, needs and how the supplier is able to solve the problem. In addition, the establishment of a direct communication with the client provides the company in the long-term run with valuable feedback both from the specific product in its working environment and in addition valuable market information. Market information are a requirement for future business development and product development according to customer needs and market demands. This aspect is entirely similar for Brazilian and Swedish companies. The personal selling process establish thus the basis for a long-term collaboration. Customers may also become loyal to their individual sales person, who is the representative of the supplier.

To gain and maintain customer satisfaction the Brazilian Companies use customer satisfaction researches. Swedish companies gain their knowledge through regular direct face-to-face communication with the customer and ongoing after-sales support.
The humble conduction of the selling process which should include negotiation, definition of the scope of work and evaluation of the customers’ demand, is considered as a basis to establish balanced mutual agreements that support positive long-term customers’ commitment and collaboration. Subsequently the successful implementation of projects and thus satisfied customers increase market attraction and recognition. Established references are stated by the companies as the basis of future missions. The positive word-of-mouth spreading will extend the business network. Satisfied customers are a valuable connector in the overall business network. Especially in the IT branch, network connection and collaboration are perceived as highly important, according to interviewee D.

Business cooperation and long-term collaborations are important for the joint product development through learning from the client. Business networks help to obtain direct cross-national market information. The personal selling is thus a highly important intersection between the company towards the market through the operation with the client. The internal processing of cross-national market information will support the product development according market requirements and adaptation regarding different customers and the communication with them.

The Brazilian Companies and Company C implement customer segmentation. The Brazilian Companies use the size and the financial potential is a determinate to segment their clients. Company C segment their customers according to the demanded product and country of origin to provide the best fitting solution. Company D focuses mainly on large customers of the several market and do not segment their customers. The evaluation of who the customer is, demand and ability is depending on the sales person.

The sales process is mainly focusing on methods to conduct the sales operation in the most efficient way. Whereas usually the process starts at the first contact with the client, the assessment of the company information showed that the basis is effective Marketing resources. Company A lined out especially on relationship creation, whereas for Companies B and D market reputation and references are considered as driving factors. Company C have the situation that customers find the Company themselves in accordance to searching directly for a solution that fulfills their specific requirements. The Company has thus a higher response to their online presents.

All companies follow a certain sales process with stated stages. The sales staff leads the sales process and is perceived as the driver of the process also in regards to create company commitment to archive customers’ satisfaction. The sales person is the connector between companies supply and customers demand. The sales people are the intersection of customers’ demand and capabilities of the company. Through the face-to-face communication and the personal contact, the sales person has the possibility to find out who the decision makes at the customers’ side and evaluate the capability of the client as part of the overall purchasing process. In regard to interviewee D, “that information is not available online”. All companies defined sales targets and control the sales situation through regular meetings with the sales staff and internal information sharing events. The companies refer their targets either as a yearly target or quarterly target. In regards to Company A, the targets are also defined in accordance to investors expectation.

The sales target may differ significantly in consideration of the size of the company and the kind of sales targets. The sales target includes the number of expected sales, number of new prospects and who the new clients should be. In explanation, Company D is focusing on large-size companies only which are considered as market leader, in order to increase their market recognition. Further the sales target is established on previous experience and sellers’ performance. A main difference between the Brazilian and Swedish Companies is the change
of the sales of the sales strategy. Whereas the sales strategy is to be considered as rather stable and does not significantly differ over the time, the sales strategy is changed at least once a year in Brazil.

Personal selling is considered as most expensive communication tool, but the only one in regards to one-to-one communication. Despite of the high involved cost of personal selling, face-to-face communication is the only effective way of communication when it comes to offer of high advance technical products that demand a certain demand of explanation and communication with the customer in accordance to be able to understand customer problems and customize on this basis a solution that fulfills specific needs.

Sales people should be perceived both to the function of the actual seller and representative of the company towards the client, and accumulator of market information and customers’ desires. Technical high advanced solutions have a high demand on explanation towards the customer. In regards to respondent C sometime one has to coach in the client into a technical solution based on previous experience from other projects. Education and providing skills both for the sales staff and customer is necessary for high advanced technical products for the selling process. To provide the best technical solution, needs a skilled staff with regarded knowledge and diversified to their cultural background to interact in the best possible way with the client.

The requirements and characteristics according an ideal sales person are similar in Brazil and Sweden. The seller has to be determined and disciplined, skilled with demanded knowledge. An advantage has been outlined when the seller already has experience form the correlating market and product knowledge. In order to develop sales skills and gain further knowledge about product specification, the large-size Companies A and C offer in-house trainings and meetings. Company C in addition provides the opportunity to participate on internal international exchange programs in their local offices.

Brazilian and Swedish companies provide workshops on a regular basis both for new and existing employees. Whereas the focus in Sweden is mainly in accordance to the product specifics and selling methods, in Brazil skilling in regards to political concerns in the sales process is provided as well. All companies differentiate the customers into existing clients and new customers. Interaction with the customer takes place on a regular basis, either by face-to-face meetings at their site, workshops and trade fairs or participation at conferences.

The personal seller is a long-term connector between the supplier and customer and involved in close cooperation. It is thus important to hold the employee within the company and provide them with ongoing motivation in regards to different aspects. Personal selling is thus effective as it established long-term relations with the client, that provided market information and establishes market recognition. Satisfied customers will a positive impact on the business network, which provides possibilities for future missions and ongoing business development in accordance to market and customers’ demand.

5.4 Impact of personal selling on B2B characteristics
Through the analysis of the four cast studies, it can be outlined that each of the selected B2B characteristics is dependent and improved through personal selling.

In regards to the conducted interview, companies experience significant differences of customers’ behavior according to their cultural background. In the European Countries and also within Brazil, the way of operating business and expectation towards the supplier vary significantly. The communication tool of personal selling accompanies with the direct face-to-face communication directly with the customer. The sales staff is thus being able to evaluate the specific demand, which is the basis for a successful selling process.
Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies

That customers become attracted to the offered products is based on marketing actions. The interaction and networking is perceived as important in the industrial business-to-business framework. The companies refer their Marketing resources to references and awareness in the specific market. The first contact with the future customer is often done in personal at trade fairs, conferences and other events. The highly advanced technical solutions require often adjustments or entirely customizing for the client. This process included a long-term business involvement, where personal in detail communication is required. Through the personal selling it is possible to establish such a trustworthy and mutual supportive relationship on the long-term perspective. Through ongoing aftersales relationship, customers’ satisfaction can be maintained, feedback to the product and market information directly obtained and the company may in addition learn from the customer.

According to literature, the B2B market is highly complex. The more complex selling situation requires a higher scope of communication. Personal selling is the only communication tool that focuses on the one-to-one interaction. Taking into consideration that advanced IT solutions are difficult to understand for the client and often need adjustment to clients’ demand, a long business involvement is required which goes along with intense communication in the entire process. Through the personal selling, the evaluation of customers’ demand and simultaneously the provision of knowledge toward the client can be insured. All companies follow a structured sales process with direct communication with their clients.

Sales People need a variety of skills in order to conduct their mission. Literature and statements obtained from the interviews correspond to the characteristics of a successful seller. Successful sales people must have a selling-minded character and knowledge about the product and the respective market. The seller interacts directly with the client and is thus able to provide customized offers. Through the personal selling it is possible to establish a dual process of selling products to clients and obtain simultaneously information about the market, its demand and customers’ expectation on the supplier. In order to conduct this process both the seller and customer need respective knowledge about the certain working field. The customer may become loyal as well to the seller. The satisfied customers will be a valuable connector towards the overall business network. To maintain successful seller, action for motivation are required.

Figure 4 Impact of personal selling on B2B characteristics
6 Conclusion

The sixth chapter summarizes and provide aspects in regards to the research question of this study whether the usage of personal selling strengthen B2B relationships. After the impact of personal selling comparing the obtained knowledge from the literature review is described general managerial implications according to the countries Brazil and Sweden are provided. Subsequently aspects for future research are outline and finally limitations of this study are stated.

The literature review, in chapter two, is focusing on four main areas within the B2B settings. The purpose was to investigate the B2B relationship characteristics in regards to personal selling. Personal selling is in this study understood as the direct interaction of the supplier and the customer through face-to face communication. The B2B characteristic has been evaluated according to cultural aspects, Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships, Sales Management and Salespeople Management. Each of the four B2B characteristics have been evaluated in previous researches. This study refers all of them in parallel to the aspect of personal selling as one-to one communication tool and line out the impact of this method of improving business relations to provide implications for companies, operating in the B2B framework. The evaluation through cases studies took place in regards to companies operating in the IT sector. The study investigated, through personal interviews of companies from Sweden and Brazil, the positive impact of personal selling on the business relations.

The literature lines out the characteristics of B2B markets and its considerations according to relationship establishment and selling process. B2B markets are in comparison to B2B markets characterized by its complexity. According to Gummesson (2014) selling drivers are market reputation, capacity and quality of the provided products. In addition, the study evaluated the even more complex selling situation of providing high advance technical solutions to the client. The selling process of technical advance products which have to adjust and customized to customer needs and requirement, involves significant amount of communication between the supplier and the customer. The study lined out that according to the specific needs of the customers, communication, sales process and support have to be adjusted also in regards to the cultural background. An important part is the empowerment of knowledge of both the sales staff to provide technical complex solutions and the customer to understand offered systems and their individual advantages. The personal selling supports the examination of the customers’ attitudes, to be able to understand their problem and offer customized solutions that fulfill customer needs. Referencing to Kotler (2016) in companies that sell business products and services, companies sales people work directly with the customers. Through the direct communication, it is further investigated that the supplier gains important direct market information and feedback about their products in the working environment, which is considered important to business development and product development. The description of Fill & McKee (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012) that organizations have to work together to archive their goals can be confirmed through the evaluation of the case studies.

On basis of several literature aspects and evaluation of case studies from Brazil and Sweden, the study is able to clearly outline: Personal Selling has a positive impact on the establishment of long-term business relation, increase market recognition and leads to mutual business cooperation with the customer, that is necessary for future business development and product development according to customer and market demands. The satisfied customer becomes thus a connector towards the business network, which is stated to be highly important for future
missions. Customer commitment can be achieved through products that are demanded, right product range and high quality of the products. In addition, technical support and education are necessary to establish long-term commitment. Through the nature of the implementation of technical complex systems a natural bond of the client to the supplier takes place during the sales process. Possible uncertainties during the sales process can be solved through transparent communication and explanation about the specific product solution.

6.1 Implications Brazil

Through the conducted interview with Brazilian IT companies, the study was able to obtain the perception that cultural aspects have an impact on business operations. The companies identified differences both in the cross-national operation and also within the country. One has to take into consideration that Brazil is a multi-cultural country. Working habits and demand of communication differs thus nationally. In order to succeed at the respective market, it has to suggested to adjust the way of communication, emphasis on communication and offer of the solutions to the corresponding region within Brazil and on a cross-national basis. Companies have also to be aware of different purchasing habits. The purchase process is decentralized but the final decision is performed by one person. The advice can be outlined to include all involved employees in the purchasing process, evaluate the decision maker and maintain a good relationship with this person. The different development of the countries effects the possibility for sales. Whereas in Brazil e-commerce systems are well-known, such systems are rather new in Latin America and require thus much more explanation and direct communication. This circumstance becomes even more important when highly complex systems are offered. It is suggested to lower uncertainties through ongoing communication, be aware of the cultural differences and demonstrate credibility in the respective market.

To establish mutual relation with the customer is perceived as valuable in Brazil. In regard to the size of the company, different relationship building methods are implemented. The large-size Company A implemented a customer loyalty. It has to by suggested while implementing a customer loyalty program to establish a system that both creates positive relationship and provides further insights and training about the specific products. Company A provides through their loyalty program additional training, consulting and system extensions in addition to discounts. In general, it has to be suggested through the evaluation of the Brazilian Company to focus on good-quality systems that fulfills customers’ demand and maintain customers’ satisfaction through interacting with them. If the company has the capability a wide range of product offer is in favor to gain satisfied customers. It is recommended to offer personalized services to their customers, thus the needs of the customer can be evaluated. According to segmentation of the client it has to considered which client is likely to establish mutual long-term relationships. To gain commitment with the customer is perceived as highly important, as this business connection is described as deepest connection between the involved parties, which both connects organizations and involved individual with each other. It is suggested to focus on direct communication with the client. Thus the company is able to customized offers and can learn from the client.

The Brazilian case studies provided the recommendation to focus on structures sales strategies. The sales strategy should be in regards to the defined sales target. The basis to establish the sales targets are on information of the previous years and investors expectation. Due to many influencing factors on the Brazilian market, also in regards the challenging political situation, companies adjust their sales strategy at least once a year. It is recommended to implement a structured sales approach with integrated personal selling. Thus it is possible to interact with the client and obtain the possibility to manage selling behavior in accordance to
seller performance. It can be outlined even when operating with several customers to focus on one target segment and create long-term relationships. Through the insight of providing e-commerce tools in Latin America it can be stated that doing business on challenging market also provides many business opportunities. The growth numbers confirm this opportunity at Company B.

Sales people are perceived as the connector between the market and the company. Companies should perceive their sales staff as the most important source to obtain market information. The sales person has a dual- task. On the one- hand side he presents the company towards the customer. On the other hand, he obtains direct market information through the client and has the possibility to understand the specific demand of the customers and their problems. It is recommended to strengthen relationship through face- to- face selling. This personal interaction establishes a competitive advantage and makes the difference in purchasing time.

The sales staff gather valuable market information. Thus regular meetings are held in accordance to share experience and provide information internally in the company for future business development and product development in regards to market and customer demands. It is suggested to hold weekly meeting.

In order to be able to conduct this responsible and challenging task, the sales staff needs ongoing education to improve and update their knowledge. It has been outlined that especially the IT sector changes in technical requirements and development.

The interaction with the customer is segmented according to existing and new customers. The reason is that the existing customer already knows the company and its products and should be attracted to new solutions or purchase a similar project again.

6.2 Implications Sweden

The perception, experience and given examples of the Swedish companies stated clearly that cultural differentiation and adaptation has to be taken into consideration to establish a successful business relation, understand clients’ demand and succeed in the correspondent foreign market. Marketing, Sales Strategy and Support as to be adapted to clients’ demand and expectation on the supplier.

In the first step it has to be evaluated who the client is, what his specific needs are and whether the company is able to solve the problem with their resources. The evaluation is mainly conducted by the sales staff. They are thus a key factor to obtain market information for further business and product development. The face- to- face communication is hereby the most common used communication method, as the client and supplier gets into contact directly. Simultaneously it has to found out the origin of the client and who is involved in the purchasing process.

The case studies investigated that the knowledge of how to handle different customers in respect to their culture is based on individual persons and cultural background of the employees itself. Thus it has to be suggested to emphasize on diversification of the employees and sharing cultural experience on regular basis within the company to lower the dependence on single employees. On the other hand, it was in addition outlined, that each customer has its unique demand regardless his cultural background. One should thus not only focus on the cultural difference. That might be the reason that in both companies no general communication system exists in the view of how to communicate with the costumer, in regards to their cultural background.
Large companies may have a wider ability for adaptation in the several markets, due to their higher human resources. Nevertheless, adaptation of handling the customers, kind of communication and sales strategy can be adapted regardless of the size of the company. In conclusion of the interviews with the Swedish respondents it can be suggested, in concerns to cultural aspects, adaptations towards the different clients demands and background. On basis of the evaluated cases, it is recommended the adaptation of the way of communication with the client and adaptation of business operations. Further, the internal processing cross-national market information will enhance future business development and product development in regards to market demand and clients’ needs.

The different perception of uncertainty avoidance can be found in the cases as well. The provided cases show that according to the nationality, uncertainties are handled and perceived differently. Uncertainties occur mainly to technical concerns, thus internal skilled sales staff should understand clients’ specific problem, provide a functional technical solution and skill the customer in accordance to understand the provided system through ongoing referred communication and coaching methods. Hereby it has to be evaluated who the decision maker is and who will use and evaluate the system. Those persons have to involved as well while educating the customer, as the purchaser might be not the one who uses the provided solution.

Business Relations in B2B Markets are characterized by its complex structures and products which are developed in direct regards to customer demand. Especially technical advanced solutions are often customized for respective clients and implemented according to their specific needs. The sales process is described in literature and confirmed in the cases as complex process, involving different people at a time. To improve successful selling in B2B markets, the supplier has to provide a high quality reliable product that once that it is implemented works in the specific environment. Products and Services should be provided with a product range in regards to customer needs and market demands. For a successful sales process the supplier have to explain and provide knowledge towards the customer to make the technical solution understood in accordance to the specific environment of implementation. The negotiated scope of the mission should be fulfilled on time, according to customer demands.

It has been outlined that successful implemented projects are the basis to gain market recognition and establish references at the market. Market recognition and positive references are the basis for future missions. In addition, through satisfied customers the positive word-of-mouth spreading will provide new target customers. Especially in the industrial IT sector networking is highly important and can be stated as an essential to gain new customer.

The customer is thus a valuable connector in the overall business network. Through the direct contact with the client, the supplier obtains market information both in accordance to clients’ needs and specific problems and toward overall market demand. Further, the client provides valuable feedback on the product in its working environment. That information will be the basis for future product development and services and maintenance of satisfied customers. Companies should therefor focus on long-term relationship with their clients. Both literature and the evaluation of the Swedish cases showed that a trustworthy and mutual supportive relationship with long-term intention will establish cooperative and constructive B2B relationships.

A further characteristic of the B2B market structure is outlined of fluctuating demand according to changes in consumer preferences and behavior (Kotler, Armstrong, & Parment, Principles of Marketing: scandinavian edition, 2016); (Fill & McKee, Business marketing face to face: the theory and practice of B2B, 2012). Company C stated the unpredictably of purchases of standardized products. Also the changes in consumer preferences were outline,
that clients might change the requirements and characteristic of their product and need to change the technical communication solution as well. Those changes might lead to the circumstances that the supplier cannot provide the customer anymore, due to the fact of limited technical resources, for example when the client wishes to use a specific communication protocol that the company has not in the portfolio. Further, the decision of the client to produce the specific component on their own, might terminate the business engagement for the specific product solution. Even if the B2B market is stated as less price sensitive as the B2C market, competition on the price takes place for sure. On basis of the conducted interviews, it can be outlined that despite of the high involved cost of personal selling, face- to face communication is the only effective way of communication when it comes to offer of high advance technical products that demand a certain demand of explanation and communication with the customer in accordance to be able to understand customer problems and customize on this basis a solution that fulfills specific needs. The humble treatment to satisfy customers even on the long-term perspective insures the joint development of products and the provision of direct market information. When providing a customized technical product, a structured sales and communication process is suggested within the framework of the described sales target and strategic objective through the sale, also with the view to internal limitation on ability and capability to deliver a certain product and limited human resource. In this reference sales target and business development has to be adjusted whereby objective should be defined in a measurable and achievable manner within a given time frame.

Personal selling is the most expensive sales method but the only one in regards to one-to-one communication. The sales people should be perceived both to the function of the actual seller and representative of the company towards the client, and accumulator of market information and customers’ desires. The right choice of sales persons is thus outlined as highly important. Generally, employees within the sales staff should contribute with a selling minded character together with basic knowledge of technical education to understand the advance IT products of the company. Further the companies should pay attention to a diversified employee structure to gain international competences directly from their employees in accordance to handle international customers in regards to their specific characteristic and requirements of treatment. Especially when the company is still at a start-up phase it might be wise to employ people with knowledge from the target market and/ or knowledge about the product characteristic. To maintain and develop the skills participation on volunteer training programs is recommended to encounter ongoing technical changes on the market. In addition, the cases provided the importance of regular information exchanges internally. The exchange of information and experience provide improved solution at future missions.

According to the literature and insights in real business, customers might be both loyal to the company and the sales person. To keep the employees on a long-term perspective requires maintenance towards employees’ satisfaction. Onside of a fair salary, the perception and feedback, both positive and negative is important. As sales people are mostly out of the office it has to be insured that the individual person gets informed about internal operations and information to feel as an integrated part of the overall company.
7 Future Research
The conducted study is focusing on the investigation of the personal selling method and the impact on the B2B Relationship especially for the IT sector. It would be interesting whether the findings of this study can be proven while conducting a similar study in other technical branches. The cross-national comparison took place between Sweden and Brazil. It would be of interest whether similar similarities and differences between the countries can be evaluated. In the literature review it is stated that cultural difference and thus also the impact on business relation and the selling process may differ also nationally. A research towards aspects of cultural behavior within one country and the regarded impact of businesses would be a further interesting study. According to the communication mix model, personal selling is one communication tool. An investigation of how personal selling influences the other communication tools would be worth to evaluate in regards to the theoretical background.

8 Limitation
In this study we liked to provide a cross-national comparison of Brazilian Companies with Swedish Companies. Due to limitations of this work we evaluated four companies from the IT sector. It has to be constrained that the set of four companies cannot a general view of a cross-national comparison and has thus to understood as short-term exposure on the obtained empirical data from Brazil and Sweden. In future research on may construct a questionnaire that can be send out to a large spread of companies. This study is meant to provide a general view in this specific topic of personal selling and its impact on business relation in the technical B2B framework.
Table of References


Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies


Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies


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Appendix
A Semi-Structured Interview Guide:

Fortalecimento das relações B2B utilizando Venda Pessoal através da análise de Gestão de Vendas em consideração à cultura de empresas de TI brasileiras e suecas

Introdução

a. Qual sua função na empresa?
b. Há quanto tempo você exerce esta função?
c. Quantos colaboradores você gerencia?
d. Seu gerenciamento de vendas possui foco no Mercado nacional ou internacional?

Aspectos Culturais

1. Você percebe alguma diferença cultural nos seus clientes de acordo com a região em que se encontram?
2. De que forma vocês conseguem identificar quais valores são mais importantes para cada cliente?
3. Você alguma vez precisaram adequar o setor de vendas para conquistar algum cliente que possuía valores e características diferentes dos demais clientes?
4. Como vocês lidam com a insegurança e incerteza de um cliente na hora de realizar uma venda?
5. Os seus clientes possuem em sua maioria pessoas chave que tomam decisão ou esta decisão é descentralizada, ou seja, depende de várias pessoas?

Marketing de Relacionamento e Relacionamento entre Empresas (B2B marketing)

6. Que táticas vocês utilizam para tornar o cliente leal à empresa? Essas táticas mudam de acordo com os valores de cada cliente?
7. Você possuem algum programa de fidelização e segmentação de clientes? Como funciona?
8. Alguma empresa já entrou em contato com vocês demonstrando interesse em adquirir os seus serviços através de indicação de algum atual cliente?
9. O setor de vendas recebe apoio de algum outro setor ou recurso capaz de atrair novos clientes, contribuindo com o processo da venda?
Gerenciamento de Vendas

10. Qual o tempo médio de demora para realizar uma venda?
11. Qual o tamanho médio das empresas clientes?
12. Vocês possuem um processo estruturado de vendas, com estágios pré-definidos?
13. Qual a maior dificuldade encontrada na hora de realizar uma venda?
14. Vocês possuem meta de vendas? De que forma essas metas são estipuladas e como são divididas?
15. Qual a situação da empresa hoje, quando comparamos a quantidade de vendas com a quantidade de contratos rescindidos? churn
16. A empresa apresentou constante crescimento nas vendas nos últimos 5 anos?
17. A empresa obtém a mesma estratégia de vendas dos últimos 5 anos? Se não, o que mudou?
18. Qual a maior dificuldade encontrada para realizar uma venda hoje em dia?
19. Qual a melhor estratégia hoje para conquistar um cliente?
20. Em sua opinião, qual o diferencial da empresa que faz com que os clientes sintam orgulho de utilizar os serviços e ter vocês como parceiros?
21. Vocês realizam alguma pesquisa sobre o cliente antes de entrar em contato com ele?
22. Como funciona o estágio de prospecção de clientes?
23. Qual a situação da empresa hoje, quando comparamos a quantidade de vendas com a quantidade de contratos rescindidos? churn

Gerenciamento da Força de Vendas

24. Quais são os requisitos que um profissional de vendas precisa ter para ser contratado?
25. Vocês possuem um plano de carreira para a área de vendas?
26. De que forma os profissionais de venda são integrados às políticas e normas da área de vendas quando são contratados?
27. Os profissionais de venda possuem treinamentos ao longo do tempo? Com que peridiocidade?
28. Qual a média de turn-over dos vendedores da empresa por ano? Qual o motivo principal de saída desses profissionais?
29. Qual a peridiocidade de reuniões com os funcionários de vendas, em que são apresentados os status de vendas por vendedor?
30. De que forma a empresa contribui com a motivação dos profissionais de venda?
31. Com qual frequência os vendedores realizam visitas nos clientes e possíveis futuros clientes?
32. Vocês possuem diferentes profissionais focados somente na base de clientes e outros em busca de novos clientes? Existe uma divisão por região de atuação?
Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies

Introduction

e. What is your function at the company? (To make sure that the interviewee is a key person)
f. How long have you been working at the company? (Timeframe of experience)
g. How many employees do you manage? (Amount of employees)
h. Your selling management focus on national or international market? (selling coverage)

Cultural Aspects

1) Do you notice any cultural differences in your customers according to the region where they perform?
2) How can you identify which values are most important to each customer?
3) Did you ever needed to adjust the sales strategies to attract some customer who had different values and characteristics of the other customers?
4) How do you deal with the insecurity and uncertainty of a customer at the time of executing a sale?
5) Do your customers have mostly key people taking decision or the decision is decentralized? In other words, in your client, the decision of buying your services depends on many people or just one person?

Relationship Marketing and B2B Relationships

6) What tactics do you use to make the customer loyal to the company? These tactics change according to the values of each client?
7) Do you have any loyalty program and/or customer segmentation? How it works?
8) Some company has contacted you expressing interest in acquiring services from the statement of a current customer?
9) Does the sales sector receive support from another sector or from some tools that attract new clients, helping them in the sales process?

Sales Management

10) Do you have sales target? How these targets are laid and how they are divided?
11) What is the average time to accomplish a sale?
12) What is the average size of your clients?
13) Do you have a structured sales process, with pre-defined stages?
14) What is the greatest difficulty at the time of execute a sale?
15) What is the situation of the company today, comparing the amount between new clients and rescissions?
16) The company showed steady growth in sales over the past 5 years?
17) The company gets the same sales strategy of the last 5 years? If not, what changed?
18) What is the greatest difficulty to make a sale today?
19) In your opinion, which differential do you have to make customers feel proud to use your services and have you as partner?
20) What is the best strategy today to win a client?
21) Do you perform some research on the client before contacting him?
22) How does the prospecting stage of customers?
23) What are the strategies used at the time of contract negotiation, which allows them both to be favored (buyer and seller)?

Salespeople Management

24) What are the requirements that a sales professional must have to be hired?
25) Do you have a career plan for the area of sales?
26) How sales professionals are integrated into the policies and sales area when they are hired?
27) The sellers have some training over time? How often?
28) What is the average turn-over of the sellers per year? What is the main reason of resigns?
29) How often do you have meetings with sales staff regarding the awareness of sales status?
30) How does the company contribute to the motivation of sales professionals?
31) How often sellers conduct visits to customers and potential future customers?
32) Do you have different staff focused solely on customer base and others for new customers? There is a split by region of operation?
Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies

Inledning

a. Vad är din funktion inom företaget?

b. Hur länge har du jobbad för företaget?

c. För hur många anställda är du ansvarig?

d. Fokusera er försäljnings management på nationell eller internationell marknad

Kulturella Aspekter

1. Har ni upptäckt kulturella skillnader av kunderna relaterad till olika regioner och länder dem kommer ifrån.

2. Hur kan ni identifiera vilka värde är mest viktiga för respektive kund.

3. Behövdes det anpassa försäljnings strategi till kundens olika värde bakgrund?

4. Hur hanteras osäkerhet av kunden vid tidpunkten av försäljningen.


Relationsmarknadsföring och B2B- förbindelser


7. Har ni någon form av lojalt program eller kund segment fokus? Hur fungera det i så fall?

8. Fanns det företag som har kontaktad er genom rekommendation från andra kunder?


Försäljnings hantering


11. Vad är det genomsnittligt tid för att genomföra en försäljning?

12. Vad är den genomsnittlig storlek av kunden?

13. Använda ni en för definierat försäljnings process?
14. Vad är den största utmaning att genomföra en försäljning, också med blick på olika säljsteg?
15. Hur är det aktuella situation av antal bestående kunder och nya kunder?
16. Har försäljning ökat stadigt under den sista 5 åren?
17. Har man ändrad försäljningsstrategin under den sista 5 år? Om inte, varför?
18. Vad tror du, vilka justeringar behövs för att kunden tycker om att använder er service och har er som partner?
19. Vad är den bästa strategi för att få en ny kund?
20. Gör ni någon undersökning innan ni kontakta en ny kund?
21. Vad är strategier som används under förhandlingen, som är i fördel för både försäljare och kund?

Hantering av försäljningens personal

22. Vad är förutsättningar som en “Sales professionell” ska ha för att blir anställd?
23. Har ni en karriär plan inom försäljningen?
24. Får försäljningspersonal kurser? Hur ofta?
25. Vad är en genomsnittlig omsättning per kund per år? Vad tror du är huvudanledning att avsluta samarbete?
26. Hur ofta har ni möte med försäljningspersonal för att kommunicera aktuell försäljnings status?
27. Hur motivera ni er försäljningspersonal?
28. Hur ofta besöker ni kunder och potentiella nya kunder?
29. Hur ni olika personer för bestående kunder och blivande kunder? Är det separerat per region?
**Interview with Martin Hoffert, Sales and Marketing Manager Nordic**

**Date:** 2016-04-21

**Place:** HMS Headquarter, Stationsgatan 37, Halmstad

**Face-to-Face Interview**

**Interviewer:** Matthias Hoffmann (I)  **Respondent:** Martin Hoffert (R)

**Planed time 60 minutes, conducted time 30 minutes**


- Produkt kvalitén
- Bra support
- Och en bra produkt utbud som kunden vill har det.


**I:** Ja, det blir ju nog det att kunden tycker om era tjänster och service.

**R:** Ja, så kan man säga. Och jag ser inte så riktigt att marknadsföring har så mycket med kundlojalitet att göra.

**I:** Men det är ju långsiktigt strategi som man har, för att få kunder, tror jag i alla fall.

**R:** Ja, det är som marknadsavdelningen här har är produktansvarig och så säger jag närmast att man lyssna på marknaden och erbjuder produkter som marknaden vill ha. Det är det som kunderna kommer tillbaka. Men marknadsföring, när det gäller market Communication och sådant är kanske det primära sättet som du skapa kundlojalitet – attraktion ja, men lojalitet nej!

**I:** Ok, en annan fråga: Om en kund ringer till er, och hamnar till exempel på en annan avdelning – har ni ett system som tar emot kunder och skickar deras behov vidare till andra avdelningar? Eller hur fungera det? Eller hur ser en vanlig process ut?

**R:** När en kund kontakta oss?

I: Så ni har segmentation också?

R: Ja, dem har ju direkt nummer också på webben. Då så, om kunderna gå in ditt, och säger att jag ska pratar med en i Danmark, så ser dem klart och tydlig, att den här personen som är ansvargi för den delen av Danmark, då är det honom jag ska ringa.

I: Vad tycker du är den största utmaningen att genomföra en försäljning?


I: Gör ni en undersökning innan ni säljer produkter till kunden? Speciell vid långsiktigt projekt, när man satsar mycket att utvecklar för kunden. Gör ni en undersökning vem kunden är?


I: Har ni mest nya kunder eller också bestående kunderna? Hur ser andelen ut?

R: Inom mitt sälj område lägger till ungefär 70 nya kunder per kvartal.

I: Så, ni har också ett säljs mål för att säljer produkter. Ni har ett mål som ni ska nå?
Ja, inom säljavdelning, ja visst. Men den absolut störst delen av våra kunder är existerande kunder. Så vi har ju ungefär 1200 kunder.

Hur långt tar det ungefär för en försäljning, en genomsnittlig försäljning? Det beror ju på olika produkt.


Ja, det är ju en produkt som man ha i handen, men vi vill veta lite mer om embedded.

Om en embedded skulle jag säga snitt ligger mellan 9 och 12 månader

Hur stort är kunden då, ungefär? Medelstora företag som kontakta er eller också stora? Små företag?

Vi har kunder, allt ifrån enmans firma till ABB.

Men Embedded Systems är ju mer för större företag.

Det är för större, vad vi kallar för Vice Manufactures. Företag som tillverka andra produkter, som kräver kommunikationslösningar. Och då är ju typ kunden ofta ganska stor, ofta global.

Ok, Vi är redan genom en del. Du har nämnt – när man säljer produkter till Danmark, att det kopplas, att det kopplas till Sverige. Har ni upptäckt kulturella skillnader mellan kunder, relaterad till deras region och länder dem kommer ifrån?

Absolut!

Och hur hantera ni det?

Vi försöka att anpassa oss. Och det är absolut så att vi ser skillnader. Det är skillnader mellan Danmark och Sverige och det är ganska stor skillnad mellan Danmark och England till exempel, för att inte tala om mellan Sverige och Japan, eller Sverige och Tyskland också. Vissa länder, man märka det både i försäljning och support fasen. – Technical Support-


Alltså, vad som är viktigt för dem?

ansvar och företräda sina kunder. Så dem kommer att säger, det här fungera ok i min region men normalt sätt vill vi hellre ha det.

I: Har ni ett utbyt, hur det är? Vilka skillnader finns?


I: Väldigt mycket kommunikation i så fall.

R: Ja, det är det!

I: Vid inköpsprocessen: Om man pratar om större projekt fram för allt, är det mer en person som har ansvar för att köpa in produkter och projekt eller är det mer ett team som köper tjänster från er?


I: Vi har lite olika aspekter i vårt arbete. Vi intervjuar olika företag och försöka sedan att formulera ett generellt resultat. Därför blir det lite blandade frågor. Sista delen är tillhantering av försäljningspersonal. Ni har egen personal för direkt försäljning?

R: Ja, jag har det i alla fall min avdelning. Det har ju alla säljområde chefer, men vissa till större utsträckning en dem andra.

I: Vad krävs det för förutsättningar för att anställa en ”sales professional”? Om ni anställa en ny person, vad behövs det för attityd. Vad behöver han för att blir en bra säljare.

R: Det finns två aspekter: Dels, så måste han ha en ganska bra attityd till försäljning till kunder han måste tycker att det är kul, fram för allt. Man har liksom en säljande mindset. Något som är nästan lika viktigt är att man ha lätt låta till sig teknisk komplicerat produkt lösning, för vår produkt är ganska komplicerade och vi kräver en ganska högt teknisk nivå från vara

I: Finns det en karriär plan när man börjar här?


I: Det är ju också spännande att ser olika område.

R: Ja, men det finns inte en spika, att det måste göras så här, men det finns en tanke. (18:11)

I: Erbjuder ni också kurser till försäljningspersonal?

R: Ja, javisst, absolut.

I: Hur ofta i så fall? Är det en gång per år?


I: Hur ofta har ni möte med försäljningspersonal för att kommunicera aktuell försäljningsstatus? Du pratade om att man ska nå målen?

R: Varannan vecka har jag möte med personal.

I: Hur motivera ni er försäljningspersonal.


I: Ah, ok alltså information dem tars upp utifrån och finns sedan också på plats inom företaget!?

R: Ja, ofta gör det. En av deras uppgifter är ju att ta feedback från kunden och skicka in det på produktorganisationen för att få bättre produkterna.

I: Har ni ett system för det? En databas som det läggas information i där, eller är det mer från person till person.

R: Det är mer person till person. Vi har ett CRM system också. Så ofta när vi ringer eller förlora en opportunity så skriver vi in varför. Till exempel så skriver in att produkten inte
Strengthen of B2B relationships by Using Personal Selling through Analyzing Sales Management in cultural consideration of Brazilian and Swedish IT companies

hade den här featuren. Och det går ju till produktavdelningen för att analysera om det förras vidare eller inte. Men ofta är direkt från mig till produktavdelning, eller direkt från försäljarna till produkt chef, beroende lite vad det är och hur Company A säljarna.

I: Hur ofta besöker ni kunder och potentiella nya kunder? Eller hur gör ni att hitta nya kunder? Är det Acciser, direct marketing?

R: Om vi börjar hur ofta vi besöka kunder: Det gör vi. Vi har ju ett mål på mina säljare att dem ska ut tre dagar i veckan utav fem. Så, tre dagar ska dem vara ”on the road” och träffa kunder och så ska dem träffa en kund, två- tre kunder om dagen, det beror lite grann hur stort sälj områdena är, var dem befinner sig och hur ofta kunderna vill att dem ska träffas.


I: Alltså ni erbjuder också Workshops, att hur man använda produkten

R: Ja, absolut. Vi har webbinar och sådant som är gratis, som man kan delta i. Roadshow, gör vi, till exempel just i Norge.


R: Ja, det är också oerhört svårt. Vi har ju olika klassificeringar av kunder. En snittklassificering på en kund är en omsättning på ungefär halv miljon om året. Men det är absolut inte snitt som vi säljer för. 8 av 10 kunder är inte embedded kunder utan det är en gateway kund. Alltså snitt per sold kund är inte mer än ett par tusen.

I: Vad tror du om huvud anledning för att en kund avsluta samarbeta med er?


I: Har det ändrats försäljnings strategi under den sista 5 åren?


I: Har försäljning ökat beständigt under dem sista 5 åren?
R: Ja, absolut. 18-20% på.

I: Ok, vi är genom frågor relaterat till uppsatsen. Till slutet lite grann om dig. Det skulle vara bra om du kunde prata lite om dig själv. Din funktion är ju Sales Marketing Manager for Nordic Countries


I: Hur länge har du jobbad för HMS?

R: Sedan 2010/2011

I: Vad har du jobbad innan?

R: Innan HMS?, på Eriksson, Göteborg.

I: För hur många anställda är du ansvarig?

R: 13 personer

I: Försäljnings Management: Fokusera den men på nationell eller internationell marknaden?

R: Internationell – 95% går i Export.

I: Vill ni vara anonym eller är det ok att vi nämna HMS.

R: Det är ok, men jag skulle vilja ha en kopia på den dock.

Kommentar:

Bredvid själva intervjun har vi talats om skillnaden mellan direkt försäljning och försäljning genom distributör. Direkt försäljning är mycket viktigt när det behövs mycket kommunikation med kunden och anpassa produkten till kundens behov. Distributions försäljning går dock mycket bra på standard produkter, so inte behövs särskild anpassning.
Interview with Coraline Zhang Sales and Marketing Manager

Date: 2016-04-27

Place: City Library Halmstad

Face-to-Face Interview

Interviewer: Matthias Hoffmann (I)  Respondent: Coraline Zhang (R)

Conducted time 30 minutes

I: We prepared questionnaire: Our topic is Strengthen of B2B Relationships by Using Personal Selling. We like to investigate the impact of personal direct selling, that one can improve the relationship between your business partners.

R: I have to ask; how do you define “Personal Selling”?  

I: As I understand it, that you have a direct communication with your customer from the aspect of providing information, explaining about the project especially in the IT, that the reason for us on focusing on IT companies and also selling the projects and also after-sale. – That you have still the communication with the business partner and improve both products and services.

R: So the personal selling would compare with e-commerce, online or in Apps?! 

I: Its meant face-to-face selling.

R: So chatting doesn’t count?

I: We are focusing on the face-to-face communication.

I: We have to main sections in our questionnaire. The first section is about yourself. What is your function in the company? How long have you dealt with this issue? And how many employees do you manage, to get a general understanding of the framework.

R: The company I work for, called DH Solutions. It’s the mother company of DH Anticounterfeit. So, I think I know DH Anticounterfeit much more than the entire DH Solutions. So, when you ask me about the company, even I’m employed by DH Solutions, I will present only DH Anticounterfeit. It is an IT company, develop case management software for IP Case Management.

I: Ok, you said you working there since 2014? -R: Yes

I: Are you responsible for other employees, as leader or has it to be understood as a big team?

R: Yes, it is a big team. In our team we have five people in total and different people taking responsibility of different things. I’m responsible for Sales and Marketing and I have two other colleges, work on system development. The other one working on project development.

I: Is the selling focus more on national or on the international market?

R: International!

I: That was the first section. We are like to ask questions according to four aspects. This will be Culture Aspects, Relationship Marketing in B2B Relations, Sales Management, and then some questions about Salespeople Management. Let’s start with the Cultural Aspects.
You deal with several people. They have their cultural aspects and characteristics in their backpack. Do you discover any differences? And how do you identify what is important for the customers?

R: I think for communication from the beginning, it’s getting very important, because you realize different nationalities they have different ways of handling things. Even through, our software requires around two- three month. We call it pre- study and configuration phase. So in this three month we have to do a kind of a project together with our client. So we have to collecting their needs and have meetings and leading them to the right direction and find a solution by our self or together. Then we well configure it and deliver it and test it in the final working life. In this months, the communication with different nationalities is quiet different.

Like Germans they will make plans first – very clear, each step what we need to do and taking care about all the details. Everything need to negotiated in advance.

Comparing with Frenches, it is quite different. French people they will, let’s go and see on the way what happened, delayed all the time but they want to involve a lots of people inside. So, it’s very different style. And we have Dutch costumers as well, there are all different.

I: Is it then also the issue to adjust your sales strategy according to the partner, to the region they are come from? Because, when you structured the process to the client, also the point of sales is maybe different?

R: During the sales, I think the one who is selling it, tries to adapt to your client, what they need and what they want, to learn from them as well. And those clients we are dealing with, most of them are like leading companies in their own industry. The same for the Brand – we try to be very humble and try to learn from them as well.

I: How do you deal with insecurities or uncertainties of the customer in the whole process or still at the point of sale? When there are still uncertainties are left.

R: Uncertainties of what?

I: For example, about technical issues, or when the customer still feels unsecure if they should do the buying process or not.

R: And the question is, how do you deal with base on different culture?! I think generally we have very … it’s not written, but we feel for German customers they are more demanding, they need your response very quick and step by step very clearly. We try to be very strict forward and very clear and proactive regarding German customs.

With French customers, we try to listen them more to express themselves, clearly by themselves first. So, I would say less proactive but more communication, negotiation.

I: That’s also what I discovered so far – communication is an important part, especially when you working in intercultural framework.

Do you are confronted during the selling process by many people or one key person, who buys the product from your company or is it more a team.

R: You mean the buyer?

I: When they decide to buy a software solution, is it then one person, who is in charge to buy it, or is it a decision of a whole team?
R: Of course at the beginning it would be one person, be responsible for the project, start the communication and collecting all the information. Then afterwards the software will be used in the entire team. I would say, everyone has influence, just depends on how much they have. There always be one or two persons is essential and then a higher team is involved as well. Sometimes this is not only the person who will use the software, the IT department will be involved as well. So the IT, even though they are not the ones who to buy it or not, but they are in the process to evaluate you. We consider them in the sales as buyers as well.

I: We are now going to the second aspect “Relationship Marketing”. Now it maybe comes a little bit clearer, when we talk about customer loyalty in the view of the values and characteristic of the customers, according where they are come from. You just named the comparison between French people and German people. Do you have customer loyalty programs?

R: Honestly, we don’t have a program in our company but of course we try to keep our existing client happy and try to involve them all the time. Not just deliver a product and disappear. We feel that Dutch companies they like to continue the discussion with you. They are keen on join your growth of your company as well. I think this is maybe not based on nationality. It is based on the company’s strategy. For example, a large Swedish furniture company, they care about their supplier a lot. They will try to evaluate you and know your strategy and educated you to the companies’ strategy as well. I wouldn’t say its nationality, culture based.

I: But there is a strategy in mind, to stay in contact with the company and get happy customersand feedback.

R: Yes, feedback, and keep the relationship and sometime you will visit them and having events like fairs. We will invite them, invite all of our clients. We call it user-advisory workshop – have it once a year.

I: Do you make customer segmentation? Like, dividing them in regional groups? For example, when you inviting to an event, you invite all of them?

R: Yes.

I: One important question is: Is there any company who contacted you through an advice from another company? – From another company you solved or help them with a problem.

R: Yes, actually our first client came through a recommendation. And the third one came through recommendation within their Brand

I: So networking works.

R: Definitely! In our industry references are the most important and most efficient action.

I: When you get a request from a possible client to your company and this one reaches another department – is there a system that this question will be forwarded, where the client can be supported?

R: They contact us directly. They usually contact the one who is the sales person the buy the product from – it the quickest way to get the answer.

I: How does the customer find you? Is it through internet, or through direct contact.

R: Direct and email or telephone. Most email!
I: No we have some questions about sales management: Do you have a sales target? How many sales should be conducted annually?

R: This year our goal is to get 9 new clients.

I: Is the sales target somehow divided? To clients’ sector and products? I saw that DH Solutions have four different solutions.

R: DH Anticounterfeit is just one product. The sales target is to get new customers and the sales target as is well to get the leading companies in their industry, so that they be in the future our good reference, for the future sales. That’s this years’ strategy, but now we have realized maybe it’s not the best strategy, because the leading companies they are very complicated handle, take very long time. To compare with less leading companies, it will be quicker and easier to get the money.

I: So when you talk about the size of the client, it is mostly large companies right now?!

R: Yes!

I: You already talked a little bit about the structured sales process referring to stages. Can you explain a little bit more about this? How this sales process works?

R: Ok, we should in the sales process not mention Marketing. But the sales process starts from Marketing source. We have mainly three sources. One is reference, the other one is conferences and attending on different fairs and the other one from internet, either marketing campaigns, email or website or google add words. So that’s the main three types. And so far the second one works best. – go to a fair know them personal, talk to them and get involved.

Then normally the second stage will be we will first talk to them, we call it qualification. To say if you really needed it, you have that needs and our software suits your needs or not, if you have the budget or not.

Then the next step will be a demo. Normally we go to the sites to have a life demo together with them and continue with the next step. Sometimes we do a webinar as well. But so far all the successful sales were done in this way. 80% were done in the face- to face demo and one was done by webinar.

Then after the webinar, we continue the discussion on the project and negotiation of the price. But before we sign the contract, normally we start the project first. We give the client 30 days’ free cancelation. We start the project and start the so called pre- study workshop. We show the system one more time, but in more detail and provide the answers they requested we will do a kind of simple configuration in the system around their case directly in our system.

I: Is this then also the best way to win the customer, through the massive communication and provision of the product? When it comes to contract negotiation, is this in favor for both sides, the client and the company? How does the customer feel most satisfied of using the product?

R: You mean how the contract influence the feeling about the product!? I will say, all of our clients are legal persons. I’m a legal person as well, so we know a good contract works. A good contract should be balanced and the supplier shouldn’t feel to be misused and they paid what they have done and the customer should feel: what you promised you did that. – you don’t overpromise too much.
I: Do you make any research before you contact the client or offer a structured program for your client – you named the qualification process. Do you make a research about who is the client, does he have the need for our product?

R: In this type of research is normally done by talking, face-to-face, because that information is not available online.

I: What is the greatest difficulty to make a sale today?

R: I think; the difficulty is we don’t have that much sales persons or resellers to reach the target directly. Every time we can use our limited human resources, talk with the people during the event – but this is really limited by 20-30 people maximum. So you get one or two clients.

I: And it is also expensive, isn’t it?

R: Yes, the events are really expensive. Email Marketing, we do that, but so far we haven’t got any real feedback from, just by email marketing or website marketing.

I: So, it is less the situation that the customer comes directly to you?

R: Much less.

I: Comparing the amount of new clients and existing clients, how is the situation of the company today and how was it the last five years?

R: Five years are too long. We had the first contact with a client in 2008 and then we developed the software for almost three years, so 2010/2011 the software itself was finished. We started selling on the market since 2012. So far we have only four years’ history. And during those four years its growing really slowly.

I: Do you have resigned, so far?

R: Based on the nature of the software, once you start using the product it is very hard to just hop off. So far we haven’t any client that dropped out, stop using it.

I: We like to step into the last section: Sales People Management. What does it need to have a good Sales Professional? What does the sales person to offer to become a good part in your company?

R: Ideally, he should have the resources: Has the connection, have the history of contact in our target before. For example, he is event organizer for legal issues, event organizer for brand protection manager to attend those events, then he has those contacts already, got the technical information or he is successful lawyer who has worked for many brands, then he will know background information, know the persons, this would be ideally. But of course the characteristic is important, sustainable ones.

I: So conclude it in three pillars: Knowledge, Contacts and Characteristic. Do you offer a career plan for ongoing development for Salespersons?

R: We still consider our company as a small start-up company. The career path is something you create by yourself. That’s our definition. Not like big companies, that show a very clear road after three years you go to middle management, five years you go to some manager. The career is created by yourself.

I: But when the salesperson says: I found here an interesting training. Can I participate? Would you support him?
R: Yes! The company create lots of opportunities for training. I have a legal background, so I’m more interested in attending all the events according to legal training and I had that chance and other people they like to learn more about security, in system development have the chance there.

I: So there is no fixed plan over the time? It is more like when they found something, they can participate?!

R: Apply for it. And this fixed training we have every time, when we have a kick-off meeting, twice a year. At that time, it is the training for the entire company.

I: Going directly to the next question. Do you have meetings with your sales staff regard the awareness of the current status? Do you have meetings on a regular basis?

R: With the sales team we have a weekly meeting and the entire company have monthly meetings.

I: How often do you conduct visits with the customers or potential future customers. Do you visit them directly?

R: Yes, for all the potential clients, before they sign a contract, we definitely will visit them. For existing clients, we try to visit them once a year, or at least meet them once a year during the event or education.

I: Do you have different staff focusing only on the customer base and others for new customers? Do you separate your sales team according to existing customers and to new customers or is it everything once? One person for all, both existing and new customers?

R: Actually, I taking responsibility for new prospect and the project manager take care of all the existing clients. So it’s two persons.

I: Do you split it according to the region, the client is coming from?

R: No.

I: How are sales professionals are integrated into the policies when they are hired. I think they will sign a commitment.

R: The sales people will have certain commission connected to their salary.

I: I mean the commitment according to the policies of the company. So the company has a set to behave, so the profession should also behave in this way. Is this stated in their contract?

R: No.

I: How do you contribute the motivation of the sales professionals?

R: Motivation has to be managed in many ways. One is salary, more directly or the leaders who give them hope, give the future for the individuals, can be career related, can be lifestyle related.

I: There is one question left from the Relationship Marketing. Do you use sales tools, for example CRM systems?

R: Yes, we have it and use it.

I: Are there other tools used to stay with the customer in contact?
R: No.

I: Do you like to be anonym in our thesis?

R: It is ok, you can name as, except the names of the clients. (Clients names, where mentioned during the interview, is not named in the transcription.)

Comment:
The location of the cafeteria at the city library was maybe not the ideal one. But the recording was in a sufficient quality and there was no influence from other listeners. The tables next to were empty.
Mayara Cristine Wandall from Brazil: Bachelor on Business Administration in Regional University of Blumenau - FURB (Brazil) and Master in International Marketing at Halmstad University (Sweden)

Matthias Hoffmann from Germany: Bachelor in Baltic Management Studies at University of Applied Science Stralsund (Germany), ten-years' experience in German- Swedish relation, Exchange Student at Shanghai International Studies University (China), Master in International Marke