The View on Scandinavian Female Leaders
in China, Japan & Scandinavia
-A Comparative Study from the View of Female Scandinavian Managers

Department of Business Administration
International Business
Bachelor Thesis
Spring 2015

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, we would like to thank the five women that contributed to this thesis by offering us their precious time as well as their unique insights and experiences related to the topic. The empirical material collected from the respondents not only provided us with valuable information for our research, it also inspired us through new perceptions and understandings around the topic, thereby making us wanting to further explore the subject.

Secondly, we would also like to thank Em Roblin for her time and for sharing all her knowledge and experiences around Chinese women in managerial roles. We are very grateful for her allowing us to get these further insights that may only be obtainable through her kind of experiences.

Finally, we would like to extend thanks to our colleagues and classmates as well as to our tutor and supervisor Ramsin Yakob, who have contributed with feedback and comments along the process of the execution of this thesis, which would have been difficult to be without.

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Gothenburg, Sweden
02-06-2015
Abstract

Title: The view on Scandinavian female leaders in China, Japan and Scandinavia
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Background and Problem Discussion: As globalisation enhances, the cultural aspect gain in importance, making the incorporation of business and national cultures a key element in order to succeed. Companies are, to a larger and larger extent forced to manage differences in both organisational and national cultures in order to facilitate global growth, which includes the view on women as managers and leaders within organisations. Different perceptions of this may cause both personal and organisational implications if leading to negative differential treatment for women in managerial positions abroad. To avoid these potential issues, it is therefore important to explore the experiences around this subject as well as to understand the derivation behind the different perceptions and the way they express themselves in differential treatment.

Purpose: To explore and describe potential differences in the perception of female leadership in Scandinavia, China and Japan through the perspective of the Scandinavian female manager as well as to explore the possible origin behind them.

Method: This study has been conducted through qualitative empirical interviews with five Scandinavian female managers, all with experiences of working as managers in China, Japan or both. One informant interview regarding the general view on female managers in China was also conducted. Furthermore, the empirical material has been analysed and compared to applicable theories within the subject, this culture by culture, in order to make connections between the women’s experiences and the derivation of the possible differential treatment of them.

Conclusion: The study shows that differences exists between the three geographical areas, where generally, Scandinavia acknowledges the gender factor but does not let it affect the equal treatment of male and female managers, Japan considers gender to be an important factor resulting in unequal treatment for men and women, and China, where gender is not considered a factor and men and women are treated equally in management positions. The study also derives the origin behind the different treatment of Scandinavian women in management positions to the impact of national and organisational cultures, which in turn are influenced by the core values of the geographical area.
Definitions

*Culture* - The word culture comprises moral norms, values and behaviours which distinguish groups of people from each other, are inherited from previous generations and intended to be passed on (Gullestrup, 2006). In this thesis the word culture will be used in reference to the national culture.

*Organisational culture* - In accordance with the terminology used by Hofstede (2001), organisational cultures are distinguished from national cultures by analysing cultures within organisations while holding the national environment constant. The definition of organisational culture used in this paper is “The differences in collective mental programming found among people from different organisations, or parts thereof, within the same national context.” (Hofstede, 2001. p. 373).

*Scandinavia* - The geographical area entitled Scandinavia applies to three countries in Northern Europe, namely Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and is constituted based on the countries’ historical, cultural and linguistic similarities and relationships. Though the term is sometimes extended into including Iceland and the Faroe Islands, these areas are not included in the definition used in this paper (Encarta Online Encyclopedia, 2009).

*Senior managers* – The delimitation used for the definition of senior managers is “*the managers and executives at the highest level of an organisation*” (Qfinance – The Ultimate Finance Resource, 2009a).

*Middle Managers* – Middle managers are referred to as “*the position held by managers who are considered neither senior nor junior in an organisation*” (Qfinance – The Ultimate Finance Resource, 2009b).

*Junior Managers* – The definition for junior managers used is “*Managers at the lowest level of an organisation, considered as a group*” (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2015).

In order to clarify, this report will treat the concepts of *leadership* and *management* as well as *leaders* and *managers* as equivalents.
**Key words:** Female management, diversity management, cross-cultural management, gender equality, cultural perceptions

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1. Introduction

The first chapter of this report begins with a background of the chosen field, followed by an outline of possible challenges mentioned field may encounter. Thereafter, the research question and purpose of the study is disclosed further and the structure of the thesis described.

1.1 Background

As globalisation enhances, the cultural aspect gain in importance; making the incorporation of business and national cultures a key element in order to succeed (Lewis, 2006; House et al., 2004). Furthermore, it embodies a vast increase in cultural changes, originating from mass mobilisation and decreased differences in individualism and gender roles (Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2008). According to the research of Geert Hofstede, organisational cultures are identified in the practices by the employees whereas national cultures is foremost expressed through the core values of its population; although the first is greatly influenced by the second (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). Sequentially, national cultural dissimilarities may result in different views on hierarchy, management styles and gender equality in the working environment (Gullestrup, 2006; Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2008). Studies indicates that differences in leadership characteristics between the sexes are developed from the social processes within cultures where inhabitants learn to adapt and adjust to fulfil the expectations and demands from the society (Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2008; Widell & Mlekov, 2013); which tends to be different for the two genders (Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2008). These norms and expectations are then transmitted to the organizational cultures arising from that area (ibid). As an extension to this, it is shown that gender equality in the workplace is greater in cultures with a more equality based mind-set. However, no studies have been able to prove that gender has a direct effect on leadership styles; even though there are some suggesting so (Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2010). Yet, several studies confirm that women, in general, face more obstacles in their work towards becoming a manager than their male counterparts (ibid; Widell & Mlekov, 2013).

The question regarding female leaders and managers has been given more attention since the beginning of the 21st century (Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2008; Grant Thornton, 2015). A vast amount of studies has been made regarding female leadership, foremost in North America and Europe, and the question now stand if the theories developed through these studies are applicable to Asia and other geographical parts of the world (Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2008; Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2010).
The situation today shows that top management positions in the world are generally held by men, and furthermore, the gender distribution in senior management positions are often seen as an indicator of the amount of female managers in the organisation (Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2010). In writing moment, 22 % of senior leadership positions in the world are held by women and 32 % of the world’s enterprises have no female leaders (Grant Thornton, 2015). Additionally, the representation of female managers is highest at junior management levels (Diversity & Inclusion in Asia Network, 2011).

Statistics in this area show that the percentage of women in management positions deviate greatly depending on country and region. As an example, Sweden has a percentage of 28 when it comes to the proportion of senior management roles held by women in 2015, whereas Japan merely has a percentage of eight. However, numbers fluctuate vastly within regions as well, proven by the fact that 25% of the senior management roles in China are held by women (Grant Thornton, 2015). Moreover, 49.79% amongst the total workforce in China in 2011 were women, whereas the percentage of Japanese women in their workforce the same year only stood for 33.62%. The largest gap in the number of female managers in China and Japan are between the middle and senior managerial levels. However attitudes in Asia are changing, and Asian women now to a further extent strives to become more integrated in the working life, focusing more and more on their careers (Diversity & Inclusion in Asia Network, 2011).

1.2 Problem Discussion
When looking at different national cultures in the context of the increasing economic integration across borders, it is evident that differences in structures of management and leadership are going to cause cultural clashes (Tayeb, 1998; Widell & Mlekov, 2013). Since views on female leadership differ from nation to nation, industry to industry and company to company, potential problems can be a possible outcome when transferring one company structure regarding women as leaders formed by one culture to a company whose culture originates from another country (Lewis, 2006). In the case of this study, this entails a Scandinavian organisation’s culture being transferred into an Asian country’s national or organisational culture. If there are significant differences in how women are perceived as managers with official power to practice leadership and decision making, they could possibly result in ineffective working processes as well as the harming of business collaboration (Tayeb, 1996). In order for a leader to be able to perform and steer her employees towards the same goal, it is important that a female manager is treated with the same respect in both her country of origin as well as within other countries’ business environments (Widell & Mlekov, 2013). Therefore, in order to minimise the potential negative impacts based on different perceptions and expectations
of female leadership around the world, it is central to try to understand why these potential differences exist and where they come from (Parboteeah, Hoegl & Cullen, 2005).

Questions could be raised around this issue, due to its potential to cause difficulties not only for the women in leadership positions and their personal careers and lives, but also for the organisations that these women are representing. As mentioned, different views on female leadership and the differential treatment of them may in the long run result in inefficiency. A female manager that constantly has to work harder to prove herself, in comparison with her male colleagues, and continuously feel discouraged in her professional life will have to focus a large part of her energy on just gaining approval rather than to focus on her actual professional tasks. Set to extremes, this may thereafter lead to stress, physical and emotional health issues as well as the prevention of both the personal and the professional development of these women (Zevallos, 2013).

Organisational collaboration issues may also arise due to unequal perceptions and treatment of women and men when practicing leadership abroad. If a female leader from one company and its culture has got the assignment to represent it at another location and there is faced with resistance because she is a woman, this could cause friction between head offices and subsidiaries and put restraints on the relationship company-wise. The possibility of malfunctions in these collaborations can also affect the extent to which women want and get the chance to go abroad for work (Zevallos, 2014). Moreover, harming and discouraging the diversity of the workforce, is often proven to have negative impacts on organisations (Tayeb, 1998; Widell & Mlekov, 2013), this since there is a positive correlation between the number of women in managerial positions and the well-being of companies (Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2010). Therefore, competences risk getting lost under a cover of homogeneity. In order to build a harmonised path towards successful cross-cultural management, which is only going to gain in importance, it is thus crucial to explore and try to understand why these clashes occur and where they come from (Tayeb, 1996).

Though, it is not certain that potential perceived differences from a female perspective when working in another country originates from the national cultures being unlike or not. The problem could also be connected to sectors and industries, this if for instance a Scandinavian female leader working in an industry with a traditionally high presence of women does not experience any differences when practicing leadership within an Asian country or company compared to one in Scandinavia, while a woman in the same situation working in a traditionally male dominated industry does. Though, with the highly integrated global business environment seen today, organisational cultures are jarred together and influenced by one another. Therefore, the issues could also be seen as strictly organisational culture related. Moreover, there might also be a possibility that experienced
differences are based on purely personal characteristics, such as leadership style, age or ethnicity (Gelfand, Nishii & Raver, 2006). The reasons could be simple or have endless complexity.

1.3 Research Question
How are female Scandinavian leaders and managers perceived in Scandinavia, China and Japan? Which, if any, differences do they encounter regarding the perception of them in their work in China and Japan compared to their work in Scandinavia; and where do these differences derive from?

1.4 Purpose of The Study
To explore and describe potential differences in the perception of female leadership in Scandinavia, China and Japan through the perspective of the Scandinavian female manager as well as to explore the possible origin behind them.

1.5 Limitations of the Study
There are several approaches that can be taken in order to analyse this study’s question of issue. However, this thesis will attend to and focus on the view of the Scandinavian women with experiences as managers in China, Japan and Scandinavia. Additionally, limitations are made to only include women at senior management positions. The interviewees are all Swedish women employed by Swedish companies, however, the choice to maintain a Scandinavian focus on the thesis was founded in the interest of the authors as well as the applicability of chosen theories.

Moreover, there are many theories applicable to this research. Nevertheless the usage of theories has been limited to those deemed to be the most pertinent in regards to the research question. Furthermore, in accordance with Parboteah, Hoegl and Cullen (2005), Kostova’s (1997) recommendations to only use those elements within a theory that, suggested by the theory, is the most pertinent in regards to the research question has been applied to the use of the cultural dimensions theories applied in this thesis. Additionally, the decision to select the most relevant dimensions, and exclude the others, is founded in the attempt to delimitate the study and make it more graspable and trustworthy by focusing more closely on these aspects. Therefore, the choice has been made to only include the cultural dimensions of Masculinity, Power Distance and Individualism in Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory as well as the corresponding ones in the cultural dimensions of the GLOBE study. The justification of this is based on a sample of conducted studies with similar research question and purpose as the one of this thesis, such as de Jonge (2014), Grosvold (2011) and Parboteah, Hoegl and Cullen (2005). Moreover, high scores in chosen dimensions suggests that emphasis is put on social status, more focus is put on the individual career and a more aggressive
environment (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009), all characteristics the authors consider as highly influential on management and organisational structure; which thereby affects the view on women in management positions.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters; Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Culture and Leadership, Methodology, Empirical Findings, Analysis and Conclusion. Both chapter two and three addresses the applied theories. The chapters are outlined as follows:

1. *Introduction* - The introductory chapter provides the reader with a brief introduction and background to the chosen field of study, including a problematisation of the field. Thereafter, the purpose and limitations of the thesis are outlined together with the research question.

2. *Theoretical Framework* - In this chapter the theoretical background relevant to the study is introduced and described. The chapter is divided in three main parts: the first one including cultural dimension theories, the second part describes a theory regarding cultural tightness and looseness and the final part presents a new model developed in order to answer the research question.

3. *Culture and Leadership* - This chapter contains historical aspects together with brief descriptions of the studied cultures. The theories introduced in chapter two are applied, and the section of each culture outlines both general features and managerial aspects. The chapter ends with a cross-cultural comparison.

4. *Methodology* - This chapter explains and justifies the choice of method used in the thesis. Additionally, it also contains a response to potential criticism as well as descriptions of the executed methods and the thesis ethical approach.

5. *Empirical Findings* - In this chapter the empirical findings from the collected data is presented and described.

6. *Analysis* - The purpose of this chapter is to detect and analyse the empirical findings in relation to the chosen theoretical framework. The aim is to discover differences and similarities between the chosen cultures.

7. *Conclusion* - In the final chapter of this study, the analysis is linked to the research question and the drawn conclusions are presented. Additionally, suggestions for future research within this field is provided.
2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter describes, according to the study, relevant theories and information; it is initiated with two cultural dimension theories after which an additional theory is presented. Thereafter, previous and applicable theories are outlined and the chapter ends with a summary of the theories discussed, relating them to each other and the question of issue. Additionally, a new theoretical analysing model is introduced.

2.1 Cultural Dimension Theories

“A society does not appear to be formed primarily by a country’s geography or natural resources, rather it is formed by the values, attitudes and determination of its people.” (Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence & Sivesind, 2004. p.151).

Cross-cultural research has reached a new level of relevance, increasing the importance for companies to embrace cultural aspects in their businesses (Jones, 2007). Conducting research through cultural dimensions is considered an appropriate tool in cross-cultural examinations (Crown Relocations, n.d.) and two of the most esteemed studies within this fields, both of them using the concept of cultural dimensions (Taras, Steel & Kirkman, 2010), has therefore been included in this thesis.

2.1.1 Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

The theoretical framework developed by Geert Hofstede is the most well-known and cited study within the area of cultural dimensions (Jones, 2007; Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; Tung & Verbeke, 2010). The analysis is based on a study, carried out between 1967 and 1978, and the data collected from 32 questions asked in 40 countries. The study was conducted within the company IBM (Jones, 2007) and was presented in 1980 (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009). The theory contributes with a profound understanding of cross-cultural analysis and its relation to international business (Jones, 2007; Tung & Verbeke, 2010).

Beginning the description of the dimensions applied with the dimension of Power Distance, different societies have various views on the importance of status consistency within areas such as prestige, wealth and power; thereby causing inequality within organisations (Hofstede, 2001). Cultures with high Power Distance have a higher emphasis on traditional hierarchical structures, where women are typically subordinate to men, and therefore tends to be more accepting towards gender inequalities (Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen, 2005). Low Power Distance often correlates to more individualistic cultures, with more similarities with feminine values often connected with more women working as board directors (Grosvold, 2011). According to Hofstede (2001), a person’s view on equality, and thereby power distance, is implemented early in life by children’s mirroring of the elders during their
upbringing. Hence, cultural differences in family and school environments can result in differences in organisational power hierarchies, depending on the cultural context from which it originates.

The dimension of *Masculinity* (measured in the *MAS* index) estimates the implications the duality of the sexes has on different societies and how it is coped with differently in different cultures. The masculinity of a culture is of great significance regarding the gender division of manager roles and the perceiving of female managers (Hofstede, 2001). According to Hofstede (2001, p.297) "Masculinity stands for a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct". Furthermore, masculine and feminine societies create different hero types that may be transferred into the general view on leaders. Masculine societies often look upon leaders as assertive, decisive and ”aggressive” (in this context in a positive meaning), while feminine cultures not only put less heroic significance in the managerial role, where they tend to see the manager more like any other employee, managers within more feminine cultures are also usually less visible as well as more intuitive rather than decisive (Hofstede, 2001). Differences can be shown further in the dominance of different values in masculine and feminine societies, where masculine societies values success, money and rewards whereas feminine cultures focus more on interpersonal aspects, quality of life and nurturance (Holme & Solvang, 1996). Studies have also showed, that the less masculine a culture is, the more of the characters described for managers can be classified as female characteristics. Additionally, cultures with a high *MAS* index has a preference amongst women to select male bosses, leading to fewer women in managerial positions, which in turn leads to larger wage gaps between the genders. The opposite can be said for cultures with lower MAS index. Finally, studies show that the *MAS* index can be related to the percentage of women in the parliament where a lower *MAS* index correlates to more female ministers (Hofstede, 2001).

Moving on to the impact of the *Individualism* dimension, the level of individualism in a culture influences the characteristics of persons admitted to powerful positions within organisations (Hofstede, 2001). It also affects the competitive atmosphere within a company. In more individualistic cultures, focus is put on personal career while cooperation and teamwork are more evident characteristics in countries with low individualism (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009). Additionally, correlations can be drawn between high collectivism and large power distance in most cultures. Studies regarding the interdependence between Hofstede’s dimension of *Individualism* and *Masculinity* have shown contradictory results. However, the previously mentioned heroic view upon managers within masculine societies can be related to the individualistic view upon leaders (Hofstede, 2001).
Despite the study's wide recognition, it has been heavily discussed and subject to extensive criticism throughout the years. Such criticism includes the fact that the framework is based on one single company, the narrowness of the dimensions and the executions of the surveys, which are argued to have been conducted in a misleading way (Yeh, 1988). However, despite the criticism towards Hofstede’s theory of cultural dimensions, the positive feedback outweighs the negative and it is considered to have had a significant and valuable impact on descendant studies in the field (Tung & Verbeke, 2010; Jones, 2007); thereby it is consider being an appropriate framework to apply in this thesis.

2.1.2 The GLOBE Study
The GLOBE study (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness Research Program) initiated in 1994, analyses leadership and organisational behaviour as well as organisational and social cultures at different levels in the society. It was conducted in 62 countries and includes data collected from 17,300 managers (House et al., 2004; Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence & Sivesind, 2004; Diehl & Terlutter, 2006), from 951 organisations active in three different industries. Through the study, a theory with nine cultural dimensions was founded together with six global leadership styles, and the sectioning of participating countries in ten different groups (House et al., 2004; Diehl & Terlutter, 2006). The nine cultural dimensions are Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Institutional Collectivism, In-Group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Performance Orientation and Human Orientation, where the first six derives from Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Institutional Collectivism and In-Group Collectivism are linked to Hofstede’s dimension of Individuality and Gender Egalitarianism and Assertiveness is based on Hofstede’s Masculinity index (House et al., 2004) which is why these dimensions, in accordance with the reasoning behind the selection of Hofstede’s dimensions applied in this thesis, are the one analysed, together with the dimension of Power Distance.

Starting with the dimensions equivalent to Hofstede’s dimension of Individualism, Institutional and In-Group Collectivism, the latter one refers to the individual and how he or she expresses pride, loyalty etc. within organisations and families. The previous one focuses on the rewards and encouragement provided by organisational and societal institutions for collective action and distribution of resources (House et al., 2004). Characteristics of countries with high scores in both of the mentioned dimensions are that the good of the collectivism is prioritised, distinctions are made between groups and decisions are made collectively (Growell Global Leadership Solutions, 2015).
Moving on to the dimensions of Gender Egalitarianism and Assertiveness, comparable with Hofstede’s Masculinity index, Gender Egalitarianism evaluate the degree to which a society strives to eliminate gender inequalities (House et al., 2004) and has strongly been correlated with the most esteemed of the leadership styles, charismatic/value based leadership (Growell Global Leadership Solutions, 2015). Continuing with the dimension of Assertiveness, it measures how aggressive and confrontational individuals in a society are in different social situations, hence a high score in Assertiveness relates to a masculine culture in Hofstede’s M.A.S index (House et al., 2004). These cultures are recognised as highly competitive and success driven, using direct communication and attempting to have control over the situation (Growell Global Leadership Solutions, 2015).

Finally, the dimension of Power Distance is practically identical with Hofstede’s, assessing the importance of the division of power and the differences in behaviour in regard to the amount of power possessed (House et al., 2004; Hofstede, 2001).

As mentioned, in addition to the nine cultural dimensions, ten cultural clusters were identified. The sectioning of these clusters was formed on the basis of results from previous studies combined with common characteristics within language, geography and religion (House et al., 2004; Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence & Sivesind, 2004). Moreover, the study confirmed that inhabitants within the same cultural cluster have similar views on organisational structure and leadership behaviour (Emmerik, Euwema & Wendt, 2008). The clusters used in this thesis are Confucian Asia and Northern Europe.

Lastly, the six leadership styles produced from the GLOBE study will, due to their limited relevance for the research question, not be further elaborated in this chapter. However, the styles relevant to the chosen geographical areas of this thesis are described under the section of management styles for mentioned area respectively.

Criticism towards the GLOBE study has contained accusations towards its credibility due to the relatively small number of samples; approximately 250 subjects per culture. Additionally, the selection of participants has been criticised, the study only included middle level managers (Diehl & Terlutter, 2006), together with the execution since individually-based surveys are analysed at a cross-cultural level (Peterson & Castro, 2006; Fischer, 2009). Nevertheless, the GLOBE study is looked upon as the most ambitious and comprehensive study within this area since Hofstede’s (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; Taras, Steel & Kirkman, 2010; Centre for Creative Leadership, 2014), which makes it a good complement in this thesis.
2.2 Cultural Tightness Theory

National cultures, put in another context than previously mentioned theories, can be traced to the presence and perspective of women as leaders. According to a study made by Toh and Leonardelli (2012), the presence and emergence of women in leadership can be correlated to the “tightness” versus “looseness” phenomena of a nation's culture. The tightness or looseness of a culture is explained through the perspective of norms within a society or culture (Toh & Leonardelli, 2012). If the norms are strongly implemented and rooted in the societal context as well as implies for vast implications if not followed, the culture can be defined as tight (Triandis, 2004; Carpenter, 2000; Gelfand et al., 2006). Examples of countries experiencing culture tightness according to this definition are Pakistan, Malaysia, Norway and Japan. So called loose cultures on the other hand are characterised by being more tolerant regarding deviation from norms and have, in general, a larger uncleanness when it comes to which norms are valid or not. Ukraine, Israel, Netherlands and Australia are here seen as loose cultures (Gelfand et al., 2011).

When looking at Toh and Leonardelli’s study and how they relate the tightness and looseness approach to women in leadership positions, it states that it sees women as leaders in another perspective than that of purely culture characteristics and practices. Instead of these specific practices, the tightness or looseness of a culture defines how accepting it is to women as leaders. According to the study, a tight culture is more reluctant to change than a loose one, since norms here are deeply rooted and rarely questioned. Therefore, when looking at the existing traditional prejudices that in general shows a strong correlation between men and leadership, in a tight culture, the probability of women emerging and being accepted as leaders is smaller than in a loose one (Toh & Leonardelli, 2012).

However, the study found one derogation that the theory above could not validate. Norway, which in the research indicated a significantly tight culture, still has one of the highest numbers of female board representation (Catalyst, 2011). The authors are facing this ambiguity by explaining the tendency of tight cultures to accept and follow gender egalitarianism policies and norms implemented by authorities. They claim that once implemented, norms are accepted to a further extent and therefore are more likely to get a greater impact in tight cultures than in loose ones. Hence, loose cultures are according to the study more likely to accept and encourage women in leadership without authority encouragement, while with it, tight cultures have a tendency of stronger implementing gender egalitarianism (Toh & Leonardelli, 2012). Toh & Leonardelli (2012) therefore
suggests that their studies can support the adoption of different strategies for e.g. gender quotas depending on the nation.

Critic can however be directed at the original study for being too generic and vast, since it only puts states and their geographical borders into account when putting nations into the tightness and looseness context. Harrington & Gelfand (2014) for instance brings up the U.S.A as an example of a nation that geographically holds several cultures within its borders, which could potentially be problematic in a discussion of how tight or loose the national culture as a whole is. Furthermore, Kates (2011) reason that the study is more a presentation of different culture correlations than a presentation of real evidence. The well-cited study developed by Gelfand et al. (2011) illustrated 33 nation’s culture tightness and looseness. There have been further developments and evolution of this study, where the list of countries examined has been prolonged e.g. Uz (2014).

2.3 Perception of Female Managers Model
From the theories previously introduced, a number of key factors are distinguished as strongly influential over the view on women in manager and leadership positions within different cultures. Because none of the mentioned theories take all factors under consideration simultaneously a new model, based on the factors from the previous ones, has been created in order to answer the research question (Figure 1). The Perception of Female Managers Model consists of five factors, of which four regards cultural dimensions and one cultural tightness. The cultural dimensions, based on Hofstede’s and the GLOBE study’s, included are: Power Distance, Individuality, Gender Egalitarianism and Assertiveness.

Regarding the dimensions which differ between Hofstede and GLOBE the justification for using Hofstede’s definition of Individualism is based on the fact that focus is put on Individualism versus Group Collectivism in this model whereas in the two dimensions representing the same dimension in GLOBE, In-Group Individualism and Institutional Individualism, focus is also put on how these values take form in organisational institutions and in individuals way of expressing pride etc. These are features the authors argue to have less impact on the view on women in management positions and are therefore less relevant for the purpose of the model. Continuing with the dimensions of Gender Egalitarianism and Assertiveness, equivalent to Hofstede’s Masculinity index; the choice of using the GLOBE dimensions is founded in the fact that they are more detailed in areas concerning the question of issue. Gender Egalitarianism is more related to the general view of women and their situation in a culture whereas Assertiveness takes in consideration characteristics classified as male or
female which makes it relevant to the question by illustrating the importance of male and female characteristics in a culture.

The factor of *Cultural Tightness* is included in order to further analyse the cultures flexibility to adjust to the impacts generated from, amongst other things, the new found spotlight on gender equality and to new values, demands and expectations that may derive from it.

Regarding the second layer of the model, two aspects of national culture, influenced by the dimensions on the first layer, are classified as having an impact on the perception of female managers. Additionally, the characteristics of the organisation studied, which also derives from the dimensions in the previous layer, may influence mentioned perception as well. However, the organisation does not necessarily originate from the same culture as the one being studied, hence the arrow indicating organisational cultures impact of the perception of female managers is dashed in order to clarify.

**Perception of Female Managers Model**

In order to fully answer the question of issue, which is the view on Scandinavian women in manager positions in Japan, China and Scandinavia, the differences between them as well as the underlying reasons for it, historical influences within the clusters will be analysed in order to determine where the values in the different factors originates from. This will be done in chapter three, through describing culture and leadership in the different cultures. The model will then be tested towards the new data gathered from the conducted interviews.
2.4 Summary of Theoretical Framework

In order to facilitate for the reader a brief summary of the theoretical framework used in this thesis has been made in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Applied Dimensions</th>
<th>Key Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions</td>
<td>• Power Distance</td>
<td>Description of national and organisational cultures through six cultural dimensions derived from studies in 40 countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Masculinity</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Individualism</td>
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<tr>
<td>GLOBE Theory</td>
<td>• Institutional Individualism</td>
<td>Classification of countries into nine cultural dimensions, six leadership styles and ten cultural clusters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In-Group Collectivism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gender Egalitarianism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Assertiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Power Distance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Tightness Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td>Describing how a country’s cultural tightness/ looseness affects the emergence of women as managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Female Managers Model</td>
<td>• Power Distance</td>
<td>A summarising model of above mentioned theories composed in order to relate their contributing factors to the perception of female managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Individualism</td>
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<td>• Gender Egalitarianism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Cultural Tightness</td>
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Own Table: Table 1 – Summary of Theoretical Framework
3. Culture and Leadership
The Culture and Leadership chapter of this thesis includes an outlining of the different cultures within the geographical areas analysed. Each section is divided in two parts, the first one describing the culture’s main characteristics and general features and the second part focusing in more detail on the managerial aspects within the culture. The chapter ends with a short cross-cultural comparison where the findings are related to each other.

3.1 Scandinavian Culture
Scandinavians are characterised as modest, punctual and honest and three keywords that describes the Scandinavian culture are prudence, restraint and stability. The Scandinavian countries have been connected to each other since the age of the Vikings and hence have a number of features in common (Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence & Sivesind, 2004). This has led to Sweden and Denmark being sectioned in the same cultural cluster in the GLOBE study, namely Nordic Countries, unfortunately Norway was not a part of the study (House et al., 2004; Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence & Sivesind, 2004). Mentioned similarities are also noticed in their adjacent scores in Hofstede’s cultural framework where the greatest difference, amongst the dimensions taken into consideration in this thesis, is 13 (Appendix 1). This difference is encountered in the dimension of Power Distance where Denmark, with a score of 18, is the country amongst the EU27* with the highest ranks in terms of independency for the employees. Sweden and Norway both scores 31 in this dimension. Nevertheless, all three countries have a low Power Distance indicating a decentralised working culture with emphasis on equality and independence (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). The importance of independence is further expressed in the dimension of Individualism where all three countries scores as highly individualistic. The Scandinavians first and foremost care for their immediate family (The Hofstede Centre, 2015), yet, the distinctive characteristic of the Scandinavian social welfare system is that everyone is entitled to social benefits, regardless of previous working experience or lack thereof (Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence & Sivesind, 2004). In terms of employment, the individualistic approach is noticeable since Scandinavians tends to think in terms of individualistic careers and the relationship between the employer and employee is looked upon as mutually beneficial (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). Regarding the Masculinity dimension, Sweden and Norway are the two most feminine countries in Hofstede’s study; which indicates that the cultural features of most importance to the Scandinavians are caring for others and quality of life (The Hofstede Centre, 2015; Lewis, 2006). Additionally, Sweden and Denmark scores 5.15 respectively 5.08 in the dimension of Gender Egalitarianism and 3.61 respectively 3.39 in the Assertiveness dimension in the GLOBE study; meaning

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1 *The states included in this categorisation can be found here: [http://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/eu-27](http://datacollection.jrc.ec.europa.eu/eu-27).
both countries work hard on achieving equality between the genders and confirming Hofstede’s result that female characteristics are considered important (House et al., 2004).

Moreover, the Scandinavian countries view on women can be shown in their work to achieve gender equality (NIKK, 2014). According to the Gender Gap Report 2014, Norway, Sweden and Denmark scores third, fourth and fifth place (World Economic Forum, 2014) and in another study measuring the skew distribution between the sexes on a scale from 0-1, where 0 represents absolute equality, the Scandinavian countries scores between 0.055 and 0.066; indicating good equality between the sexes (Globalis, 2015). Additionally, all countries took part in constituting a common action plan between the Nordic countries in order to achieve gender equality in 1989 (NIKK, 2014).

Another key element in the Scandinavian lifestyle, and an underlying reason for its cultural features, is what is known as The Law of Jante (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). The Law of Jante was developed and published by Aksel Sandemose in 1933 and consists of ten commandments such as, “you shall not think you are wiser than us” and “you shall not think you are better than us” (NE, 2015). The core of this concept is that the culture discourages people from distinguishing themselves in ways that make them appear superior to others (Scott, 2013, 18 December; The Hofstede Centre, 2015). Moreover, this can be related to the Swedish word ”lagom” which stands for moderation, sufficiency and ”just the right amount” (SAOB, 2014), which correlates to the Swedish welfare system where no one has too much and everyone has enough (Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence & Sivesind, 2004).

Regarding the tightness of the Scandinavian cultures, though no study could be found that included all three of the countries, Sweden scores as loose (Uz, 2014) while Norway scores as tight (Toh & Leonardelli, 2012); Denmark falls in between with a score fairly close to the middle (Uz, 2014).

3.1.1 Scandinavian Management Culture
According to Schramm–Nielsen, Lawrence and Sivesind (2004) the success of Scandinavian management lies in the contextual, cultural and historical strengths of the region. Furthermore, management styles in the Scandinavian countries have four main characteristics in common:

- **Egalitarianism** – no one should be superior or different.
- **Participation** – a system of industrial democracy where employees are able to participate in the decision-making is well implemented.
- **Stable workforce** – People tend to stay in the same city as previous generations.
- **Decency** – It is important for companies to have decent working environments and contracts of employment (Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence & Sivesind, 2004).


The GLOBE study concluded, as mentioned in chapter two, six leadership styles, affecting which characteristics a leader should possess in order to be successful in different cultures. Besides the first two categories, Charismatic/Value based and Team-oriented, which are seen as important features in all cultures (House et al., 2004), the Scandinavian countries scored high in the Participating style, meaning that a successful leader in Scandinavia "Encourages input from others in decision making and implementation and emphasizes delegation and equality." (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2014 p.4). Sweden also scored high in the Human style which emphasis compassion and is concerned with the wellbeing of others (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2014).

Furthermore, the ideal Scandinavian managers are described as managers who gathers input from their employees when decisions are taken, yet, can make decisions themselves while remaining democratic (Lennéer-Axelsson & Thylefors, 2005). Moreover the low Power Distance is shown in the availability for discussion and accessibility of the manager for the subordinates in all countries; in Sweden this has resulted in the implementation of a law stating that all important decisions must be discussed with affected employees before executed (Lewis, 2006). The importance of equality and participation is further established in Scandinavian managers references to the team as being responsible for success rather than accepting it themselves (Schramm-Nielsen, Lawrence & Sivesind, 2004).

3.2 Asian Culture
China and Japan have, like the Scandinavian countries, an interlinked history (Lewis, 2006) and in the GLOBE study both countries were sectioned in the same cultural cluster, namely Confucian Asia (House et al., 2004). The culture of Confucian Asia has been strongly influenced by the Chinese culture (Ashkanasy, 2002; Lewis, 2006); which in turn has its main influence from Confucianism (Lewis, 2006) where emphasis is put on network and trust, and collectivism is regarded as highly important (Ashkanasy, 2002).

Confucianism is a philosophical way of thinking named after the Chinese philosopher Confucius (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; NE, 2015). Two of the key principles are that the family is the prototype for all social organisations and that the stability of the society is based on unequal status relationships between people (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Lewis, 2006). However, unequal relationships do not provide the superiors with authority to unquestioned do what they please, with superiority comes a mandatory responsibility over those inferior to you (Lewis, 2006). There are five key relationships from which Confucian cultures build their ethical behaviour (the first one mentioned in each pair is superior the other):
1. Ruler - Subject
2. Father - Son
3. Older brother – Younger brother
4. Husband – Wife
5. Senior friend – Junior friend


Confucianism is often linked to a long-term approach (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009), which can be seen in the Long-term orientation index where the top five consisted of Confucian Asian countries, amongst them China in first place and Japan in fourth (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Additionally, studies show that Confucianism is linked with certain scores in Hofstede’s dimensions, where countries in Confucian Asia scores high in Power Distance, low in Individualism and middle too high in Masculinity (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). When looking at China and Japan and their scores in mentioned dimensions they do not contradict mentioned theory. However, nor do they confirm them with clarity (Appendix 2).

Firstly, there is the dimension of Power Distance, here China markedly confirms the thesis with a score of 80, whereas Japan with a score of 54 barely falls on the upper half of the spectrum, which questions the definition of what counts as high. Yet, as mentioned before it does not contradict the thesis (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). The hierarchy in the Japanese society is evident in working environments (Lewis, 2006; The Hofstede Centre, 2015), however, everyone is born equal and has the potential to climb higher in the hierarchies provided he, this does not apply to women, works hard enough (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). In China on the other hand, one should not try to evolve beyond one’s rank (Farh, Hackett & Liang, 2007; The Hofstede Centre, 2015).

Secondly, the same situation regarding the confirmation of the thesis is noticed in the dimension of Individualism where China confirms the thesis with a low index and Japan questions it with an index placing them on the borderline, namely 46 (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). China is a highly collectivistic country, always prioritising the well-being of the group and showing hostility towards those outside the group; whereas Japan puts more focus on group harmony and loyalty to their company (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; The Hofstede Centre, 2015).
Finally, the thesis is fully backed up in the third dimension where both China and Japan scores high in the *Masculinity* index and where masculine characteristics such as down prioritising leisure time is evident in both countries. Moreover, with a score of 95, Japan is the most masculine country in the world (The Hofstede Centre, 2015), making it hard for women to advance in their careers (The Hofstede Centre, 2015; The Economist, 2014). Connecting this to the dimensions of *Gender Egalitarianism* and *Assertiveness* from the GLOBE study, Japan scores 5.56 in the latter and 4.33 in the precious one whilst China has a score of 5.44 respectively 3.68. This indicates Japan is the more masculine society of the two, however still put more emphasis on gender equality (House et. al., 2004).

Moving on with the special characteristics of the two cultures, despite their mutual heritage China and Japan does not share cultural aspects in the same extent as the Scandinavian cultures. Starting with China, as the world's largest populated country and home to the world's oldest society, it regards itself as the centre of the universe. Despite the fact that it has been isolated for most of the time throughout the history, Chinese culture has had a significant impact on the cultures of Southeast Asia (Lewis, 2006). The social structure in China focuses on hierarchical organisation, collectivistic functioning and structural tightness (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009). They believe they have a cultural superiority, including values such as: modesty, loyalty and trustworthiness. Additionally, the Chinese are looked upon as having a rather hostile view on foreigners; partially founded in the invasions during the Opium war. Finally, the Chinese culture is vastly influenced by, besides Confucianism, Taoism, Feng Shui and the system of animal years, where individuals are given qualities based on their birth animal (Lewis, 2006). Regarding the view on women in Chinese cultures, strong influences can be detected back to Confucianism where, as mentioned, the woman is inferior to the man. Likewise, influences can also be found from the concept of looking at the world through yin and yang; where women represents yin and are therefore considered more fragile, receptive and passive while the men, representing yang, are looked upon as hard, assertive and dominating (Asia Society, 2015). However, China has become more equal since the founding of the Republic of China, whose first law introduced regarded the prohibition of forced marriage (Malmefjäll, 2010, 4 October). Looking at the equality studies mentioned in regards to the Scandinavian view on women, China scores on place 87 in the Gender gap report (World Economic Forum, 2014) and has a contortion between the sexes of 0,213 (Globalis, 2015).

Continuing with Japan, mixed influences of Confucianism and Buddhism has led to collectivism, interdependence and harmony being the cornerstones in the Japanese culture (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009). The culture varies vastly from any other culture, though as mentioned it is greatly
influenced by China. The core values are ultra-honesty, modesty, shyness and sense of honour and the Japanese population is characterised as being punctual and having an uneasiness regarding foreigners (Lewis, 2006). However, an overall conservative view on women, influenced by their inferior position within Confucianism, still exists in the country and the expression “good wife, wise mother” remains common. Yet, changes can be detected within this area with more women choosing work and career over the traditional values (Sveriges Ambassad, 2007). Nevertheless there is still a long way to go in order to achieve equality; Japan scored number 104 in the Gender gap report 2014 (World Economic Forum, 2013) and 0.131 in the study regarding the skewed distribution between the sexes (Globalis, 2015). Furthermore, they put great importance in the receiving and returning of obligations and the culture is greatly influenced by the Japanese language (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009).

As a closing note in the description of the two cultures, a general characteristic of all Confucian Asian countries are their way of adapting to a changing world environment as well as their openness towards external influences and customs (Ashkanasy, 2002). However, both countries categorises as relatively tight in the tight versus loose theory (Toh & Leonardelli, 2012).

3.2.1 Asian Management Culture

The Asian culture, foremost through the Confucian values, has had a significant influence over the management and leadership styles in Confucian Asia (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; Peus, Braun & Knipfer, 2014); where social relationships, harmony, collectivism and trust are factors implemented in the leadership culture (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009). According to Alves, Manz and Butterfield (2005), there are six philosophical areas on which Confucian management and leadership is based on: change, human nature, culture, governance and interdependence. (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009).

Regarding the six leadership styles in the GLOBE study, both China and Japan scored high in the Participative leadership style, as well as in Charismatic/Value based and Team-oriented which are, as mentioned, seen to be contributing to popular leadership styles in most countries (House et al., 2004).

Continuing by looking at the characteristics special to each country’s management culture; the Chinese management culture’s key features are inequality and respect (World Business Culture, 2013). Senior managers delegates tasks downstream and subordinates are expected to be told what to do. Additionally, the manager must be obeyed and confrontation is avoided at all costs (World Business Culture, 2013; Lewis, 2006). There is a vast number of family owned businesses in China in which the senior male inherit the position as top manager. As in the families, the senior managers
must therefore be shown respect and attention at all times; something which has influenced the general management culture in China (Lewis, 2006), this since the ideal manager is looked upon as a father figure (World Business Culture, 2013; Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; Peus, Braun & Knipfer, 2014), with traits such as being a propitious autocrat (Lewis, 2006). The senior managers in China often have close contacts with the Communist Party (World Business Culture, 2013).

Moving on to the Japanese management style culture, its cornerstones are collectivism and hierarchy (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; Lewis, 2006; World Business Culture, 2013). The general view on management is strongly hierarchical focusing on age, education and gender as the important factors (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009). However, the higher in the hierarchy you look, the more important the collectivistic features get; and the more important it becomes for the managers to show collectivistic values and the prioritising of the group. Accordingly, the main tasks for a manager are to provide the group with a good environment to thrive in (World Business Culture, 2013), for which he is seen as the “consensus builder” (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009). However, in accordance with the Confucian values, Japanese managers possess substantial power, yet, they have little to do with the everyday business. Ideas often originate in the lower hierarchical levels after which they make their way up the hierarchies to the top management (Lewis, 2006; World Business Culture, 2013). The suggestion has to be approved at every level before being passed on upwards (Lewis, 2006). Decisions are discussed and taken collectively (Lewis, 2006; Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1998).

3.3 Cross-Cultural Comparisons
When comparing cultures and cultural clusters to each other, using established and trustworthy categorisations is essential, this since it helps in the search for unity as well as with the clarification of why inhabitants of a certain culture act the way they do (Lewis, 2006). Therefore, this section of the thesis will use the cultural analysing theories and models explained in chapter two.

Starting with the comparison according to the presented cultural dimensions of Hofstede, differences and similarities can be detected in each dimension. The dimension of Power Distance is the one where the Scandinavian countries differ the most, however, they all remain in the lower half indicating small power distance, characterised by decentralisation, equality and independence. Contradictory to this, China has a high power distance where inequality is considered an important factor for a successful society. Looking at Japan, with a score of 54 it places itself at the upper half, however close to the middle and when strictly looking at the scores it falls closer to Sweden and Norway than China. This can also be detected in the social culture where Japan has several similarities with the Scandinavian
culture; however, the business culture in Japan is more similar to the Chinese one, where importance is put on hierarchy.

Moving on to the dimension of *Individualism*, Scandinavia scores as highly individualistic, while at the same time indicating strong collectivistic values in their welfare systems. Again, China takes the part of the other extreme by being highly collectivistic and Japan falls in the middle with a closer distance to Norway and the same distance to Sweden as to China. However, the Japanese show more distinct group-dynamics in more aspects that the Scandinavians.

In the final cultural dimension analysed in this thesis, namely *Masculinity*, the differences between the two cultural clusters are the most distinct. The Scandinavian countries are extremely feminine with Norway and Sweden being the most feminine countries in the world whereas Confucian Asian countries have a high masculinity with Japan being the most masculine society in the world. One of the biggest differences here is constituted of the fact that Scandinavia as a feminine culture put high value on quality of life whereas China and Japan put little importance on spare time. This is confirmed by the scores in the dimensions *Gender Equality* and *Assertiveness* where the Scandinavian countries scores reflect low assertiveness and comprehensive work towards gender equality whilst the results from the Asian Confucian countries indicates high assertiveness and comparatively low effort put on achieving gender equality.

Moving on to the final dimension of the Perception of Female Managers model, and the third theory analysed in this thesis, *Cultural Tightness*. The tightness or looseness of a country does not seem to fall in line with the cultural clusters, this since Norway is considered tight and Sweden loose. Comparing with the Asian countries examined in this thesis, both China and Japan is considered as relatively tight, with high importance put on cultural norms.

Continuing by looking at differences and similarities in other aspects of the cultures the Scandinavian culture is highly influenced by the Law of Jante which promotes collectivistic values, the concept of "lagom" and the belief that no one is superior to another. China and Japan are here greatly influenced by Confucianism in which stability is based on inequality, and collectivism as well as network and trust are important features; which shows that both cultural clusters put high emphasis on social responsibility and collectivism. However, it takes form in different ways. Subsequently, some of the valued features in the different cultures are modesty, loyalty and trustworthiness in China and honesty, modesty and punctuality in Japan and Scandinavia. Hence, it is clear that the
common history countries in both cultural clusters have has interlinked the Scandinavian countries cultures more than the Confucian Asian ones.

Moving over to the management culture in both clusters, all countries, except Norway who was not a part of the study, considered the leadership styles Charismatic/Value based, Team-oriented and Participating as the top three in successful leadership. However the ideal view of a manager and the overall managerial culture varies between the cultures. The ideal Scandinavian manager gathers input from its employees and the decisions are collectively taken and discussed whereas a Chinese ideal manager bare resemblance to an autocrat father figure and delegate downwards. The Japanese management culture differs from both the Scandinavian and Chinese one, but yet share characteristics with both, this since hierarchy is of great importance and collectivism is essential during the decision process. However, the most important feature of a Japanese manager is to create a prosperous working environment for the employees.
4. Methodology

This chapter includes a description and motivation of the methods for the theoretical framework and data collection; as well as the overall approach used when conducting the thesis. Chosen methods are then disclosed and justified and the execution of each method is described and the proceedings outlined. Furthermore, potential criticism towards the study has been noted and responded to. Finally, the chapter ends with an outline of the method analysis and the thesis ethical position.

4.1 Scientific Approach

According to Bryman & Bell (2007), there are three scientific approaches with regards to the understanding and the interpretation of empirical texts and theories. These are the so called qualitative content analysis, semiotics and hermeneutics approaches. The latter mentioned is the approach through which this study is viewed.

The hermeneutics approach is characterised by interpretation and understanding through the context of the empirical material’s origin. In line with the approach, in order to create a deeper understanding of the content in question, it is essential to take the author’s aspects as well as the social and historical context from where it was produced, into consideration (Bryman & Bell, 2007). When examining research questions in line with the one chosen for this thesis, this approach is considered being the most relevant since:

1. The nature of our purpose is to further deepen the understanding of the reasons behind a specific attitude and behaviour towards women as leaders, possibly created through historical, social and cultural contexts, and

2. The choice of method for collecting empirical material is based on individuals with different origins, backgrounds and perspectives of the context they live and operate in.

Therefore, in order to seek this understanding, it is vital to see the contextual impact behind the empirical material, theories and information used in this thesis. With the hermeneutic approach and the deeper awareness it provides, the hope is to further increase the understanding by connecting theory and empirical information and interpret it in the way of the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle is a central process of understanding within the hermeneutic approach, which highlights the importance of comprehending parts to make sense of the whole picture, this in order to create a circular way of understanding (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008).
4.2 Research Method

4.2.1 Qualitative Method
According to the definition used by Holme and Solvang (1996), a method is a problem solving tool in the attempt to reach new knowledge. The process behind the gathering of empirical data is usually broken down to two main methods; qualitative and quantitative, for which the principal dissimilarities are the use of numbers and statistics (Holme & Solvang, 1996; Taylor, 2005). A qualitative method, used in this thesis, emphasises the usage of words rather than numbers, as opposed to the quantitative method (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Sekaran, 2003). The main focus lies on information gathering in order to provide a deeper understanding of the research question and the environment in which it occurs. Furthermore, qualitative studies are characterised by a close relationship towards the participants of the study and an attempt to examine the research question from their position (Holme & Solvang, 1996; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008), which aligns with the purpose of this thesis. However, the qualitative method has been subject for criticism, where it has been argued to be too subjective and relying too much on the researchers’ unsystematic views regarding the relevancy of gathered information. Additional criticism towards the method has included its lack of transparency and hardness to replicate due to its unstructured manner as well as its problems of generalisations since it includes a smaller amount of data gathering (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Yet again, the purpose of qualitative research is not to create standardised theories and generalisations. There are several research methods through which a qualitative study can be conducted; such as qualitative interviewing (Holme & Solvang, 1996), which is the method used in this study.

4.2.2 Justification of the Choice of Research Method
The qualitative method has been argued to be the most appropriate tool to use when conducting a study where the studied objects are acting persons and the main interest lies in the examination of social realities and people's perception of it (Holme & Solvang, 1996; Bryman & Bell, 2007). This aligns with the purpose of this study, which is to illustrate potential differences in female leadership in China, Japan and Scandinavia through the perspective of the Scandinavian female leader as well as to explore the possible origin behind them, thereby making it the most suitable method for this thesis. Furthermore, the qualitative method has been the method mostly used before in studies regarding women in women managers careers (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The combination of qualitative gathering of data and analyses of previous studies and literature within the research area was therefore chosen to answer our research question thoroughly.
4.3 Research Approach
There are two main approaches to research, namely the deductive and the inductive approach. The deductive approach often derives from a logical reasoning, where rationality and theory creates a hypothesis which thereafter is tested with empirical research. The hypothesis can thus be either confirmed or rejected with the help of the research findings. Contradictory, the inductive approach denotes the procedure where the empirical findings from several specific cases is the foundation of the hypothesis or theory. The latter is therefore discovered through the outcomes of the researched material. Even though it is said that quantitative research often is associated with the deductive approach and respectively that the qualitative research often is linked to the inductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2007), in practice one or the other approach is seldom used on its own (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008).

The two above mentioned approaches both have their shortcomings and are criticized by Alvesson & Sköldberg (2008) for being somewhat mechanic or flat and for not seeking explanations or underlying reasons behind findings. The just mentioned authors, unlike Bryman & Bell (2007), therefore suggests a third approach. The abductive approach is more process oriented than the two traditional ones and both empirical research and theory are related to each other through the research procedure. It allows the researcher to use theory as inspiration and to see pattern formations that can help explaining empirical results, as well as lets the empirical material itself result in new theories. The abductive approach can therefore be seen as somewhat of a combination between the deductive and the inductive approach, however, with an underlying intention of further explaining and understanding (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). Based on the nature of our purpose to understand and examining reasons regarding the question of issue as well as the arguments just described, we find that the abductive approach is the most relevant to use in this study. The characteristics of the approach are also in line with the hermeneutics view and the contextual understanding method previously defined to be our scientific approach.

4.4 Developing the Theoretical Framework

4.4.1 Literature Sources
Conducting scientific research includes the use of primary, secondary and tertiary literature sources. Primary data consists of original material that presents the reader with new thinking, report a discovery or share new information (Saunders et.al, 2003); it is collected by the researcher through respondents, observations and scientific measurements. The advantage of using primary data lies in the validity of the gathered information, its conformity towards the research question, whereas the disadvantages lies in its time consuming process and restricted availability (Eriksson & Wiedersheim, 2014). Moving on to the source of secondary data, this entails already existing data which do not
need to be collected by the researcher, thereby including sources such as books, annual reports, organisational web pages and governmental publications (Saunders et.al, 2003; Sekaran, 2003). The strengths of secondary sources include their vast extent and availability while their weakness is the conformity with the research question, as opposed to primary sources (Eriksson & Wiedersheim, 2014). Finally, tertiary sources are databases, encyclopedias and fact books, which provides a collection and overview of primary and secondary data within a specific field (Saunders et.al, 2003).

In this thesis, information from all three sources has been used. Tertiary sources were used to gain a broader understanding of the environments influencing our research question, as well as to locate previous studies made in mentioned areas, providing us with an overview of the shortcomings underlying the research question. A diversity of secondary sources, including articles in well-known journals, such as the Journal of Business Studies and Journal of Applied Psychology, serve as the foundation for our theoretical background. In order to guarantee a correct and reliable result, the four steps of source examination outlined in Holme’s and Solvang’s study (1996), observation, origin, interpretation and applicability, has been used on all sources. Primary sources have been used when citing and describing scientific theories in order to further strengthen the reliability of the thesis.

4.4.2 Justification for Division of Theoretical Framework
The justification for the division of the theoretical framework into two separate chapters, chapter two and three, lies in the purpose of this study which is to explore and describe potential differences in female leadership in Scandinavia, China and Japan through the perspective of the Scandinavian female manager as well as explore the possible origin behind them. In order to fulfil the second part of the purpose, namely to explore the origins behind the possible differences, an outline of the countries’ cultural histories must be included. Therefore the choice to separate the theoretical framework into two different parts where the first part, chapter two, describes the theories used while the second part, chapter three, applies the theories to chosen geographical areas was thought to be the most suitable in order to facilitate and clarify as well as to avoid confusion for the reader.

4.5 Method for Empirical Data Collection
The purpose of this thesis and the choice of a qualitative method of research enable collecting empirical material through qualitative interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Hereby follows an explanation of the different aspects of mentioned method, as well as the method used for sampling participants and a presentation of the execution of the interviews.
4.5.1 Unstructured and Semi-structured Interviews

According to Sekaran (2003) and Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul (2014), there are two ways of how to generally conduct an interview; the unstructured way and the structured way. Bryman & Bell (2007) however, argue for a third approach as well, namely the semi-structured interview form. The structured form is first and foremost appropriate for quantitative research methods because of its often more clear and stated aim of the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This form will therefore not be further elaborated here, due to the qualitative nature of this thesis.

Bryman & Bell (2007) instead refer to the unstructured and semi-structured forms of interviewing as the most applicable to a qualitative method. The unstructured approach denotes an open interviewing technique where the purpose is not to get to a specific goal with the interviewee, but rather to explore and to get the interviewee’s general experiences and point of view regarding the subject of relevance. Often, there are merely a few or no questions prepared in advance since the conductor of the interview is usually keen to get a more conversation-like setting rather than a strict interviewing one, this in order to create a feeling of openness and freedom for the interviewee to discuss what he or she finds relevant (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2007).

The semi-structured form turned out to be the most appropriate for the interviews conducted in this study. Since somewhat of an idea regarding what topics to discuss existed and at the same time, the aim was for the respondents to feel free to openly discuss thoughts and experiences, it was the best suited for this report. Comparing answers between the respondents was also considered as a crucial point for collection of the type of empirical material preferred to analyse. Therefore, it was found necessary to pose similar questions to all interviewees. Compared to the unstructured form, the semi-structured approach to interviewing allowed this. Even though there are disadvantages with this method of gathering empirical material, such as the time consuming nature of it as well as the risk of influencing the questions in such a way that the authors own subjectivity would shine through and steer the interviewees’ answers in the desirable direction (Bryman & Bell, 2007), the advantages for this type of exploring and understanding purpose with this report still outweighed them. The points made above as well as the flexibility of the approach when it comes to putting emphasis on the topic investigated but at the same time permitting new findings to be discovered and further explored through for instance follow up questions and rearrangement in the order of the question, spoke for the semi-structured form. The mentioned allowing of new perspectives on the research question through the respondents answers to impact the empirical findings and further analysis of it is also compatible with the abductive research approach earlier chosen, which emphasizes the open relationship between theory and the empirical findings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008).
4.5.2 Developing the Questions
When constructing the questions building up a qualitative interview, there are several aspects to take into account. Due to the exploring nature of qualitative research, the aim with the questions posed are to collect information around the interviewee’s understandings and experiences within the particular field of interest, this without steering the interview too much in any specific direction. Thus, the main challenge when creating questions is to format them in such a way that all topics are covered in order to get as much useful information out of the interview as possible, as well as allowing them to still be open to new inlets and approaches brought up by the interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The language of the questions should be understandable and avoiding of jargon and technical language (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2014). Crucial is to evade leading questions or to pose questions in such a way that underlying subjective opinions may affect the respondent’s answers and hence steering the empirical material collected in the direction desired by the researcher (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2014). Questions of open-ended character rather than “yes or no answered questions” are also more suitable for the qualitative method of data collection, due to its purpose of exploring and investigating the subject of interest (Sekaran, 2003; Quinn Patton, 2002).

Having somewhat of a logical thought behind the order of questions through an interview manual or question sheet can be a useful help for the memory as well as to get a desired flow in the conversation (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2007), even though flexibility often is required in regards to adopting it to each interview situation with follow up questions and changing order of questions posed (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Holme & Solvang, 1997).

4.5.3 Through Telephone or in Person?
Interviews can be executed through telephone or in person, i.e. the interviewer and the respondent conversing face to face (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2014; Sekaran, 2003; Bryman & Bell, 2007). The most suitable method, naturally, varies depending on the researcher’s and the interviewee’s situation and current circumstances (Sekaran, 2003). Both methods have their advantages and disadvantages. Face to face interviewing is preferable because of the importance to also take into account the non-verbal communication in terms of expressions and body language when interviewing the respondent, since this might enhance or contradict what is verbally said (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Moreover, face to face interviewing also makes potential misinterpretations and difficulties of comprehension easier to clarify for both the interviewer and the respondent (Sekaran, 2003). However, interviewing through telephone has its obvious advantages when the respondent and the interviewer are separated geographically. It may also be more time efficient than setting up an actual meeting with the respondent, as well as eliminating the costs of travelling to and from this meeting (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2007). Nevertheless, when involving a
4.5.4 Recording and Transcribing
According to Quinn Patton (2002), recording the conversation in some way is crucial for a qualitative interview, since nothing can compensate for the actual things stated by the people participating. It is therefore central to before the interview have a strategy to in some way record it. Using a tape recorder to do this is the most reliant way when it comes to what is actually said, since it does not block out any conversation or change the words spoken and the meaning of them due to personal interpretation (Patton, 2002). It also allows a richer afterward examination of the material since it enables the analysis of the tone of the interviewee’s voice and other expressions made without any spoken words (Sekaran, 2013). However, it is important to bear in mind that recording the interview on tape may result in biased answers due to discomfort of the respondent. He or she might not feel safe with the notion of being anonymous or being able to express all his or her opinions. The same can be said with taking notes throughout the interview; the interviewee might be at unease with the obvious recording and answers may therefore be affected by this (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2014; Sekaran, 2003). Regarding transcription of the empirical material, it facilitates the analytical process since having the interviews on paper provides a practical overview and helps with the comparison of between several cases (Bryman & Bell, 2007). If transcription is not used, it jeopardises the contextual meaning of the answers provided by the interviewee (Gillham, 2000). On the other hand, transcribing is very time consuming and the researcher is often left with mounds of paper to handle (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

4.5.5 Sampling method
The purpose of this thesis, to explore Scandinavian women in leadership positions experiences in China and Japan, naturally results in limitations regarding the collection of the empirical material, since it requires certain criteria to be met. Like most qualitative research, the goal of this thesis is not to generalise and make broad assumptions around the chosen topic (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Holme & Solvang, 1997). Thus, together with the circumstances regarding the time and scope of it, the number of interviews were kept to a number of six. It was decided, in order for the relevance of this report and for the experiences of the respondents to be as extensive as possible, to interview women who at writing time had or have had positions as managers located in China and Japan. Therefore, the sampling was not made randomly but through the researchers’ prior knowledge and interests (Holme
After reaching out to different women’s professional networks, researching enterprises with presence in the Asia region and contacting these as well as asking personal acquaintances to provide contacts with women with the above mentioned criteria, the interviewees were found.

According to Holme & Solvang (1997), there are two types of interviews with different characteristics in regards to the interviewees; the respondent interview and the informant interview. The first mentioned is the category of the majority of the interviews conducted in this report, with respondents who at writing time were or had been involved in the chosen phenomena themselves. The latter mentioned refers to an interview with a respondent who is not part of the phenomena but is seen as someone with an insight and knowledge within the particular area. In the latter case, the informant interview is the one conducted with Em Roblin, an entrepreneur and consultant who is working with enabling and encouraging women in China and the Asian region to grow as leaders. Roblin is a Canadian who moved to China in 2010, and though her work is not specialised on Scandinavian women she has experiences of working with several Scandinavian women in managerial positions in Asia through her consulting company. Regarding the prior mentioned interview type, respondent interview, five interviews have been conducted. The respondents are all Swedish women with experiences as managers in China and/or Japan. Due to the fact that some of the respondents prefer to be anonymous, all of them have been given a letter from A-E which will be used in place of their actual names, all companies are Swedish companies and respondents A-C are employed by the same company. The relevant information regarding the respondents are outlined in the table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Managerial position in Asia</th>
<th>Chinese &amp; Japanese experience (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Automotive industry</td>
<td>VP finance and head of APAC finances</td>
<td>China &amp; Japan (5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Automotive industry</td>
<td>Director genuine parts offer, commercial offer</td>
<td>Japan (3,5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Automotive industry</td>
<td>Plant manager and vehicle assembly APAC</td>
<td>Japan (2 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Industrial manufacturing company</td>
<td>Communication director Asia</td>
<td>China &amp; Japan (2,5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Furniture manufacturing company</td>
<td>General manager and store equipment manager</td>
<td>China &amp; Japan (3 years)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own Table: Table 2 – Description of the respondents

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4.5.6 Critic and Justification of Sample
Sampling in qualitative research in general may be subject to criticism, this due to them not being apparent when it comes to how the sample was chosen (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, in this study, where specific criteria were of importance for the purpose of the study, a random sample in a statistical sense was not a relevant option. Furthermore, as mentioned, the purpose of this thesis is not to be representative, which additionally does not speak for a randomly selected sample of interviewees. Since this report is targeting rather particular characteristics, the sample therefore had to be taken out of a relatively small group where the knowledge regarding this particular topic was considered to be the largest. It is important to recognise the potential impacts a sampling method like this can have on the empirical material collected. The risk of recurrent answers and distorted descriptions is increased when interviewing respondents within the same small professional group (Holme & Solvang, 1997). When analysing the empirical material it is equally important to keep in mind that three of the respondents are from the same company and several of them also operate in so called typical male dominated industries. Therefore, the company and industry cultures the interviewees are active in might be reflected in their answers. However, the interviewees’ positions and experiences within the researched field were valued higher than the risk of biased answers, which is why these interviewees were considered and included in this thesis.

Further critic could also be directed towards the number of interviews held, that they are too few in this sense. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, restrictions regarding time and scope of this thesis prevents from elaborating and expanding the empirical material collection as much as one might have wanted. Furthermore, since the purpose is an exploratory focused one, it is not the objective of the thesis to represent and make statistical clear statements but rather to open up to further research in this particular area.

4.5.7 Execution of the Interviews
The interviewees were contacted, according to the criteria described under Sampling Method, either through email or telephone and asked whether or not they would like to participate in a relatively short interview to contribute to this thesis’ empirical material, and through this also contribute to its validity and credibility. The topic of the intended interview and the purpose of the essay were briefly presented and those who agreed to participate thereafter scheduled appointments with the authors in order to have the proper time set aside for the interview.

As previously declared, the semi-structured form of interviewing was seen as the most appropriate one. In accordance with Bryman & Bell’s (2007) description of this method, a so called interview guide was conducted in advance, partly as a memory tool and a help to receive all information
needed and partly for the interviewees, to whom the questions were sent in advance in order for them to understand the subject of the interview. However, due to the flexibility of the approach as well as the different natures of each and every interview, some turned out to be more open and some turned out to be more structured than others. The questions themselves were constructed in accordance with above described desirable characteristics, such as the avoidance of leading questions and the use of open-ended questions.

Due to the desired characteristics possessed by the interviewees, which meant that when writing this thesis, several of them still lives and works abroad, all interviews but one were conducted via telephone. The choice to not use video calls derived from the fact that not all respondents had the necessary programs required to perform such interviews. Furthermore, video calls require a more stable internet connection that could not be guaranteed, thereby the risk of interruption due to lost connection was deemed as more harmful to the interview than the lost opportunity to read non-verbal communication. Both researchers participated in all interviews but one, this in order to get as much out as possible of the conversation. According to Bryman & Bell (2007), the use of two interviewers can facilitate when conducting a qualitative interview. This was soon noticed, since one of the researchers could place all the attention on posing questions and making the conversation run smoothly with following up questions and steering too large side-tracks back on topic, while the other one therefore could concentrate on taking as accurate notes of the interview as possible as well as handling the recording of the dialogue on tape. The latter could also through this arrangement make sure that all information needed was asked for as well as pick up on potential interesting areas that were merely touched by the main interviewer and respondent. Only one main interviewer was also considered appropriate in order not to confuse the respondent, especially when having a conversation via telephone, where the visual sense not always can help deciding who is speaking.

Whether or not to record each participant on tape was discussed by the researchers before each interview. The risk of bias answers because of this was talked over and regarded as relatively small, since none of the interviewees were really put in a situation where they could be regarded as disloyal to their respective company. Hence, all interviewees were asked if they agreed to be recorded, as well as if they wanted to remain anonymous in the report. Due to limitations regarding the time and scope of this thesis, a choice was made not to transcribe the interviews. The interviews lasted around one hour each and were conducted from the 10th to the 22nd of April. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 3.
4.6 Method for Empirical Data Analysis
The method of analysing data varies greatly depending on the context of the data collected. Qualitative collected data may sometimes be difficult to analyse due to large volumes and the hardship to distinguish the influence of the purpose of the study on the asked interview questions and thereby the collected data. Sequentially, no agreement on the approach to qualitative data analysis has been established (Collins & Hussey, 2009).

4.6.1 Template Analysis
Template analysis is a type of thematic analysis mostly used to analyse data collected by individual interviews (King, 2012). The analysis is conducted by the development of categories, linked to the collected data. By categorising the collected data, a theoretical framework which the analysis may be based on is created. Since the categories may be formed prior to the collection and then altered and added throughout the collection and analysis period it is compatible to the abductive research approach (Saunders et al., 2009), which is the approach used in this thesis. The codes, or categories, chosen are formed based on which groups of collected data that contains most relevant information for the thesis. In addition to this, by categorising the answers in the collected data, the template analysis method facilitate the interpretation of the data for the researcher, which also contributes to the use of the hermeneutic approach since it provides a context to the situation of the respondent (King, 2012). Moreover, the purpose of the method is to highlight the areas of the most importance and with most influence over the research question as well as to enable the researcher to explore the reasons behind them. It also contributes by identifying issues and possibilities which may arise during the data collection and analysis and which were not thought of by the researcher in advance (Saunders et al., 2009).

The method of template analysis is considered an appropriate method when conducting a study in which the purpose is to discover the causes underlying human behaviour (King, 2012), which aligns with the purpose of this thesis. Additionally, it is a flexible technique which enables the researcher to customise the analysis in accordance with the research question (King, 2012; Saunders et al., 2009). These features, combined with the methods applicability to the abductive research method chosen for this thesis, resulted in it being the most appropriate method for empirical data analysis.

4.6.2 Execution of the Analysis
The template method was used in order to analyse the empirical material in this thesis; hence, based on the notes from the interviews, the data was divided in different categories. The categories are formed after the cultures investigated, namely China, Japan and Scandinavia, and the data was
thereby divided in accordance with the culture it concerned. Sequentially, recordings of the interviews were listened to a second time in order to detect main characteristics within the respondents’ answers for each cultural category; which thereafter were related to the dimensions of the Perception of Female Managers Model. The dimensions of mentioned model constitutes the subcategories analysed in each culture and the characteristics of these dimensions were put in context to the empirical findings from the interviews. Additionally, the result was put in relation to the historical characteristics of each culture in an attempt to find linkages and explanations for the current situation and perception of the respondents. In order to facilitate for the reader and make the analysis more evident, the most significant characteristics are inserted in a picture of the model (picture 1, 2 and 3), following the analytical section of each main category.

4.7 The Quality of the Study

4.7.1 Validity and Reliability

When estimating the quality of a study, validity and reliability are two main criteria; however, they are not applicable to qualitative studies in the same extent as to quantitative ones (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The first mentioned concerns whether the applied theories and collected empirical findings connects to the research question or not; in other words, whether the researchers investigate the subject they claim to do (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Collins & Hussey, 2009; Eriksson & Wiedersheim, 2014). The latter criteria, reliability, measure the trustworthiness of the empirical results. In the reliability context focus is put on whether the context of the gathered data is understood and evaluated by the researcher. Due to the fact that qualitative studies may be hard to replicate, and thereby ensuring the reliability of the results, it is important to strengthen the findings through documentation and authenticity. Moreover, if resembling studies have been made, receiving similar results, these results can assist in the reliability of another study; thus making it reliable (Collins & Hussey, 2009).

Since this is a qualitative study with a limited amount of respondents, a replication of the results is hard to conduct. However, in accordance with Collins and Hussey (2009), the data collected has been categorised and evaluated according to the hermeneutic approach and thereby put into context with time, space and culture; thus strengthen the understanding of the respondents and thereby the reliability of the results. Furthermore, in addition to this all interviews have been recorded and saved. Regarding the validity aspect, a description of the thesis was sent to all respondents in order to outline the purpose and relate the interview questions to the thesis.
4.7.2 Method Criticism
Criticism may be directed towards the fact that only Swedish women in managerial positions were interviewed for this thesis when the purpose of the thesis is to compare the view on female Scandinavian leaders in Scandinavia, China and Japan. During the start-up phase of the study, attempts were made to find female respondents from all three Scandinavian countries; however, due to the fact that the thesis was written when located in Sweden and both authors have a broader network amongst Swedish companies, Swedish respondents proved easier to find. The choice to maintain a Scandinavian focus on the thesis was founded in the interest of the authors as well as the applicability of chosen theories. Additionally, the fact that three of the respondents represent the same company and its effect on biased results has been noticed and evaluated. Yet, the choice to include all three respondents seemed most profitable due to their different positions and working experiences. Furthermore, the small number of respondents may limit the possibility to make broader generalisations and clear statistical statements, however, as mentioned before, this is not the purpose of the study.

Regarding the interview process, all interviews but one have been conducted over the phone; this as a consequence of the geographical location of the respondents. As noticed by Bryman and Bell (2007), this may have been of disadvantage for the study since the researchers were not able to read the body language of the respondents. Yet, as stated above, the choices were limited in this matter.

Looking at the chosen theories applied, the actuality of some theories have been subject to criticism; however, the two theories on cultural dimensions are the most cited within this field (Taras, Steel & Kirkman, 2010) justifying the use of them. Similarly, criticism may be directed towards the actuality of some of the sources used in this thesis; nevertheless, the evaluation of those sources proved them to be appropriate.

4.8 Ethical Approach
An important aspect to bear in mind throughout the data collection process of a study, is the ethical standpoint from which the study is made, concerning, amongst other things, the correct treatment of the participants. According to Collins and Hussey (2009), the most important aspects regarding the ethical approach are the voluntary participation of the interviewees. Additionally, the authors deem it advisable to avoid offering financial and/or material rewards for participation since this may serve as a pressure to take part as well as increases the risk of biased results.

Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2011) lists four main areas compromising the ethical standpoint of a study; the first one being "Harm to participants". It is the researcher’s responsibility to guarantee the
safety of the participants by assessing the risk of harming them and acting accordingly to avoid it. This includes all harm made to the participants, ranging from physical harm to harm to self-esteem and harm to future employment or career. The second area, "Lack of informed consent", regards the fact that all participants should be given as much information as possible before deciding whether or not to take part in the study. This is the most hotly debated area due to the fact that providing too much information about the study may harm it in the long run. Thirdly, the area named "Invasion of privacy", insures the guarantee of the anonymity of the respondent if he or she requests to be anonymous; and the finally the area "Deception" evaluates whether the researcher has given an accurate picture of the study and the purpose behind it. Again, preferably prior to the participants decision whether to take part or not.

Mentioned standpoints are furthered agreed upon by Sekaran (2003), where the respect of confidential information and anonymity, the importance of not misrepresenting the study and the voluntary participation of participants is stressed further.

In order to fulfil the ethical approach portrayed by mentioned authors, the first contact with the participants of this study, made by email or phone, included a brief description of the study, the research question and the purpose behind it. Furthermore, after agreeing to take part, the interview questions were sent to the respondents prior to the interview to enable them to prepare and give them the opportunity not to answer certain questions. Finally, all participants were asked whether they wanted to be anonymous as well as if they wanted their company name to be confidential. Neither monetary nor material rewards were given to the participants.
5. Empirical Findings

This chapter contains the presentation of the empirical data collected from the six interviews held with participants A-E and Roblin. The chapter is structured in four parts, of which the first three is focusing on the respondents’ experiences in each of the chosen geographical areas. The last part of this chapter describes potential problems that may derive from discriminating female managers, according to the respondents.

5.1 Experiences in Scandinavia

The respondents all had somewhat different experiences of their roles as female leaders in Scandinavia. All the interviewees expressed that they in their current positions in their organisations have not experienced any substantial negative differential treatment because of them being women. However, what a majority of the respondents had experienced in previous positions were occasional comments relating to the fact that they are women. Respondent A gave an example regarding the nature of such comments; ” You must be very good if you have reached this position as a woman ”. Respondent D mentioned other examples of comments she received regarding a previous department she was part of together with a few other women in the organisation that indicated a worry about what would happen to the company from thereon with that particular department structured as it was. Senior male managers close to retirement first and foremost made these remarks. It was pointed out by respondent D that they soon disappeared from the organisation when these managers retired and that this aspect has come to be better through the years. Interviewee C explains that she occasionally has heard reactions from male co-workers wondering if she got the position by fawning her way to it. She was however careful with making clear that she has gotten mostly positive words about her being a manager and a woman from both male and female colleagues. Furthermore, interviewee B maintained that apart from some occasional comment, she has not experienced any negative differential treatment in Scandinavia and Sweden apart from the wage level being lower for women than for men. Respondent D noted that there have been occasions in her career where it has been positive for her to be a female manager. In a previous held position she felt that sometimes, the company’s clients indicated more trust for her and therefore put less pressure on her in work related negotiations than she experienced them doing with male equivalents. In this position, she felt like she could use her being a woman to stimulate her career.

All respondents but respondent E brought up that they operate in industries and organisations typically dominated by men and that there still are mostly men employed in their respective companies today. These four were all in agreement that the organisations where they operate are aware of this and are all working towards evening out the distribution between men and women working within the company. However, respondent A expressed that she felt that there are still too
few female managers within the organisation where she works and that more is still to be done to get more women into the company. Respondent E however, says that there are almost more women than men in managerial positions in the organisation where she is operating.

Concerning the reasons behind the still relatively few women in top management positions in Scandinavia, both respondent A and D points out old habits as one main factor. According to them, the habit of men in boards and top positions in organisations to often choose other men in their own networks to become new members by holding each other’s backs, thereby preventing women from claiming these positions, is an important reason contributing to fewer women in mentioned positions. This is something respondent B also agreed with. Moreover, respondent A also claimed that she hoped it was a question of generation and that she thought that the development is evolving in the right direction, meaning that those younger than 40 today are more used to the idea of women being in top positions and are more aware of the need of diversity in the work place.

As mentioned, the respondents have generally not been subject to any negative differential treatment regarding their positions as managers in Scandinavia. On the question what the reasons are for that and to what extent the national cultures in Scandinavia affects this, all respondents agreed that the national culture has had a large influence on the situation for women in general and the extent to which female managers emerge there. Respondent B pointed out that the Swedish historical heritage where all, men and women, should work and contribute must be of great importance. She pointed out that this heritage has created institutions for e.g. childcare, which has contributed to women being more and more conscious and emancipated and that this must have had an impact on the view of female leadership in mentioned country. Interviewee E also mentioned the culture in a national sense and made connections to institutions enabling women to work flexible hours. Accordingly, respondent B associated the national culture directly to the organisational culture, which she thought contributed to the treatment of female leaders and managers in the company where she works; “A Swedish company is founded in the Swedish culture”. She further enhanced the importance of the organisational culture by believing that men who treats women different in a negative aspect in this organisation does not get any respect from neither female nor male colleagues. Finally, she mentioned the belief of the common man being pro gender equality in Sweden as a potential reason for this.

5.2 Experiences in China
The experiences coming from the respondents’ roles as female leaders in China were rather similar for all interviewees with experience from the country. None of the women interviewed had experienced any differential treatment in a negative sense in regards to them being female managers.
Respondent A described her view on the way she was treated when she was operating in China as follows; “I have never felt that it is a handicap to be a woman in China. And that is basically the only country in my region where I have felt like that”. Furthermore, respondent D expressed that her experience in the country is that she has been taken seriously and has been respected as a manager. She described it to be common with female managers and that it is not considered unusual or looked upon strangely. Respondent E went down the same track by enforcing that she has not been subject to any differential treatment when working for her organisation in the country. All respondents with working experience as managers in China were in line with the position as manager within the company being superior to gender in the country. How you perform as a leader and the responsibility that comes with that position trumped other aspects and the interviewees therefore experienced gender to be a non-issue in their working life. Nevertheless, respondent A referred to the fact that her coming from the parent company and main office from Sweden looking completely different than her Chinese colleagues might contribute to her gaining further respect there, due to the importance of position and place in the organisational hierarchy. However, she stated that she thought that if she started working in a Chinese firm, it would probably work out without any significant problems there as well.

Interviewee D claimed that there is almost a fifty-fifty distribution of male and female managers working within her particular company in China. Respondent E too mentioned that there are in total slightly more women than men in the company. Moreover, four out of five purchasing managers working in Asia for the same company are women. The respondent’s view of the situation for working women in China was that women are considered to both perform better and to be more loyal to their employers than men are. Her perception was that the women are more passionate and energetic about their careers and therefore considered as good and respected employees. Roblin, who in the interview stated that China is one of the best countries in the world regarding female representation when considering the entire labour force, confirms this further. The work ethic among especially Chinese women is very strict and perhaps as a result of this, they are considered to be extremely executional and concerned about likeability in international assessments. However, Roblin pointed out that when you take a further look into the structure of the female representation on managerial levels, the distribution of female managers in junior positions is significantly higher than at senior and board levels. Even though the country do have relatively well developed institutions for child care and such, Roblin still referred to stereotypes around childbearing and parenting as being one of the major challenges for women claiming a bigger part of the positions as managers at a higher level in the corporate world. Due to the highly valued work ethic, it is not uncommon for women to have lost their work projects and their position in the organisation’s
hierarchy when returning to work after childbirth and maternity leave. According to Roblin, the lack of flexible working hours, with days often not ending before eleven p.m., also contributes to the difficulties of combining a family and the climb of the career ladder.

When considering the reasons for China having a relatively high representation of women at managerial positions as well as generally in the entire labour force, both respondent D and E brought up the culture’s historical and political heritage from the time of Mao Zedong, where the nation was permeated with communism and the thought of egalitarianism and where no differences of male and female regarding work were made. All, no matter gender, were supposed to work and contribute to society. According to respondent D, she could still see this heritage to some extent in China today in the sense that gender seems to be less considered than the managerial position held by either a man or a woman.

What all respondents agreed to was that the main challenge for their work in China is the general differences in both countries national cultures and their view on what constitutes good leadership. Respondent A described the leadership style as more distanced to the employees when comparing to her previous positions in Sweden. Her subordinates of Chinese heritage do not want to hear what their boss did during the weekend or see her as one of them. She also explained that she can never show anything but respect for her company and can never challenge or question the company’s opinions in front of her Chinese colleagues. As her co-interviewees did as well, Respondent A made the connection to the previously and the still today relatively strict system of governing the country here when thinking of the reasons behind this leadership style being preferred. Furthermore, she brought up the importance of the hierarchy and the impacts of it on the leadership being strict and straightforward; “The manager tells you what to do and is not questioned”. Everything should be well prepared in advance and a manager is never supposed to lose face. On the same subject, respondent D described an “incredible respect for the managerial role in China” and like respondent A, she expressed that she had never been questioned in her work there. Though, she also said that it is important to be very clear when communicating due to the cultural differences in regards to how we understand each other and how we interpret “yes” and “no” when communicating. These general cultural clashes is mentioned as challenging by respondent A as well. Interviewee E also brought up and mentioned cross-cultural training together with her Chinese colleagues as an example of how the organisation she is operating in has coped with this challenge.
5.3 Experiences in Japan
Compared to the interviewees experience of being managers in China, which offered a rather unite picture of the situation there, the answers around Japan offers a somewhat more scattered image. Respondent B and E have never experienced being treated differently for being women in any work related situation in Japan. Respondent B stated; ”I did not notice one single time during the years there that I was treated differently for being a woman. But at the same time there were very few female managers within the company in Japan”. Respondent A however, had a different view. She described Japan to be a very challenging environment for her as a woman to work within. She stated; “From the very start they expected ‘Mr...’”. According to her, it took her two years if not more to build a good relationship, trust and respect with her Japanese colleagues. She felt like there existed an uncertainty of her ability to make good decisions, which made the building of the relationship with her colleagues and subordinates a slow-going process; “It is not like that now, but I think that when I made decisions, they were questioned at higher positions”. Although she pointed out that she could never know for sure since she is never going to be able to compare her experience to someone else’s, her feeling was that her introduction into the Japanese part of the company probably took double the time to what it would have if she had been a man. She was also clear with the fact that she probably had an easier time than if she would have been a Japanese female manager. Her experience was that generally in Asia, employees are very loyal to their employer and their parent company and therefore her being a foreign Swedish manager from the main offices abroad probably gave her some further respect than if she would have been Japanese. Though, once she gained the trust of her colleagues, she described the reward for her work to be doubled, due to the mentioned loyalty. Now when the relationship works, she never receives any particular questioning from her colleagues and employees.

Like respondent A, respondent D also had different experiences of Japan compared to China. She described it to be harder to be a female manager in Japan than both in Sweden and in China, despite being a foreigner and for that being to some extent excused for a different behaviour, looks and so on. She expressed a sense of difficulty for her Japanese colleagues and subordinates to handle a manager that is a woman, and that this sometimes expressed itself through a difficulty of taking instructions or the problem of understanding that she were the one with the last word in a discussion. It was not common for respondent D to have clients or external business partners in a discussion turning towards her male colleagues instead of her, even if she was the one with the power to make the final decision. When working in or towards the Japanese branch of the company, she also described the existence of similar issues. She further explained that she in the past has chosen to work through a male representative, just to get things done faster and speed up the working processes. “I have had to let go of the prestige, it has been more important for me to get things done”, she explained.
Respondent C expressed her experiences in a half European half Japanese management group she is part of in her region. She explained that it has come to be two groups in one, where the Japanese male colleagues are keeping to themselves in one, whereas the Europeans and the three women of the group, thereof one Japanese woman, comprise the other group. She has experienced the first mentioned group as rather suspicious towards her and that it took a long time before she felt she had gained their respect; “It was not like they questioned me in work situations, but rather outside work in the social networking environment where it took time before I got the respect”. She further described the group of Japanese managers as reserved towards her, as if they did not know what to talk about with a woman. She pointed out, that she was not sure enough of the fact that this attitude towards her occurred because of her gender, she also brought up language barriers as one plausible reason. Nevertheless, she added that she had to make a larger effort than what she would have needed to do in a European or Western management group.

As mentioned, respondent E expressed that she had never experienced any differential treatment for her being a woman in her role as manager in Japan. Though, like some of her co-respondents, she too thought that the situation for her probably would be different if she was Japanese. According to her, a foreigner gains another type of respect. Furthermore, she explained that within her organisation she does not find any difficulty but recognised that it might be tougher when dealing with external clients and parties, which is not something that she is particularly involved with in her daily working life. The culture of the organisation was brought up by the respondent as one potential contributing factor to the non-differential treatment of either her or women within the organisation in general. She also pointed out that even though there is not an entirely even distribution of women and men in managerial positions in the Japanese branch of her organisation, the situation is still better than at other companies in the country. One reason for this brought up by the respondent is that the organisation enables the presence of women within the company by setting up childcare establishments at some workplaces.

Respondent B too described that the fact that she as a foreign Swedish woman coming from the main offices of the company in Sweden to represent the parent company contributed to her having a lot more respect than what she would have had if she would have been Japanese. She made clear that she did have some worries about how it would work out for her in Japan before she left for her new position there, since she did not have any experience of working in this country and its rather distinct national culture. However, perhaps in contrary to what she expected, she did not feel that she was mistreated as a female manager once during her time in the country. She did however recall one situation when she was, together with a male colleague to her, meeting an external retailer outside of Tokyo where she was based at the time. The retailer assumed the colleague to be the manager or the
one with the higher position and therefore turned to him and made him the leader, even though the respondent and the colleague technically were at the same managerial level. “But that was a bagatelle in the context, they did listen to what I had to say”, she stated regarding this situation.

Respondent B did acknowledge that there were few women in general in the Japanese organisation. On the question regarding the reasons why that is, the respondent brought up the Japanese national culture and its view of women as the main reason. She explained that when the Japanese woman decides to get married and have children, the norm is for her to stop working altogether in order for her to take care of her family. She experienced the Japanese culture as very firm and strict, where the woman has an established role in society for which she is supposed to live up to. This structure has resulted in few institutions for childcare, and the few women that do combine work and children are dependent on their children’s grandparents to help with the upbringing of them. Likewise, respondent E pointed out the general lack of women in managerial positions in Japan and connected this phenomenon to the difficulty of combining a career and a family in the country. According to her, more and more women are refraining marriage and children in favour of creating a career. The respondent spoke about the so called double burden existing in Japan and Asia in general, which implies that women have the main responsibility for their own family as well as for their own and their husbands’ parents, regardless of what career they have and how much time they have to devote to it. Respondent A too experienced a general feeling that Japanese men in these business environments were not used to interact with women outside their own homes. Respondent C expressed a view of Japan as a relatively closed and homogenous culture. She described a workshop around diversity and inclusiveness that was held in Japan within her organisation. Her experience from it was that her Japanese colleagues had a difficult time with understanding the concept of diversity enriching the organisation. The respondent connected this phenomenon to the historical success that Japan has experienced despite being relatively isolated from the outside world. She described Japan to be rather resistant to change and to adapting to other’s ideas while they are very successful with exporting their own ways and systems. This being strongly implemented in the culture is one of the big reasons to why there still are few women in higher positions in the country, according to respondent C.

5.4 Potential Problems due to the Discrimination of Female Managers
All respondents outlined different problems that can arise from a potential differential treatment of female managers coming from abroad in to another culture. Respondent B expressed the great importance of a diverse work place for the creativity and the way of working and that this is lost without women as well as general diversity at all hierarchical levels in an organisation. Differential
treatment might also result in fewer women wanting and daring to take on these kinds of positions abroad. Moreover, respondent C too acknowledged that a lack of diversity hampers the development and the profitability of an organisation, though she could not say that she has had any personal implications herself. Respondent D brought up negative impacts on both organisations and nations as a whole regarding mistreatment of both foreign female managers and women in the work force in general. “If we are not treating men and women in the same way we lose half of the collective competence, both organisations and nations”, she reasoned. She claimed that in the long run, this must have negative impacts and that it must be a competitive advantage to use the entire competence in the work force. She continued with Japan as an example, where it is common for women to educate themselves and start a career but then stop working as soon as they get married. “What a waste!” the respondent expressed and aimed at the investments on building these women’s competences, which then are never properly used. She too pointed out the potential demographical issues as an effect of the previously mentioned phenomena as well, again with Japan as an example. If women who want to build a career cannot combine this with having children, more and more will sacrifice having a family for this. If this results in a significantly lower number of children being born, the country is risking a skewed distribution in its demography. However, like respondent C, she pointed out that she has not suffered significantly from it career wise herself, even if she explained that her experiences has drained a lot of energy from her that could be spent on more productive things. Respondent E explained this dilemma as well, that women in Japan particularly are to a larger and larger extent choosing to resist the stereotypes around childbearing and having a family in favour for building a career. She did also point out her worries around women leaving work after marriage from her organisation’s perspective, which is in need of ambitious and qualified women to prosper in this region. She too recognised that if women in situations like her own are not taken seriously in discussions and meetings and so forth, this will definitely have consequences for the organisation’s work, even though she felt like it has not been an issue for herself in particular.
6. Analysis

In this chapter, an analysis of the empirical data in relation to the chosen theoretical framework is presented. An analysis is made for each of the cultures and each section ends with an application of the Perception of Female Managers Model. Additionally, it serves as a foundation for the conclusion.

6.1 Scandinavia

The findings from the empirical data gathered indicates that few differences exists between male and female managers in Scandinavia. This is coherent with the Scandinavian countries' high score in the cultural dimension of Gender Egalitarianism, which indicates that they put high importance on eliminating gender inequalities (House et al., 2004). Furthermore, the Scandinavian countries all classifies as feminine according to Hofstede’s M.A.S index which, according to the theory, means that the distinctions between the gender roles are minor (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). Although this does not necessarily mean that gender inequalities are higher amongst cultures with high M.A.S index, studies have shown that feminine cultures have a higher representation of females in high political positions than in masculine cultures (Hofstede, 2001). This is also in line with the low assertiveness amongst Scandinavian countries, indicating the predominance of feminine values in the societies (House et al., 2004).

Despite the general sensation of gender equality within management position amongst the respondents, several of the interviewees have experienced negative comments related to their gender and position. Most of mentioned reviews came from high positioned men close to retirement, which may be related to the fact that the Nordic countries implemented their common action plan towards eliminating gender inequalities as recent as 1989 (NIKK, 2014); hence, mentioned persons had already founded a set of belief regarding females in management positions, which may be difficult to alter. Additionally, this relates to respondents A and D’s impressions that men are selected as board members due to old habits and norms and the network of the existing board members. The obedience of imprinted norms and values may be related to the tightness/looseness theory described previously. Since Sweden and Denmark are considered loose cultures (Uz, 2014), the process of implementing the common action plan mentioned above may take time due to the fact that merely introducing a new framework will not result in immediate result and application of the norm. Yet, loose cultures show greater acceptance towards changing the norms and thereby more accepting towards allowing more women in management positions (Toh & Leonardelli, 2012). Continuing with Norway, which is a relatively tight culture (ibid), quotas has been introduced in order to secure equality between the genders in the working environment. Due to the cultural tightness of Norway, mentioned quotas are followed which leads to more women in managerial positions. However, the
view on quotas remains divided (Lomberg, 2013, 13 mars), which is reflected in the opinions of the respondents where one of the interviewees prefer quotas, one prefer no quotas and the rest remains uncertain.

Continuing on with the cultural impact on the view on women in management positions, all respondents are coherent in the fact that the Scandinavian culture has a significant impact on the view on female managers. Additionally, it is the experiences of several of the respondents that organisational culture highly influences the view on women in mentioned positions. Furthermore, respondent B linked the cultural impact to the historical aspect where both men and women had to work on equal terms; she also argues that men who does not treat women with the same respect as their male counterparts does not receive respect from men nor women in the organisation. Keeping the cultural aspect in mind this may be traced back to the Law of Jante which, as mentioned, has had great impact on the Scandinavian culture and states that no one should act or think of themselves as superior to others. Moreover, the lack of respect towards men who discriminates women can be seen in the dimension of Power Distance where feminine cultures, such as the Scandinavian ones, suggests higher equality in working environments. Additionally, a different view on managers exists in feminine cultures, where the manager is looked upon more similarly to other employees than in masculine cultures (Hofstede, 2001). Again, in the case of the Scandinavian countries, this may derive from the Law of Jante and is further expressed in the four main characteristics of Scandinavian management; where egalitarianism and decency are the ones affecting this issue the most. Finally this may be connected with the leadership style in the GLOBE study preferred in Scandinavia, namely the Participative style, as well as with the experience of equal treatments amongst the respondents.

As a closing note on the gender equality situation within Scandinavian management, one respondent expressed unequal treatment between the genders in terms of unequal salary, which serves as an indicator that the Scandinavian countries still has a long way to go before achieving full gender equality.

In order to clarify, as well as to put different parts of the analysis in context to each other, the above discussed characteristics of Scandinavian culture related to the question of issue has been categorised in accordance with, and inserted in, the Perception of Female Managers Model below. Furthermore, the discussed national management styles and the national view on women have been inserted in step two in mentioned model.
6.2 China

According to the collected data, none of the responding women have the perception of receiving special treatment due to their gender in China. Relating this to the applied theories used in this study, contradictions appear in the dimension of Power Distance, where China as a culture with high power distance should, according to Hofstede, have greater differences between the genders (Hofstede, 2001). Furthermore, contradictions are also evident in the dimension of Gender Egalitarianism where the Chinese culture scores low, hence indicating that little effort is put on eliminating gender inequalities (House et al., 2004). However, China is a highly collectivistic country and scores low in the Independence dimension, suggesting that the best of the group is prioritised over personal and individual interests (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009); thereby selecting the most appropriate individual for a task, regardless of gender, makes gender discrimination harmful for the group and hence goes against the core belief in the Chinese culture. Mentioned strong collectivistic influences derives from Confucianism which is the foundation of the Chinese culture, and whose five core relationships is the underlying reason behind the vast power distance and low gender egalitarianism (Lewis, 2006). This is additionally in accordance with respondent D’s suggestion that the equal treatment of men and women may be traced back to the era of Mao Zedong when no differences were made between men and women in the working environment (Ponnudurai, 2012).

The interviewee’s experiences of gender equality in the working environment are confirmed by Roblin who argues that China is amongst the best in the world in hiring women, seen over the entire workforce. Nevertheless, she also points out that the higher in the corporate hierarchy one look, the
more male dominated it becomes and fewer female managers exists. Additionally, the high power distance discussed above is noted amongst the respondents who all have experienced high power distance in China. However, it is their belief that the hierarchical position is more important than the gender of a manager, hence contributing to equality amongst male and female managers.

All respondents agree that the Chinese cultural values have great influence over the view on female managers in China. Since China ranks as a tight culture (Toh & Leonardelli, 2012), the collectivistic thoughts, values and norms are followed by the Chinese; which explains the fact that despite China having high Power Distance, high Assertiveness and low Gender Egalitarianism, all factors indicating inequality between the genders (Hofstede, 2001), the strong collectivistic values results in the prioritising of the group and hence, as mentioned, leave little space for gender inequality.

Regarding the Chinese management style, despite the fact that the Chinese workers value the same leadership style as the Scandinavian ones, namely the Participative style, in the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004), the respondents experience great differences in comparison to the Scandinavian management style. The main reason for this is the greater distance between manager and employee in China than in Scandinavia, something that is confirmed by China’s high Power Distance score in Hofstede’s dimension.

Following the thesis structure regarding the analysis of Scandinavia, the result from the discussion above has been inserted in the Perception of Female Managers Model below, this in order to provide a more elaborated view of the Chinese perception of the research question.

**Chinese Perception of Female Managers**

![Own Figure: Figure 3 – Chinese Perception of Female Managers](image-url)
6.3 Japan
As mentioned, all respondents have somewhat scattered experiences around their positions as female managers in Japan but are unison regarding their view on what the general situation for women working in Japan looks like. The two respondents that both have experienced the largest differences in Japan, namely respondent A and D, have both underlined the habit of their Japanese colleagues expecting a man as their manager instead of a woman and the unfamiliarity and the unease of dealing with a woman, not only as a manager but also in working life in general. The latter phenomenon is to some extent confirmed by also respondent C, who expressed a difficulty for her colleagues to interact with her. When linking this to the applied theories, the respondent’s answers are overall relatively coherent with them, apart from some derogations.

Japan is described as a rather distinct culture, incomparable with any other in the world (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). The country is considered having a relatively conservative and traditional view on women’s role in society (Sveriges Ambassad, 2007), a thought that was consistent in all respondents’ empirical interviews. This circumstance is confirmed by the country scoring the highest in the world on the cultural dimension scale of Masculinity, which according to Hofstede can be interlinked with traditional gender roles and few women in higher positions in work life (The Hofstede Centre, 2015; The Economist, 2014). The respondents were all agreeing to having witnessed the norm that women should be in charge of the family and household to be extremely vivid to these days, which confirms the connection to the supposedly traditional view of women. The high Masculinity score is also compatible with Japan’s high score on the cultural dimension of Assertiveness, especially prominent in the working life, in which the characteristics valued could be seen as having rather “masculine” features (House et al., 2004).

However, the mid-scale fallout on the Gender Egalitarianism scale somewhat contradicts the previous findings, which might be expected to be lower due to the interviewees’ experiences of the culture. What could be an important contributor to this is the increasing, although still relatively slight, awareness of the gender egalitarianism issue in the country in general (Sveriges Ambassad, 2007), whilst the business environment may be an exception to it, perhaps due to the already heavy set male dominance within it and which the empirical material from the interviews confirms.

Regarding the Power Distance index, as mentioned previously, Japan scores at slightly above mid-scale (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). All respondents in the empirical interviews found the business environment in Japan to be very hierarchical, which is confirmed by Hofstede who claims that westerners often may perceive Japan as being exactly this (Lewis, 2006; The Hofstede Centre, 2015). Despite this potentially leading to an expectation of a higher Power Distance index for the country,
there is a perception in the culture of everyone being born equal and that ambition and strive will enable the climb of the hierarchical ladder, however this does not apply for women in the corporate world (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). Moreover, even though the organisational hierarchy, titles and positions are considered to be of great importance within the business sphere, decisions and propositions are often developed lower down in the hierarchical structure and passed upwards through every level in the organisation. This indicates a notion of seldom having one main decision maker as well as a slow decision making process (The Hofstede Centre, 2015), which is confirmed by a majority of the respondents. Finally, the hierarchical structure could be somewhat more evident in particularly the business environment, from which the empirical material in this thesis comes from, than the in the general culture of the country (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009).

Like with the Gender Egalitarianism dimension, Japan is found slightly below mid-scale when considering the dimension of Individualism (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). The score indicates a slightly more collectivistic culture, which traditionally values harmony, loyalty and the group before the individual (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009; The Hofstede Centre, 2015). Even though Japan is considered more individualistic in comparison to China and other Asian cultures, Westerners are often perceiving Japan as being more collectivistic, due to e.g. the Japanese loyalty towards their employers (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). The loyalty to the group and hard work experienced in Japan is noticed by the respondents and the empirical interviews therefore validates this theory, though for some respondents gaining the respect as leaders proved time consuming.

Furthermore, regarding the tightness and looseness factor of the Japanese culture, the situation according to this theory can be interlinked with the empirical findings as well. Japan is considered to be a rather tight culture, which designates strong implemented norms, clear consequences for not obeying to these norms as well as a reluctant to change (Gelfand et al., 2011). This is confirmed by the respondents of the interviews, thereof one who experienced the culture to be rather strong and special in its valuing of norms and traditions. According to Toh & Leonardelli (2012) a tight culture’s resistance to change results in the difficulty for women emerging as leaders, which is too confirmed by the respondents’ view of few women being managers within organisations in Japan.

To conclude, in the case of Japan, it is important to recognise the potential impact of several other factors on this rather significant culture and the perception of it through the eyes of a Scandinavian female leader. As earlier mentioned, the Japanese language is of great importance for the culture (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2009) and this aspect might be of significance with regards to especially the one respondent pointing out that the potential reason for her experiencing differential treatment in
Japan might be language related barriers and therefore a further cultural gap between her and her Japanese colleagues. It is also vital to understand that Japan’s geographical location has had an impact on the country’s national culture, which for the given geographical isolation of the country being an island has probably been subject to little impact from external cultures and their values (European Union Business in Japan, 2015). This circumstance could be one reason to the Japanese culture being perceived as so strong and as having a reluctant to be influenced by other cultures still to present day.

As in previous parts of this analysis, the results from analysing the empirical data and theoretical framework concerning the Japanese view have been inserted in the Perception of Female Managers Model below.

**Japanese Perception of Female Managers**

![Japanese Perception of Female Managers Diagram](own figure: Figure 4 – Japanese Perception of Female Managers)
7. Conclusion

This chapter contains a conclusion based on the empirical findings and related to the analysis. The chapter is divided in two parts where the first one presents the findings and contributions of the thesis and answers the research question, while the second part contains suggestions for future research.

7.1 Findings and Contributions

This thesis enlightens potential differences and similarities regarding the view on Scandinavian women in management positions in China, Japan and Scandinavia; and the results show that the perception varies between the nations. Regarding the view on mentioned women in Scandinavia, both the empirical data of this study as well as the theories applied confirm that men and women in management positions are generally looked upon equally. However, obstacles, such as wage differences and discrimination within certain groups and industries, in particularly male dominated ones, still remain between Scandinavia and complete gender equality. Moving forward with the perception of female Scandinavian managers in China, the data shows no special treatment based on gender and the respondents convey a feeling of respect from their employees. The perception of managers in China is first and foremost based on the hierarchical position and does not include gender as a contributing factor to management; a fact that is mirrored in their perception of female Scandinavian managers. Sequentially, the high value of respect towards superiors and the loyalty towards the company implemented in China combined with the fact that studied women comes from the company’s headquarters in Sweden influences the view upon them. However, regarding the Japanese view on Scandinavian women in management positions, opinions are more diverged. Still, tendencies can be discerned that inequalities are more apparent when working with external clients and suppliers than within the company; where some of the respondents have experienced equal treatment as their male counterparts whereas others feel that they have to work harder to gain the same amount of respect than their male colleagues. The second perception may be linked with the unfamiliarity and insecurity towards women in the Japanese working environment.

Moving on with the second part of the research question, which concerns potential differences between the geographical areas and their view of Scandinavian female managers, one main aspect in each culture’s perception is detected. In the Scandinavian view on female managers, the gender issue is recognised, yet it does not make any difference and managers of both genders are treated equally. The difference towards the Chinese perception of Scandinavian female managers is that the gender is not considered a factor when discussing management abilities and leadership styles in China. Hence, Scandinavian women in management positions are treated the same way as Scandinavian men in the same positions. Finally, the Japanese perception differ further by acknowledging the gender as a
contributing factor, irrespective of its impact on the perception of Scandinavian female managers, for which opinions are still divided. However, theories argues that differences exists between the perception of Japanese men and women in management positions; something that might have influenced the view on Scandinavian female managers.

Continuing with the third and final part of the research question, namely suggesting where established differences derive from, we wish to suggest two main contributing factors: national culture and organisational culture. In Scandinavia the national culture is highly influenced by the Law of Jante and the thought that no one is superior to another, which is reflected in the Scandinavians strive for gender equality and focus on gender egalitarianism. In the case of China, the impact is less evident. The strongest influence in the Chinese culture is Confucianism, which is based on women being subordinate to men. However, during the Mao Zedong era, equality between men and women in the working environment was enforced. The implementation of stronger collectivistic values, combined with the cultural tightness and already collectivistic norms, results in the historical legacy of China and the influences of Confucianism blending together as the basis of the Chinese national culture; prioritising hierarchical structure and group interest over gender, hence leading to the view on female managers existing today. Regarding the Japanese national culture, the cornerstones consists of Confucianism and Buddhism; Confucianism being the most influential one in the studied area. As mentioned before, Confucianism is based on five key relationships in which one part is superior to the other; and in the relationship between the genders the man is superior to the woman, which evidently affects the view on women in management position and thereby Scandinavian female managers.

Continuing with the second large contributing factor, the organisational culture, it is influenced by the cultural values in the area it originates from; hence making the drawing of conclusions simply based on nation difficult. Since all companies in this study derives from Sweden, the Scandinavian core values are reflected in the organisations, which means the question of gender egalitarianism is considered important; thereby affecting the view on female Scandinavian managers. This may also be a contributing factor for the differences in experienced treatment amongst the respondents.

In addition to the two main factors mentioned above, the fact that the respondents are foreigners in China and Japan appears to be a contributing factor towards the perception of them, especially in Japan. This since it is the opinion of the plurality of the interviewees that they are being treated differently due to them being foreigners and therefore excused for not corresponding to the cultural norms and customs.
In order to summarise, the purpose of this study was to explore and describe the perception of female leadership in Scandinavia, China and Japan through the perspective of the Scandinavian female manager, as well as to explore the possible origin behind them. The study shows that differences exists between the three geographical areas where Scandinavia acknowledges the gender factor but does not let it affect the equal treatment of male and female managers, Japan considers gender to be an important factor resulting in the unequal treatment between men and women, and China, where gender is not considered a factor when discussing management and men and women are treated equally in management positions. The study also derives the origin behind the different treatment of Scandinavian women in management positions to the impact of national and organisational cultures; which in turn are influenced by the core values of the geographical area. In conclusion, this thesis has contributed with detecting and describing the differences in the view of Scandinavian women in management position in China, Japan and Scandinavia; as well as to account for and outline the origins they derive from.

7.2 Suggestions for Future Research
This thesis gives a general view of a rather specific research topic, for which the scope of the thesis unfortunately does not allow us to explore the topic further. However, a quantitative study to develop the characteristic of representation would be desirable for future work within this field. A greater number and variation of women in terms of companies, industries, ages and backgrounds would allow further development of the Perception of Female Managers Model as well as allowing a continuously adaption of it, a necessity in the fast changing global business environment seen today. Furthermore, in order to increase the understanding of where differential treatment directed towards female leaders derives from, an inclusion of the perspective of the colleagues and employees in the receiving culture would further enrich this topic of research. Moreover, including a male perspective in future research could further enrich the empirical material and analysis. A deeper focus on the potential impacts differential treatment of female leaders coming from abroad can have on organisational relationships, financially and socially, as well as personal experiences would probably shed some light to and motivate change in behaviours, although it is important to keep on recognising the perspective of the balance between bringing your own values in to another culture and at the same time respecting the receiving culture.

This thesis aim to explore and to form thoughts around the perception of female managers in an increasingly global business environment. The integration of people, cultures and organisations will most probably continue to deepen and become more complex in a rapid pace, and it is therefore
important for us to understand that further economic integration will require further understanding and knowledge regarding the preparation needed to manage these circumstances. Therefore, this thesis provides organisations expanding in these geographical areas as well as especially female managers in the thoughts of taking on these kinds of positions with valuable experiences of others for e.g. preparation purposes. Hopefully, it will also awake thoughts around what approach one should adapt to these types of situation within this cross-cultural management topic, which as mentioned will probably continue to grow in importance. Finally, it is again crucial to recognise that this thesis does not aim to generalise and make any assumptions. It is rather built around individuals and their personal experiences, which could be affected by particular circumstances as well as be excerpts from a specific context. However, the hopes are to provide the readers with a similar curiosity for this topic that we ourselves have developed through the process of executing this thesis.
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9. Appendix

9.1 Appendix 1 - Comparison Hofstede’s Dimensions: Scandinavian Countries

Reference: The Hofstede Centre (2015)

9.2 Appendix 2 - Comparison Hofstede’s Dimensions China and Japan

References: The Hofstede Centre (2015)
9.3 Appendix 3 - Interview Questions

1. Have you yourself had any experiences of differential treatment in your work life because of your gender?

2. Is it your experience that the view on men and women in managerial positions is the same in Scandinavia? Is the view different for men and women?

3. Is it your experience that it is harder for women than for men to get managerial positions in Scandinavia? If yes, why do you think that is?

4. To what extent do you think the Scandinavian culture affects the view on women in managerial positions? What other factors can contribute?

5. Unlike Sweden and Denmark, Norway has instituted gender quotas for women in leadership positions. Do you think this is the right way to go or not? Why? Why not?

6. Is it your experience that you are treated differently in your work in China/Japan, both in comparison with your male colleagues in similar managerial positions as well as in comparison to how you are treated in Scandinavia? If yes, why do you think that is?

7. What are your experiences of how you as a female leader and manager is perceived in China/Japan? Have you got a specific example of a situation where you have been treated differently in comparison to Scandinavia? What do you think these differences depend on?

8. Is it your experience that the view on men and women in managerial positions is the same in China/Japan? Does it differ for men and women?

9. To what extent do you think that the culture in China/Japan affects the view on women in managerial positions? What other factors can contribute?

10. What kinds of problems do you think potential differential treatment of women in international managerial positions can cause, both through a personal perspective as well as through the organisational perspective? What consequences can come with these problems?
11. Are you experiencing that there is as big of interest among Scandinavian women as men to go for managerial positions abroad? If not, why do you think that is?

12. Have you experienced any changes over time regarding how you are treated in your role as a female manager, both in Scandinavia and in China/Japan?