

10. ESTONIANS' VIEWS ON GERMANS' AND RUSSIANS' NEGOTIATION BEHAVIOR: THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Our study explores how Estonians perceive Germans' and Russians' negotiation behavior in the framework of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Negotiations are a means for entrepreneurial communication and as such they are influenced by the partners' cultural backgrounds. Estonians were interviewed about their views on Germans' and Russians' behavior during negotiations. The results show that some perceptions are consistent with Hofstede's findings, while there are differences as well. Our findings, along with other issues, bring up implications for entrepreneurs and three aspects are discussed. Limited experience and the perception of differences may lead to generation of stereotypes among entrepreneurs. Therefore, education and thorough investigation would be beneficial for acquiring efficient negotiation behavior. Entrepreneurs can sustain the integration of the Russian population in Estonia if they are more informed about their partners' cultural characteristics.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a sensitive area in respect of culture. Culture can be said to permeate entrepreneurial motivation as well as communication. While the former focuses on the issues that apply

to people who are interested in devoting themselves to entrepreneurial activities, the latter touches the areas affecting how entrepreneurs are able to execute their ideas. This chapter addresses communication and its cultural issues because social and geographical mobility are important aspects of entrepreneurial behavior. More specifically, we will single out one particular kind of business communication – negotiations – for the subsequent analysis.

The manner how participants in negotiations treat each other is very much influenced by their cultural background which provides them with an understanding of their partner's role from various perspectives. Therefore, the cultural approach to negotiations may reveal some general issues for business people. It is an important aspect to be mentioned in connection with Estonia, where the practice of international negotiations is about 15 years old. Estonian business people have already gained some first-hand experience of international negotiations, which can be analyzed in order to understand some culture-specific features and draw some implications.

Estonia and its social and economic history have been influenced by many countries and cultures, among which Germany and Russia occupy a special position. Additionally, Estonia has been strongly influenced by different other cultures. For example, distinguishing between political, economic and cultural spaces of influence, Vihalemm (1997) indicates which countries have dominated the societal space of Estonia in different periods. In 1918–1940, Estonia's political space was influenced by Germany and Russia, its economic space by Germany and Great Britain, and its cultural space by Germany, Finland, and Sweden. After World War II, Estonia was part of the Soviet Union, which left its imprint on all the three dimensions. This circumstance has generated interesting aspects for analyzing the cultural impacts on many activities by means of Hofstede's framework.

Culture can be characterized by the following four dimensions (Hofstede, 2001). *Power distance* reveals to what extent power and hierarchical relations are considered to be essential for a particular culture. *Uncertainty avoidance* explains whether tense and vague situations are tolerated or avoided and to what extent. *The individualism-collectivism* dimension shows whether the interests of an individual or a group are more important. The fourth dimension is *masculinity-femininity*, which shows to what extent culture is dominated by such masculine values as orientation towards achievement and competition.

In the light of the abovementioned aspects, the aim of this article is to draw implications for entrepreneurs by way of studying Estonians' views on Germans' and Russians' negotiation behavior using Hofstede's framework of cultural dimensions.

The introduction of this paper is divided into two main sections, the first one describing the main concepts of the study – negotiations and culture – as well as their potential interrelationship from an entrepreneurial perspective. The second section summarizes German, Russian and Estonian cultural characteristics according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, exemplifying the rationale of the empirical approach used in our research. The third section of the paper presents an empirical analysis, which is based on the interviews conducted with Estonian business people who have copious experience with representatives of the German and Russian cultures. Finally, some implications are drawn for the entrepreneurial perspective.

The role of negotiations for entrepreneurs and the impact of the cultural context on negotiations

The role of negotiations is often underestimated by entrepreneurs; instead they tend to have an attitude towards negotiations as something that one has to get quickly over with. But as the scope of enterprise rapidly increases, the necessity for communication

between entrepreneurs also grows. And if good results are wanted, one must also understand the role of negotiations. It is important to have a systematic negotiating process to prevent hasty decisions that in the future may have no impact. That presupposes thorough knowledge of the negotiation partner, a well-planned negotiating process and explicitly expressed purposes.

Entrepreneurs lack information about how to conduct constructive negotiations; the topic is not well developed yet. For example, Baker (2004) introduced these issues when characterizing the started discussion for providing a theoretical background to rock and roll entrepreneurship and organizational communication.

Due to the globalization of economy and enterprises, understanding the role of negotiations is getting more difficult. An important factor that comes into play is culture, and understanding cultural differences makes the negotiating process rather complicated. In the course of cross-cultural negotiations, different beliefs, religions, social expectations and backgrounds bounce together. It means that conflicts and misunderstandings are easy to occur, which in turn may lead to critical situations or even failure of the negotiations. Hawley and Hamilton (1996) have shown that in a multicultural world it may frequently happen that entrepreneurs find themselves in the role of a negotiator between the contradictory values of their own cultural system and those of the dominant world.

Culture plays an essential role in negotiations; this is especially important in international business when East and West meet at the negotiating table (Adair, 2003). Information processing is one of the reasons for different understandings of the negotiation process. Weber and Hesse (1998) have shown that people's differing perception is one of the factors that lead to cultural differences in the situation of risky decision making. Usunier (1991) also underlines the role of cultural differences in business negotiations by analyzing perception time.

Cultural background is one indicator that determines how the negotiator sees the whole negotiating process – what are its purposes, what role is played by the relationships with other parties, how important is formality, etc, and on the whole all that underlies the choice of strategy for carrying out the negotiations. All in all, it can be said that intercultural negotiations are represented as a function of differences between parties with respect to preferences on issues and negotiation strategies (Brett, 2000). Figure 1 suggests that when the strategies negotiators bring to table clash, the negotiation process is likely to be less efficient, and agreements are likely to be suboptimal. But differences do not always mean failure, they also mean opportunities. In Figure 1 “integrative potential” is the key factor – if cultural differences are taken into consideration, a smart negotiator can shape a suitable attitude and accordingly choose a suitable strategy that will lead to the results satisfying both parties. This means that a successful negotiation process does not assume the elimination of negative side-effects, but also their skilful utilization in one’s advantage.

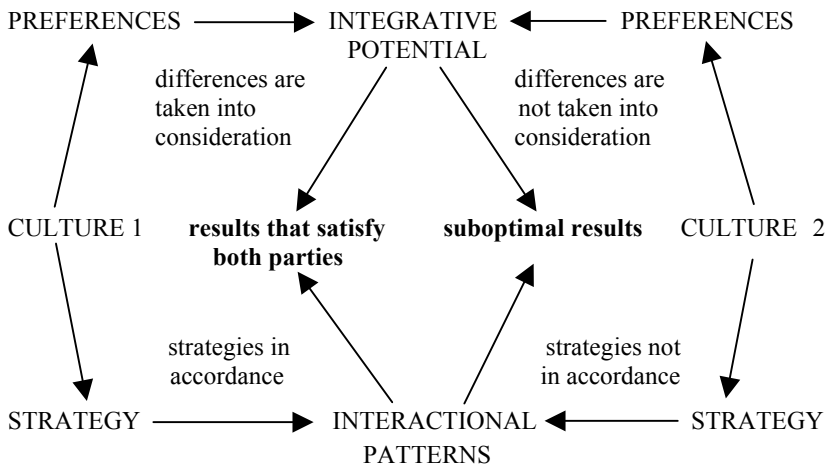


Figure 1. A model of inter-cultural negotiations (Brett, 2000, modified).

Sometimes the participants in negotiations are partially cooperative or protagonists, seeking to optimize their own gains. Studying the patterns of understanding one's partners' cultural background is particularly relevant when investigating negotiations, because culture affects the way people communicate. Entrepreneurs usually act on the basis of intuition (see, for example, Greenbank, 2000), which has shown that the role of the cognitive aspects of entrepreneurial behavior is substantial. For example, Allison, Chell and Hayes (2000) suggest that those owner-managers who are, in practice, successful in identifying and exploiting the opportunities for growth and capital accumulation (i.e., successful entrepreneurs) are more intuitive in their cognitive style than the general population of managers. We position our study into this context and aim to get some elements of understanding with respect to negotiations from the Estonian perspective, because everyday practices and interaction are sometimes influenced by intuitively created stereotypes.

Russian, German and Estonian cultural characteristics in Hofstede's framework

Russia is one of the most important countries in the world's political and economic life because it has enormous natural resources as well as educated population. This vast country has attracted many investors and has changed a lot during the last decade, though many partners have experienced significant cultural unfitness when cooperating with Russians (Fey and Denison, 1998; 2003; Fey and Nordahl, 1999). As a matter of fact, Russian entrepreneurial activities are greatly influenced by personal relationships. Puffer (1994) and Kets de Vries (2001) also note that friendship affects Russians' business dealings: "While Americans and northern Europeans are more task- than relationship-oriented, Russians need to develop relationships in order to successfully accomplish tasks." (Kets de Vries, 2001).

The four dimensions of Hofstede show that Russians (Table 1) have a very high level of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1993). That means that Russians are not comfortable in unfamiliar situations. They prefer highly structured negotiations with similar procedures. If the negotiation partner does not act as Russians expect them to act, they might no longer trust the partner. Usually Russians presume, for example, that the partner from the West has similar experience and the same expectations as they have (Snavelly *et al.*, 1998). And if they find out it is not so, it may become a big problem and encumbrance during the negotiations.

Table 1. Hofstede's cultural dimensions for Russians, Germans and Estonians.

Hofstede's dimensions	Russians	Germans	Estonians
Power Distance	Very high	Low	Average
Uncertainty avoidance	Very high	High	Average
Individualism	Average	High	High
Masculinity	Low	High	Average

Sources: Hofstede, 1993; Vadi and Meri, 2004.

The indicator of power distance is likewise very high when speaking of Russians. It means that in a Russian enterprise, control and decision-making are centralized and negotiators from very high positions are involved. Russians assume that their partners are from high positions as well; they even hardly hear out people of low authority. On the other hand, Russians have an average level of individuality – relations do not matter so much that they could somehow hinder the negotiation process. So conflicts do not necessarily mean failure, being rather a natural part of negotiations.

The indicator of masculinity for Russians is low which means that results are not achieved by applying power, problems can be

resolved peacefully. Russians are willing to make compromises in some circumstances or even concede to requirements. (Bollinger, 1994)

The social and economic ties between Estonia and Germany have grown significantly after Estonia regained independence. Many entrepreneurs see German markets as an attractive target for their business but several areas of cooperation are still underdeveloped. There are many reasons behind this unused potential, including communication issues. Andrijevskaia and Vadi (2004) illuminate some of them by comparing factors forming organizational culture in Germany and Estonia. For example, they suggest that in Germany communication is mostly through group representation, while in Estonia bottom-up communication is rare, and most communication is direct by nature. Another aspect is that in Germany we can meet multiple patterns of communication, but in Estonian newly-started free market economy top-down communication still prevails (Andrijevskaia and Vadi, 2004).

Research done by Hofstede shows that Germans (Table 1) do not emphasize hierarchy and authority – their indicator of power distance is low (Hofstede, 1993). They are rather tolerant during the negotiating process; they also accept opinions of parties from low position. So control and decision-making are probably decentralized in German enterprises and power does not play an important role in organizations, while all the other indicators are rather high. Uncertainty avoidance shows that Germans like structure and order in negotiations and that should prevent not knowing about the future. So they may act aggressively when problems arise during negotiations, and from that point on they will mistrust the partner.

The indicator of individualism suggests that Germans prefer to perform individually; the group is not competent to make decisions. The relationship with the negotiation partner is not important, Germans even avoid close relationships. Due to that, a negotiator is not irreplaceable; when choosing people for negotiations, their competence makes a difference, not relations.

Germans have a high level of masculinity: men are deemed to be more competent, self-confident and persistent. The conflicts arising during negotiations are resolved very stoutly; it hardly ever happens that compromises are made.

The preceding part of the article expanded upon Hofstede's cultural dimensions for Russians and Germans and was based on Hofstede's assessment. So it does not mean that Estonians have the same understanding of these two nations. Different surveys suggest different results; there is no research that holds well in all kinds of circumstances.

Below we will make an attempt to characterize Estonians in a similar framework as Hofstede characterized Germans and Russians (Table 1). Our information is based on the study by Vadi and Meri (2004) where they present the position of Estonia in Hofstede's framework by comparing Estonians with Italians and Egyptians. Table 1 reveals that Estonians are in between Russians and Germans in respect of power distance and masculinity, differ from both of them in respect of uncertainty avoidance, and resemble Germans along the dimension of individualism. This could be explained by the evolution of Estonian culture – it has absorbed influences from both German and Russian culture.

Empirical study of the German and Russian cultural backgrounds in the negotiating process

To involve the empirical part, interviewing was used as a research method. To carry out the interviews, such questions were compiled (Appendix 1 and 2) that could determine Hofstede's cultural dimensions for Russians and Germans¹. The analysis of the results

¹ The empirical studies were conducted by using unlike measurement tools because they were parts of different surveys. The results were combined for this chapter because it enables presentation of issues of

is directed towards finding Germans' and Russians' positions in Hofstede's framework and interpreting these categories from Estonians' perspective. The authors' intent is to find out how the respondent reflects on the dimension under discussion and in this light the answers will be interpreted in the framework of the cultural dimensions. In other words, the main focus is on exploring how Estonians perceive their partners' cultural background.

Eight entrepreneurs who in the recent years have had or are still having business relations with Russians were questioned. In order to elicit opinions about Germans, nine persons who had expertise in communication with Germans in the context of negotiations, were interviewed. The list of respondents is presented in Appendix 3.

Interviews with different business people helped draw some conclusions about certain aspects of German and Russian cultures in the negotiating process. The interviewees' thoughts and opinions provided a colorful illustration to the cultural impact of Germans and Russians that in turn referred to different cultural dimensions. Based on the interviews, the two nations were subsequently compared according to Hofstede's dimensions. There are also given some comments of the respondents that illustrate how they perceived any particular cultural dimension.

Power distance

Power distance is very high in the case of both nations. The position of negotiators is very important and therefore formality plays a great role. But there are also differences between the two cultures.

For Germans the formality of the negotiating process depends significantly on the position of the opposing party in the hierarchy. A. Sadam, M. Lublo and A. Talijärv accentuated that the negotiation process should be the more formal and considered, the

negotiating behavior more concisely than by giving an overview of a single study.

higher the positions of the participants (negotiation parties). But that does not eliminate the possibility that the opposing party may have a lower position. The negotiations can then be less formal but it is acceptable.

For Russians, on the contrary, the positions of the negotiation parties are so important that they hardly agree to negotiate with people who have lower positions. Russians think that the higher in the hierarchy the partner is the more competent and trustworthy he/she is. For example, T. Alt brought out many cases when he as the owner of the company and Supervisory Board had to explain to his Russian partners that the chairman of the management board is actually much more competent and trustworthy than he himself is.

The similarity between Russians and Germans lies in their addressing systems where titles and esteem are very important. Russians accept familiarity more readily than Germans. Their addressing formally depends on their relations with the opposing party. If the negotiating process goes well for them, they are more eager to have less formal relations. For Germans it takes time to get used to familiarity, for example, the negotiation parties must be acquainted for a long time before they go over to first name terms. "People may work together for years, sharing the workplace, having negotiations, but still address each other as Herr or Frau" says S. Puust-Mumme, meaning that informality can be totally unacceptable in some cases.

Collectivism/individualism

It was rather hard to determine how collectivistic Germans and Russians are. The people who were questioned gave different answers. The results in this dimension were average for both nations. It means that collectivism or individualism depend on a particular situation.

Most of the interviewees agreed that if the negotiation process is going well and the Russians want to do business with the opposing party for a long time, a good relationship is more important than a quick result. T. Sepp believes it makes a great deal of difference what purposes Russians have and what are their real interests and altogether what is useful for them. But usually the negotiating process ends with an informal meeting and then Russians are very hospitable. Mainly they are interested in quick results and for that purpose develop good relations.

For Germans, informal negotiations are also important, but in contrast to Russians, they do not let informality into the actual negotiating process. K. Koger, A. Sadam, M. Lublo and E. Rebane share this opinion. Digression from the subject is not acceptable and therefore the quick result is the main issue. Temporizing occurs when Germans want to check everything before making a decision, because when the decision is made, it is semidiurnal. "They are rather bureaucratic, coordinating the decision with different people and organizations," said Puust-Mumme.

Masculinity/femininity

The results of the two surveys show that Germans and Russians are masculine nations. Russians are very rigid and do not give up their opinions, even if another opportunity is more useful. P. Riim recollects from his experience that usually Russians have two or three standpoints that they practically never give up. But it is possible to make compromises if a Russian negotiator sees a benefit from it, "it means you have to be pliant yourself," says K. Kask. So it is not excluded that Russians make any conceding.

Germans are also very stubborn, but according to R. Strandberg's experiences, if they see that the other person is right, they are willing to concede. Frankness and splenetic comments are also very common among German negotiators. They do not like joking; the negotiation process must be relevant, consequential and persuasive.

Uncertainty avoidance

As seen from Table 2, Russians and Germans are both very cautious, especially Germans. They do not like unexpected situations that they cannot control, especially when they do not have enough information. That is why Germans examine their negotiation partner thoroughly before the actual meeting.

Russians are not so exhaustive, but they also prefer to avoid problems. They are very critical when the opposing party makes a mistake, although the results of the survey showed that Russians are often troublemakers themselves. For example V. Käärik and T. Sepp have a lot of experiences that affirm that Russians are usually late for meetings and fail to comply with deadlines.

Germans, on the contrary, are punctual. They do not like obscurity; that is why it is normal that translators are involved in the negotiating process to guarantee that both parties understand each other perfectly. For example, silence makes Germans very uncomfortable, because they think that they are not understood. But in M. Lublo's opinion, it can also mean that the opposing party is having doubts and that in turn makes Germans very cautious.

Both Russians and Germans like to have all contracts and agreements in writing, so the risk would be minimal. Such a formality is very important and makes them much more confident.

The abovementioned tendencies are summarized in Table 2 and refer to the answers given by the respondents in the following part. Table 2 expressively demonstrates that the results differ a lot from Hofstede's estimations. It can be seen how similar, in Estonians' opinion, Russians and Germans appear to be in the negotiating process. Even though the two cultures have developed in different conditions, they still have had a comparable impact on Estonians. The reason here may come from history, because Estonia was occupied by both Russia and Germany during World War II. So Estonians might have similar expectations of both nations.

Table 2. Comparison of Russians and Germans along Hofstede’s cultural dimensions in the context of negotiations from the Estonians’ perspective

Dimension	Germans	Explanation	Russians	Explanation
Power distance	Very high	Negotiations are very formal; titles are important; attitude depends on professional status – the higher in hierarchy, the more formal	Very high	The position of the parties in negotiation is very important; titles matter
Uncertainty avoidance	Very high	They have good knowledge of the partner before the negotiations; silence arouses suspicion; agreements in writing are important	High	The structure of negotiations is not very important; agreements in writing are significant; critical attitude towards the problems caused by the opposing party
Collectivism	Average	Decisions are made rather quickly; agreements are very fixed; no deviations from the subject are accepted	Average	The quick result is important, but through dependable relations; informal talks have a significant part in the negotiation process
Masculinity	High	Very strict; humor and negotiations do not belong together; there are no concessions in important questions	High	The higher the position, the more irrefutable opinions; it is possible, but complicated to achieve compromises

Discussion and implications

The surrounding cultural environment is most likely to influence those aspects of business that involve relations between individuals (e.g. management policies, leadership styles, communication patterns) and least likely to affect machine technologies. We have demonstrated that culture plays a role in the evaluation of one's partners' negotiating behavior. In our paper, we analyze how Estonians perceive German and Russian cultures through the lens of Hofstede's framework of cultural dimensions. We also explain some manifestations of the culture of the two above-mentioned ethnic/cultural populations.

The results will be discussed from the entrepreneurial perspective, considering three aspects – the potential role of stereotypes, the content of entrepreneurial education, and the role of entrepreneurs in the wider social context of this country.

First, differences in the perception could be a source of stereotypes. This complex subject-matter area may generate stereotypes of culture or, as Zarkada-Fraser (2001) says, "pictures in our heads" that serve as cognitive tools and as the reason for shaping a static conception: the elimination of boundaries and definition of "other-ness" requires the processing of information that is not available and even if it is available, it appears to be too vast to process." Stereotyping is the process of categorizing an individual as a member of a particular group (i.e. ethnicity) and assuming that the characteristics attributed to the group apply to the individual. Indeed, it helps in dealing with negotiations but stereotypes can lead to false deduction of information because social stereotypes about the nationalities are often based on little personal knowledge. Once stereotypes get accepted, it is difficult to change them. Our study enables entrepreneurs to compare their own experiences with other peoples' understandings about the negotiation partners and thus possibly avoid stereotyping and

accept the differences. It will make entrepreneurs more flexible and innovative in their communication.

Second, the training programs for entrepreneurs would include knowledge and exercises that accommodate them with cultural sensitivity, thus supplementing their intuition. Greenbank (2000) has suggested that training should attempt to reduce the types of bias that are inherent when he has found that owner-managers tend to combine informally absorbed information, heuristics and other short-cut methods in a more intuitively-based approach to decision-making. The relevance of cultural training is also demonstrated by Miles (2003) when he gives advice that Western businessmen can follow if they want to be effective in negotiations with their Chinese counterparts.

The results show that some aspects that Estonians have perceived in their negotiations partners' behavior are in accordance with the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede, while there are also some differences. These findings enable us to give some specific ideas for those who are going to participate in the negotiations where the cultural background has an important role. Indeed, more empirical research is needed for the development of effective training programs because our study shows that each ethnicity may have own perception of others and therefore the framework and data according to this construct have other meaning than that proposed by Hofstede (2001).

Third, entrepreneurs could serve as agents of integration in Estonia when we provide them with knowledge how to negotiate with Russians. Here the issue is the ethnic diversity in Estonia, where Estonians formed about 68% of its population, while 25–26% of the population belonged to the Russian-speaking minority (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarussians) in 2000. Their feeling of being the majority turned to the feeling of being a minority after Estonia regained independence. We propose this aspect in the same vein as Dyer and Ross (2003) analyze communication in small ethnic enterprises. They mention some advantages of direct

communication for ethnic small business, including the development of social ties, especially for those who find themselves in a minority position in society. Thus, if Estonians and Russians are able to understand each other better in entrepreneurial activities, it will benefit society as a whole as well. Accordingly, if we provide entrepreneurs with knowledge how to negotiate with Russians, their contacts will be more efficient, and entrepreneurs who are at the forefront in the use of new opportunities may disseminate positive attitudes to the rest of the business society.

The suggested implications are more related to policy-making issues than to activity guidelines stipulating how Estonians could negotiate with Germans and Russians. It is naturally a limitation of our study that we were not able to offer clear advice for entrepreneurs. Obviously, the variation among entrepreneurs is higher than our results have revealed and therefore we are afraid of generating stereotypes. The second limitation derives from the criticism towards Hofstede's approach, which argues that the dimensions are too broad and the indicators do not reflect the overall understanding of the whole nation at the same time (see, Clark, 2003; Sondergaard, 1994). This serious aspect and a detailed investigation could open up better opportunities for working out concrete guidelines for those who want to hold effective negotiations with Germans and Russians. Nevertheless, this study opens a door to further explorations – it would be both necessary and interesting to test our findings.

In order to be competent in social interactions, entrepreneurs must know how the cultural background impacts on the decisions made in the process of negotiations, or in other words, within a social context.

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Appendix 1. The measurement tool for the Russian culture

Uncertainty avoidance

- How important is fixed structure and formality of the negotiating process for Russians?
- How would a Russian negotiator act when a problem arises (postponement of a meeting, unpunctuality of the participants' or other. unforeseeable issues)?

Power distance

- What kind of attitude do Russian business partners have towards the negotiator's position (professions of participants etc.)?
- How do Russians regard the opinion of the participants having a lower position in the hierarchy?

Masculinity

- How rigidly do Russians hold on to their opinion?
- How would you comment on the expression "The goal celebrates the measure" when speaking of Russians?

Collectivism

- What is more important for Russians – a quick result or a good relationship with the opposite party?
- Which part of the negotiating process do Russians pay more attention?

Extra questions

- How many negotiations have you had with Russians?
- Have there been any interesting situations during the negotiating process with Russians? What?

Appendix 2. The measurement tool for the German culture

Collectivism

- How do you characterize Germans' speed of decision-making?
- What kind of attitude Germans take toward excursus during the negotiations?
- How does Germans regard interruption (discontinuation) of conversation?
- How do you characterize Germans when keeping their word?
- What kind of room placement Germans prefer?

Power distance

- How do Germans react when you address them by first names?
- What do Germans prefer and in what extent – formal or informal style during negotiations?

Masculinity

- How flexible Germans are in the negotiations?
- How blunt-spoken Germans are in their sayings?
- What kind of role-plays humor during the negotiations?

Uncertainty avoidance

- How do Germans safeguard themselves against misunderstandings?
- How venturesome is a German negotiator?
- How important are written contracts for Germans?
- What kind of attitude do Germans have towards their partner's silence?

Appendix 3. List of respondents

Interviews about Russians' behavior in the context of negotiations:

1. Andres Kask – OÜ Cantori – member of the board,
2. Rain Sepp – Jippii Balti – regional manager,
3. Priit Riim – OÜ Primus PR – executive,
4. Toivo Alt – AS Saarek – chairman of the council,
5. Toomas Sepp – OÜ Saare Dolomiit–Väo Kivi, Saaremaa – production manager,
6. Erki Lifljandski – OÜ Estinvait – executive,
7. Vahur Käärrik – AS Cista – executive,
8. Kaido Schmidt – OÜ Meritreid – executive.

Interviews about Germans' behavior in the context of negotiations:

9. Ave Sadam – Pärnumaa Environmental Service – forestry specialist,
10. Urmas Lõhmus – East AS – chairman of the council,
11. Tarmo Kulmar – University of Tartu, Faculty of Theology – Professor of Comparative Theology, PhD (theol.),
12. Andres Talijärv – Estonian Association of Forest Industries – managing director,
13. Monika Lublo – Department of Agriculture, Estonian Agricultural University, Faculty of Forestry – chief specialist,
14. Reidi Strandberg – Rödl & Partner OÜ,
15. Kristo Koger – Puitex AS – chairman of the board,
16. Eve Rebane – Department of Environment, Faculty of Forestry – arch specialist,
17. Sirje Puust-Mumme – Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry – manager of the department of international relations.