



# *The Dos and Don'ts of Doing Business in Ukraine*

Dissertation

Master degree in International Business

**Yuliia Pankiv**

Leiria, September 2023

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Master degree in International Business

**Yuliia Pankiv**

Dissertation under the supervision of Professor Susana Rodrigues, Ph.D., professor at the  
School of Technology and Management of the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria.

Leiria, September 2023

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## **Originality and Copyright**

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## **Dedication**

To Ukraine, a land of limitless potential and a bright future.

## **Acknowledgments**

During this journey, some people have been vital in keeping the process going and making it easier. I want to thank them all for their help and for all the support I have received over the past 2 years.

First, I am grateful to my loving family who supported me and helped me feel happy despite the distance. I would also like to thank my partner, who has always believed in me and has been with me every step of this journey.

My deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Susana Rodrigues, who accepted to guide me throughout this dissertation. For the guidance, support, dedication, and patience that helped me going through this process. Your valuable and constructive comments have significantly helped me to improve my academic skills.

I would like to express my gratitude to the professors in my master's program who dedicated their time and knowledge to me and my fellow master's students of 2021/23, preparing us for the future stages of our lives.

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I couldn't forget about my friends who helped facilitate the establishment of contacts with the companies that agreed to participate in this study. Special thanks go to the workers who were interviewed and willingly shared their time and experiences.

My sincerest gratitude to all, without your help this would not be possible.

## **Abstract**

Despite facing challenges arising from the ongoing conflict with Russia, the country's market size, abundant natural resources, and skilled workforce continue to attract foreign investment across sectors. Ukraine's transformative journey from a Russian sphere of influence to European integration, coupled with its candidacy for European Union membership and substantial progress in aligning with EU standards, adds a unique dimension to business prospects. Ukraine, with its diverse market, geopolitical significance, and evolving business environment, presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for business ventures. Ukraine offers many opportunities across various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, IT, energy, and services, and serves as a crucial transit corridor for trade and travel between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The war has led to a significant refugee crisis, with millions of Ukrainians seeking refuge abroad, potentially impacting labour markets and consumer behaviour, while also offering opportunities for businesses involved in reconstruction and humanitarian efforts.

In the last decades, the motivation to write this guide for foreigners interested in doing business in Ukraine has grown significantly. Although there is increasingly more information available about international business practices, there remains a noticeable gap in knowledge specific to Ukraine. To address this gap, this investigation undertakes a comprehensive examination of the dos and don'ts of doing business in Ukraine. The study employs a semi-structured interview approach, engaging with 12 foreign managers working in European companies that have maintained business operations in Ukraine. These interviews provide valuable insights into the unique challenges, cultural nuances, and market dynamics that foreign businesses encounter when operating in Ukraine. The results obtained from these interviews form the foundation for the development of a practical guide aimed at assisting foreigners in successfully navigating the Ukrainian business environment.

**Keywords:** Ukraine, Business Culture, Negotiation, Business Relationship, Success, War

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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BOFIT	Bank of Finland Institute for Emerging Economies
BTI	Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ESTG	School of Technology and Management
EU	European Union
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KIIS	Kyiv International Institute of Sociology
NBU	National Bank of Ukraine
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UA	Ukraine
UAH	Ukraine hryvnia
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WBG	World Bank Group
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Contextualization

International investment in Ukraine has seen both challenges and opportunities, particularly against the backdrop of the ongoing war and geopolitical tensions. The entry modes adopted by international investors vary, with some choosing joint ventures and others opting for direct exports or licensing agreements (Matuszak,2022). Ukraine is a large and diverse market with a population of around 37 million people. It offers opportunities in various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, IT, energy, and services (Heinonen & Korhonen, 2023). Ukraine's geographic location combined with 17 FTAs with 46 countries (including EU, EFTA, Canada, Israel, etc.) makes it an important transit corridor for trade and travel between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (UkraineInvest,2023). Its extensive transport infrastructure, including railways, highways, and ports, presents opportunities for logistics and transportation businesses.

The Ukrainian economy has faced challenges, including the impact of the war, but it also offers opportunities. The country's market size, natural resources, and skilled workforce can attract foreign investment in various sectors (Darvas & Martins,2022). The war with Russia has disrupted Ukraine's trade and supply chains. Understanding the changing patterns of imports and exports, as well as the effects of sanctions, is essential for international businesses operating in the region. Following the war's outbreak, road and rail transport gained ground, and Ukraine's land border crossings with EU countries (mainly Poland) became the main routes for Ukrainian exports (Matuszak,2022). As a result, in 2022, Poland overtook China and became the largest trade partner of Ukraine in the world. The process of trade reorientation gained momentum in July 2022, when Ukraine began exporting electricity to the EU. The EU secured the status of the main recipient of Ukrainian goods, as EU countries now account for 64% of Ukraine's exports. In general, Ukraine's exports to the European Union increased by 1.7%. A drop of 20 to 90% was recorded in trade with other countries of the world (Chubyk,2022).

## 1.2. Personal Motivations and Actuality of the Research

As a native of Ukraine, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges and transformations our nation has undergone, particularly during this challenging period of war. This research serves as my contribution to shedding light on the complexities of Ukrainian business culture

to serve as a guide for foreign investors who may be hesitant or unfamiliar with the nuances of our market. Through this work, I aim to bridge the gap between local expertise and international perspectives, fostering understanding, resilience, and the potential for economic growth in Ukraine during these trying times.

Presently, a transformed Ukraine is emerging, where even amid the challenges of conflict, the groundwork for post-war opportunities is being laid. The war, though accompanied by dangers and destruction, is also serving as a catalyst for the nation's evolution. In just one generation, Ukraine is achieving an extraordinary "triple jump." This entails transitioning from the Russian to the European political and economic sphere, moving from autocracy to democracy, and shifting from a fledgling economy to one that is progressively developing. Notably, Ukraine has secured candidacy for European Union membership and has already executed 63% of the agreements required for integration into the EU market.

The war has led to a significant refugee crisis, with millions of Ukrainians seeking refuge abroad. This demographic shift may affect labour markets and consumer behaviour, creating both challenges and opportunities for businesses. As Ukraine rebuilds after the conflict, there will be opportunities for businesses involved in construction, infrastructure development, and humanitarian aid. Ukraine's well-educated workforce with a focus on higher education can be an asset for businesses seeking skilled professionals. Despite the current challenges, Ukraine's long-term prospects can be promising for businesses that are adaptable, resilient, and committed to supporting the country's recovery and development.

### **1.3. Objectives of Research**

The main objective of the research is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the key considerations, strategies, and guidelines necessary for successful business in Ukraine, considering the cross-cultural aspects that significantly influence business interactions. This research aims to:

- 1) Explore the key cultural dimensions and nuances that play a crucial role in doing business in Ukraine. Identify and explain the cultural factors that can impact communication, relationship-building, decision-making, and other aspects of business interactions.
- 2) Create a practical guide of dos and don'ts, offering actionable insights and recommendations that guide businesses through the multifaceted landscape of doing business in Ukraine.

- 3) Investigate the dos and don'ts of effective communication and business etiquette in Ukraine. Analyse factors that influence trust-building, networking, and relationship longevity, while highlighting potential pitfalls and offering strategies for fostering positive relationships.
- 4) Discuss preferred approaches to decision-making processes and hierarchical structures and advise on appropriate adaptation of these styles for successful cross-cultural collaboration.
- 5) Provide real-world case studies of businesses that have succeeded or faced challenges in Ukraine due to cross-cultural factors. Analyse these cases to extract valuable lessons and practical dos and don'ts for businesses entering the Ukrainian market.
- 6) Contribute to the existing body of knowledge on cross-cultural business practices by offering insights into the unique cross-cultural challenges and opportunities present in the Ukrainian business environment.

#### **1.4. Methodology**

This study uses a qualitative approach, mainly through semi-structured interviews, using pre-defined questions, particularly open-ended ones, which allow respondents to articulate their personal experiences and insights in relevant areas. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and codified to the MAXQDA 2022 qualitative data analysis software. In addition, the results of the research questions were retrieved from the software and analysed accordingly.

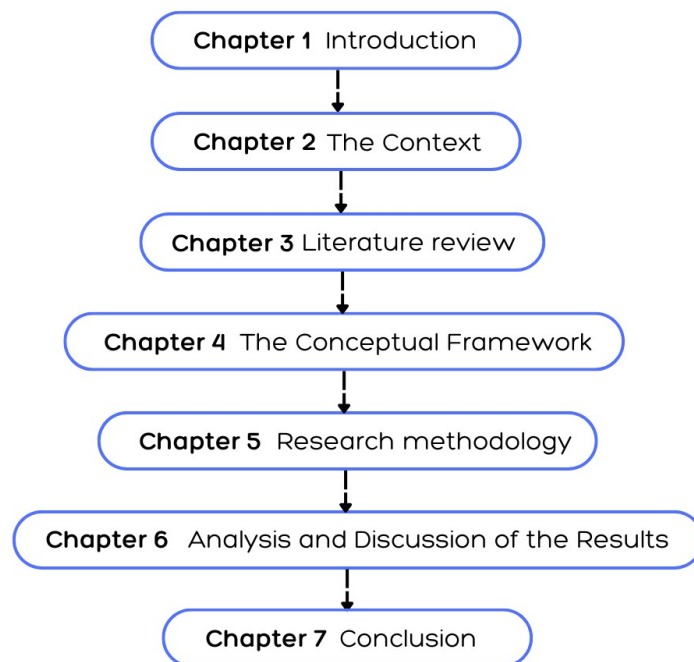
#### **1.5. Dissertation Structure**

This dissertation is composed by seven chapters, as illustrated in Figure 1. It starts with an *introduction* with a presentation of the chosen theme and its contextualization, personal motivations and actuality, objectives of the research and methodology. The *second chapter* develops the contextualisation of the Ukrainian market, drawing the country's framework, including the political system, economic analysis, foreign trade, international business impact of the war in Ukraine, and how Ukrainian refugees trying to make new life abroad.

*Chapter three* presents the literature review on the study's central themes as it delves into the features of Ukrainian business culture and their reflection during the period of war. This chapter covers topics such as the impact of the Russian invasion, essential guidelines for

doing business in Ukraine, business meeting etiquette, relationship-building, and the role of hierarchy in the quality of business teams. Subsequently, the fifth chapter explores the key aspects that influence the business landscape in Ukraine, construct the conceptual model, and formulate the research questions. Subsequently, *chapter four* examines the aspects that impact doing business in Ukraine, construct the conceptual model, and formulate the research questions. The *fifth chapter* exposes the research methodology used to achieve the proposed objectives, justifying the choice of method and strategy, including the description of data collection methods and its characteristics, and includes the respondent's profile.

*Chapter six* presents the results obtained from the semi-structured interviews, followed by the respective analysis and discussion. Lastly, the *seventh chapter* reveals the conclusions provided by main remarks, as well as the theoretical and practical implications, limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.



**Figure 1 – Dissertation Structure. Source: Own construction.**

## 2. The Context

### 2.1. Ukraine

Ukraine has a rich and complex history, with a mix of different cultures and influences. It has been ruled by various empires and states throughout its history, including the Khazars, Kyivan Rus', the Mongols, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire, and the Soviet Union (Alkov, 2021). The long process of state formation of Ukraine continued for centuries of territorial fragmentation. However, modern Ukrainian borders were formed after Ukraine gained sovereignty in 1991. For the past 32 years, Ukraine has tried to emphasize its democratic aspirations and integrity with European values (Zagoriy Foundation, 2022).

Ukraine is a country located in eastern Europe (Figure 1). Ukraine is the second-largest country in Europe with a land area of 603,628 sq.km. The capital is Kyiv, located on the Dnieper River in north-central Ukraine (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). Ukraine is bordered by Belarus to the north, Russia to the east, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea to the south, Moldova, and Romania to the southwest, and Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland to the west (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). Ukraine lies in a temperate climatic zone influenced by moderately warm, humid air from the Atlantic Ocean. Winters in the west are considerably milder than those in the east. In summer, on the other hand, the east often experiences higher temperatures than the west (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023).



**Figure 2 – Ukraine (UA). Source: Google maps / Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc.**

As of 1 January 2023, the population of Ukraine is estimated to be about 37 million inhabitants (United Nations, 2023). The largest cities by population are Kyiv, the capital of

Ukraine, Kharkiv and Odessa. Russians continue to be the largest minority, though they now constitute less than one-fifth of the population. The remainder of the population includes Belarusians, Moldovans, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, and other groups (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). The Crimean Tatars, who were forcibly deported to Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics in 1944, began returning to the Crimea in large numbers in 1989; by the early 21st century they constituted one of the largest non-Russian minority groups (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). In March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea by force, which was condemned by the international community, and human rights groups subsequently documented a series of repressive measures taken by the Russian authorities against the Crimean Tatars (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023).

There are approximately 20 languages spoken in Ukraine. According to the 2001 census, 67% of the population speak Ukrainian, the official language (Ukraine Census, 2001). Significant numbers of people in the country speak Polish, Yiddish, Rusyn, Belarusian, Romanian, or Moldovan, Bulgarian, Crimean Turkish, or Hungarian (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). The Russian-speaking minority in Ukraine was nearly 37% in 2012, 26% in 2021, and declined sharply to 13-15% in 2022, depending on poll results (Ben & Maryn, 2023). For the first time since the independence of Ukraine, Ukrainians speak Ukrainian much more than Russian. According to UNESCO, Ukraine has an adult literacy rate of 100% (UNESCO, 2020). As of 2022, according to a survey by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), 85% of Ukrainians identified as Christians. 72% identified themselves with Eastern Orthodoxy, 9% to the Catholic Church (8% Greek Catholics, 1% Latin-rite) and 4% adherents to some sect of Protestantism or other form of Christianity (KIIS, 2022).

The term Ukraine hryvnia (UAH) refers to the national currency of Ukraine (NBU, 2023). The currency was adopted by the country's government in 1996. The hryvnia is abbreviated as UAH in the foreign exchange market. Currency is printed by the country's central bank, the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU), which is responsible for maintaining financial stability and the country's economic development (NBU, 2023).

Ukraine is a unitary republic, not a federal state. The highest court in the judicial system is the Supreme Court of Ukraine (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). The President of Ukraine is the head of state, while the Prime Minister is the head of government. The country's political system is undergoing significant changes, with ongoing efforts to strengthen

democracy and increase transparency (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). On April 21, Zelenskyi was elected president of Ukraine with an impressive 73% of the vote (BTI, 2022).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the poverty level in Ukraine was gradually decreasing as economic growth resumed (BTI, 2022). According to the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) 2019, Ukraine's "extent of market dominance" is ranked 89<sup>th</sup>, a notable improvement on its 106<sup>th</sup> place in the GCR 2017-2018 and 129<sup>th</sup> in the GCR 2014-2015 (Emerson & Movchan, 2021). In the World Bank's Doing Business Report 2020, Ukraine was ranked 45<sup>th</sup> in the category "protecting minority investors," a significant shift upward compared to its 72<sup>nd</sup>-place ranking a year before (WBG, 2020). This report covers 10 topics that provide an objective framework for understanding and improving the regulatory environment for business in Ukraine (Figure 2). According to the Doing Business report 2022, Ukraine ranked 61<sup>st</sup> in the category of "starting a business," with a score of 91.1 out of 100. Ukraine was ranked 146<sup>th</sup> in the Doing Business Report 2020 in "resolving insolvency" (WBG, 2020). However, a new Bankruptcy Code entered into force in April 2019, aiming to simplify market exit and thereby make the Ukrainian market more attractive for investors (BTI, 2022).



**Figure 3 – Rankings on Doing Business topics – Ukraine. Source: Doing Business 2020. Economy Profile Ukraine.**

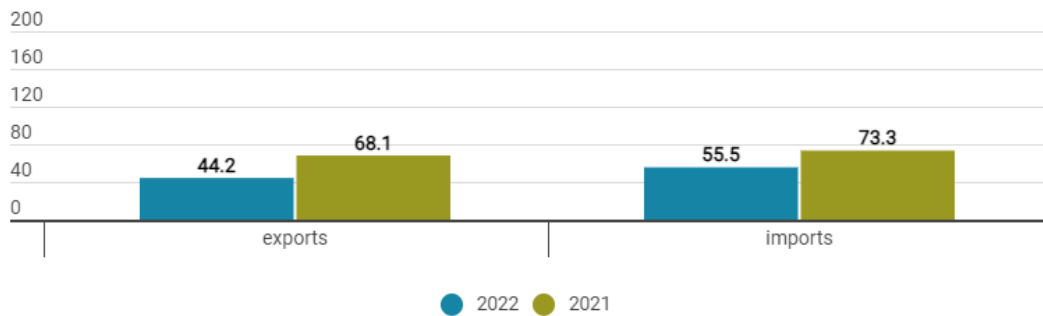
The size of the shadow economy has continued to shrink since its 2014 peak. According to official estimates, in 2020 the shadow economy was 31% of GDP (Interfax-Ukraine, 2021). In 2021, Ukraine continued improving its position in the Human Development Index, ranked at 77<sup>th</sup> place out of 191 countries, with a score of 0.773, having slightly decreased from the previous measurement (UNDP, 2022). Countries with a score above 0.700 are considered highly developed compared to countries with a lower score. According to the Global

Innovation Index (GII), Ukraine ranks 57<sup>th</sup> among the 132 economies featured. The statistical confidence interval for the ranking of Ukraine in the GII 2022 is between ranks 48 and 59 (WIPO, 2022).

Ukraine's geographic location combined with 17 FTAs with 46 countries (including EU, EFTA, Canada, Israel, etc.) makes it an important transit corridor for trade and travel between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (UkraineInvest,2023). Ukraine is a middle-income country with a relatively large industrial and agricultural sector. In many areas of social development, it has achieved good results, although its GDP per capita is lower than that of neighbouring countries (BOFIT,2023). One of the most important sectors of Ukraine's economy is the transport infrastructure sector with an extensive network of railways and highways, sea, and river ports (terminals), airports, as well as a wide network of air terminals, cargo, and customs terminals (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2023; UkraineInvest,2023). The transport sector makes a significant contribution to the Ukrainian economy - it accounts for 6.4% of the country's GDP and 7% of total employment (UkraineInvest,2023). The infrastructure sector of Ukraine was severely weakened by the invasion of Russia. Significant infrastructure activity is unlikely to occur until the conflict subsides (Radchenko et al.,2021).

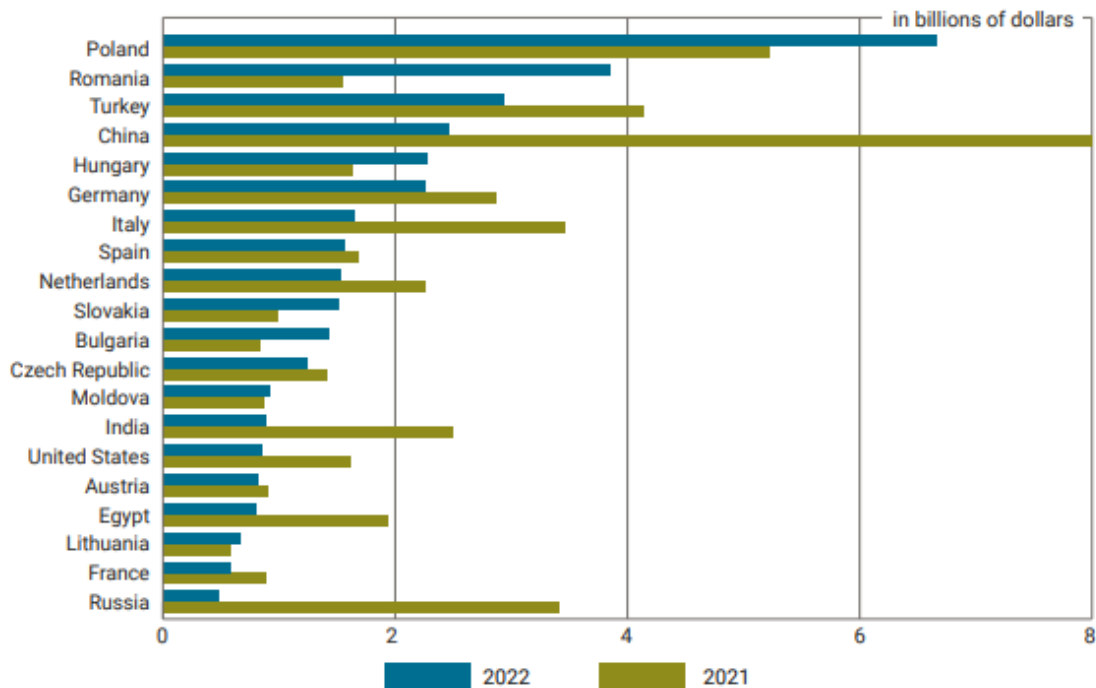
The Russian invasion led to the collapse of Ukraine's foreign trade. It also caused significant changes in the geographic pattern of its imports and exports. Before the war, Russia and Belarus were important economic partners of Ukraine, especially regarding fuel imports. Therefore, after the Russian invasion, there was a sharp drop in Ukraine's trade turnover, since already in March 2022 its exports fell by 49.5%, and imports by as much as 70.7%. However, the situation with imports partially stabilized during the following months (in December 2022, Ukraine's imports fell by 23.7% compared to December 2021), with exports it continues to be very difficult (-49% in December 2022 compared to December 2021) (Matuszak,2022). In 2022, there was a very serious drop in exports (-35.1%) and imports of Ukraine (-24.2%) (Figure 3). The main reason for this decline was the blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea ports, which were and are Ukraine's most important and effective export route, as before the Russian invasion, about 70% of the country's exports passed through them. The blockade was partially lifted in August 2022, but it only affected agricultural products (Ruta,2022). The importance of seaports for Ukraine's imports was not so great, as they accounted for about 25% of the total volume of imported goods. As of July 2022, about 75%

of Ukrainian imports were transported by road, and this share continued to grow in the following months (Matuszak,2022).



**Figure 4 – Comparison of Ukraine’s commodity exports and imports in 2021 and 2022 (in billions of dollars). Source: State Customs Service of Ukraine.**

Following the war’s outbreak, road and rail transport gained ground, and Ukraine’s land border crossings with EU countries (mainly Poland) became the main routes for Ukrainian exports (Matuszak,2022). As a result, in 2022, Poland overtook China and became the largest trade partner of Ukraine in the world (Figure 4).



**Figure 5 – The twenty biggest recipients of Ukrainian goods in 2021 and 2022. Source: State Customs Service of Ukraine.**

Trade between Ukraine and the EU has increased since the signing of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) in 2014. The DCFTA, which entered into force in 2016, will finally eliminate tariffs on 95% of Ukrainian products entering the EU

(Heinonen & Korhonen, 2023). It is also scheduled to get rid of 96 % of tariffs on EU products entering Ukraine in 2023, when the DCFTA transition period ends (European Commission,2023). The process of trade reorientation gained momentum in July 2022, when Ukraine began exporting electricity to the EU (Chubyk,2022). The EU secured the status of the main recipient of Ukrainian goods, as EU countries now account for 64% of Ukraine's exports. In general, Ukraine's exports to the European Union increased by 1.7%. A drop of 20 to 90% was recorded in trade with other countries of the world. As for the goods imported by Ukraine, the EU accounts for 51% of them, and the fall in imports was recorded in all countries of the world, except for the Middle East (Matuszak,2022). As long as the war continues, economic recovery, which could increase Ukraine's exports and imports, is impossible. Current forecasts predict a slight increase in Ukraine's GDP at the end of 2023. Serious changes in the structure of Ukraine's foreign trade compared to 2022 should not be expected (Ruta,2022).

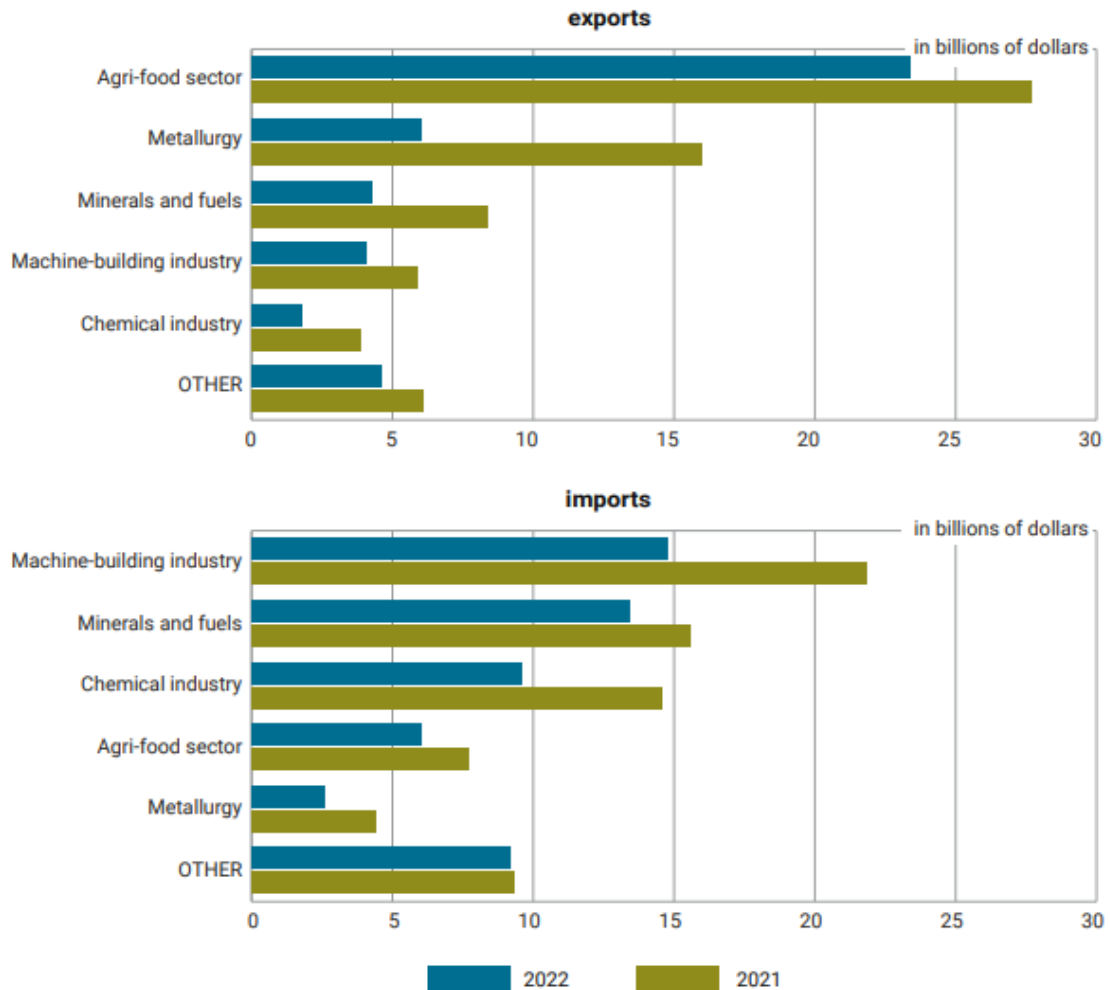
A significant revival of art and cultural production took place in Ukraine after the Euromaidan revolution, as well as an incredible level of civic engagement through culture, which only strengthened the sense of common identity and cultural space (Pesenti,2020). Ukraine began to build a "firewall" against Russia's violent narratives through the intervention of state cultural policy and the enthusiasm of its creative community. Therefore, Ukraine has created its own separate cultural space, preserving pluralism of views and cultural diversity (Pesenti,2020).

In summary, Ukraine is a fascinating country with a rich history, diverse culture, and a promising future. Its geography, population, economy, political system, and cultural heritage make it a unique and exciting destination for investors.

## **2.2. International Business Impact of the War in Ukraine**

Russia's brutal illegal attack on Ukraine on February 24,2022 changed the world economy and geopolitical order, but without a doubt, Ukraine suffered the most from the war (Heinonen & Korhonen, 2023). The world economy was slowing down even before the war. After reaching approximately 5.5 percent in 2021, global growth is expected to slow to 4.1 percent in 2022 and 3.2 percent in 2023 (World Bank, 2022). The projected slowdown reflects periodic outbreaks of COVID-19, reduced monetary and fiscal policy support, and prolonged supply disruptions, among others (Guénette et al.,2022).

Ukraine is known for its exports of agricultural products, including grain, sunflower oil, and sugar, as well as metals and machinery (Figure 5). It accounts for almost 10 % of global wheat exports, as well as 13 % of corn (maize) and 36 % of sunflower oil (UNCTAD, 2022).



**Figure 6 – Ukraine’s exports and imports in specific sectors of the economy in 2021 and 2022. Source: State Customs Service of Ukraine.**

Disruptions in the supply of these key commodities are causing prices to rise sharply. The price of wheat, for example, has risen by more than 40 percent since the war began in late February. Higher food prices hit low- and middle-income countries hardest in Sub-Saharan Africa (Botswana, Zimbabwe) and the Middle East (Algeria, Tunisia), deepening global poverty (Ruta, 2022).

The war resulted in the mutual closure of airspace between Russia and 36 countries, which led to longer routes and higher prices for air travel between Europe and East Asia. Disruptions in global and regional supply chains have caused resource shortages and higher

prices (Karadima,2022). The Russian invasion caused an unprecedented response by the European Union, the United States, and other high-income economies in the form of sanctions. They are aimed at Russian individuals and companies, banning the import of Russian energy carriers and restrictions on the export of selected electronics to Russia, such as semiconductors (Demertzis et al.,2022).

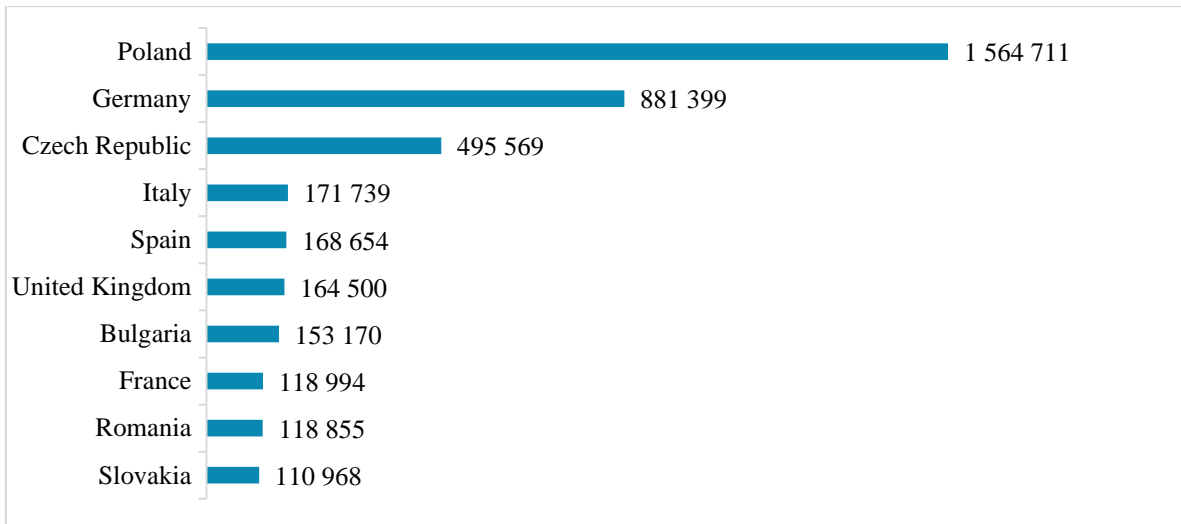
On the energy front, the EU, Great Britain and the United States have announced plans to phase out Russian energy sources. A few months after the start of the war, the export of mineral fuel from Russia to the USA and Great Britain dropped to zero. EU crude oil imports from Russia fell in December 2022 when the embargo took effect (Darvas & Martins,2022).

International Monetary Fund forecast revisions from October 2021 to October 2022 suggest that the volume of global trade in goods and services declined by 3.4 percent, energy prices increased by about 100 percent, and the prices of non-energy commodities by 8 percent. Among energy products, gas prices increased the most, followed by coal prices. Among non-energy commodities, food prices were revised upward by 11% compared to a year earlier, while agricultural raw materials and metals remained virtually unchanged (IMF,2021; IMF,2022).

The war created new geopolitical and economic uncertainty for the global economy, a sharp rise in energy prices and disruption of global value chains involving Russian and Ukrainian companies. Economic sanctions have had a negative impact not only on Russia, but also on the countries that introduced them, and, in general, on the economies of other countries due to higher prices for energy and raw materials (Darvas & Martins,2022).

### **2.3.Ukrainian Refugees Trying to Make New Life Abroad**

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, many Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes to protect their lives. Some went abroad, while others moved within the country. The return of those who have now moved abroad or are about to do so will directly affect the economic and demographic future of Ukraine (Davidson & Chu,2023).



**Figure 7 – Top ten countries hosting refugees from Ukraine registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe as of March 2023.**

**Source: UNHCR.**

More than 8 million Ukrainians have fled Ukraine to Europe since the war began, making it the largest refugee crisis since World War II. They spread across Europe, with the largest populations outside of Russia in Poland (1,564,711 refugees from Ukraine registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes), Germany (881,399 refugees) and the Czech Republic (495,569 refugees) (Figure 6). But in proportion to the size of their country, the Czechs have taken the largest share: Ukrainian refugees represent more than 4% of the total population (Stoquer,2023). According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, another million or so are sheltering in eight other Western and Central European countries, and there are over 200,000 in the United States (Dettmer,2023).

Governments are united in welcoming Ukrainians. European politicians have even unblocked the temporary visa protection status, allowing Ukrainians to live and work in Europe (Davidson & Chu,2023). Europe responded with swift and decisive support, and 4.9 million people from Ukraine are registered for temporary protection in the EU or similar national programs (UNHCR,2023). Researchers from the Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael), who have observed Ukrainian migration flows in Europe, note that migration occurs on personal initiatives, as Ukrainian refugees join family and friends (Sie Dhian Ho et al.,2022). An important role in the resettlement of new refugees was played by the Ukrainian diaspora, which before the war numbered more than 1 million people (Stoquer,2023).

Women and children make up approximately 90% of Ukrainian refugees, so there are specific challenges such as schooling for children, childcare and work for caregivers, and important emotional and psychological support, especially for children (Karasapan,2022). According to the OECD, the educational profile of Ukrainian refugees, existing social networks and immediate access to work contribute to integration (OECD, 2022). In Great Britain, Denmark, and the Netherlands, more than half of Ukrainian women found a job less than a year after moving abroad. About two-thirds have higher education, which is higher than the average in both the EU and Ukraine. Many have taken advantage of existing networks of Ukrainian refugees, especially in Poland, as geographical and cultural proximity helps. Sympathetic employers in countries such as Poland and Romania tried to accommodate the new arrivals with benefits such as free childcare (The Economist,2023). A recent UNHCR survey suggests that about 40%of Ukrainian refugees were either employed or self-employed as of February 2023, corresponding to roughly half of those who had previously worked in Ukraine (UNHCR,2023).

Time passed and Ukrainian counteroffensives continued, some civilians returned to their hometowns. Residents gradually returned to Kyiv at the end of spring, when the Russian troops withdrew (Stoquer,2023). A United Nations survey published in September 2022 found that 81% of Ukrainian refugees say they intend to return home to reunite with their families. But it is possible that this percentage may begin to fall if the war drags on (Dettmer,2023).

The reconstruction of war-torn Ukraine can be a great opportunity for all types of businesses in all sectors of the economy. Despite the protracted conflict, the Ukrainian market continues to operate, and when the war ends, it will need a variety of products and services (Garrigues,2023).

### **3. Features of Ukrainian Business Culture and how it Reflects in the period of War.**

#### **3.1. The Concept**

The Ukrainian business culture possesses distinct characteristics that are shaped by the country's history, culture, and business environment (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). These characteristics become apparent in how businesses function during times of war. Numerous international companies are proactively establishing their offices and branches in Ukraine, often led by foreign managers. While these managers bring their knowledge and expertise, they may struggle to achieve the desired outcomes. The Ukrainian mentality plays a significant role in explaining these dynamics (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2019). Researchers universally acknowledge the key aspects of the Ukrainian mentality, which is characterized by a fusion of cross-cultural traditions from both Eastern and Western influences. This fusion encompasses elements of individualism inherent in each Ukrainian and the collectivism deeply rooted in Ukrainian society (Blyznyuk,2016; Kuśnierz et al.,2020). Engaging in business with Ukrainian partners entails a range of unique factors, primarily influenced by the country's historical and regional characteristics, as well as Ukraine's rich and diverse cultural tapestry (Lepeyko & Blyznyuk, 2010). Foreign managers should familiarize themselves with the cultural aspects of Ukrainian business in order to prevent problems and conflicts.

Edward T. Hall (1959, 1966) introduced the concepts of monochronic and polychronic time in his cross-cultural studies. Monochronic time refers to a cultural orientation where time is perceived as linear, sequential, and divided into distinct units. In monochronic cultures, punctuality, adherence to schedules, and completing tasks one at a time are highly valued. Efficiency and prioritizing time as a valuable resource are common traits. On the other hand, polychronic time signifies a cultural orientation where time is seen as more flexible and less structured. In polychronic cultures, individuals are comfortable engaging in multiple activities simultaneously and dealing with overlapping commitments. Flexibility, adaptability, and the significance of personal relationships and social interactions often take precedence over strict adherence to schedules.

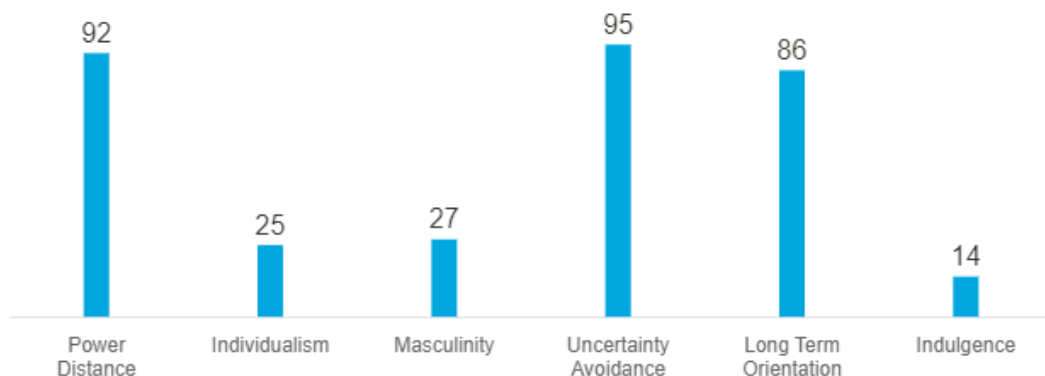
In the Ukrainian context, it is evident that the culture tends to lean towards a polychronic approach. Ukrainians often engage in multiple activities simultaneously and exhibit a flexible attitude towards time management (Lepeyko & Blyznyuk, 2010). This characteristic is evident in social gatherings and business meetings, where discussions often unfold naturally and may not adhere strictly to predefined agendas (Hall, 1959; Lepeyko & Blyznyuk, 2010). Furthermore, Ukrainians place a high value on personal relationships and may prioritize social interactions and networking over strict adherence to schedules. It is important to acknowledge that cultural patterns can vary among individuals and may be influenced by factors such as generational differences, regional variations, and personal preferences (Glinkowska-Krauze et al., 2020). While a polychronic approach is generally prevalent in Ukraine, it is crucial to recognize and respect individual differences and adapt to the specific context when engaging with Ukrainian individuals or doing business in Ukraine.

Hall (1976) is widely recognized as the pioneer of the high and low context cultures model, which highlights the role of context in communication interpretation. Hall classified cultures into high context and low context based on the degree of importance attributed to contextual cues (Dathe & Helmold, 2020; Hofstede, 2001). According to Hall (1976), low-context societies rely primarily on explicit messages, with all the necessary information contained within the explicit code of the message. In contrast, high-context societies rely on implicit cues, with information encoded in the physical context or internalized in individuals.

In Ukraine, the culture leans more towards being a high-context culture. Ukrainians value personal connections and trust, and their communication style reflects this emphasis on implicit communication and shared understanding (Prykarpatska, 2008). It is common for them to rely on non-verbal cues, unspoken assumptions, and context to convey meaning. Building rapport and establishing relationships is crucial in business and social interactions.

Hofstede (1980) is known for his studies of cultural dimensions, which help explain differences in values and behavior between different countries and cultures. His research became the basis for cross-cultural studies in management and organizational behavior. (Hofstede, 1984). Nowadays, Hofstede's 6-D model is a framework that helps to understand the cultural dimensions of a country. It assesses six cultural dimensions, namely Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint (Hofstede,

2017). *Power Distance* describes the extent to which people in a particular culture accept inequality in the distribution of power and influence. A high power distance indicates that people in that culture accept inequality in power and respect authority figures such as supervisors, parents, teachers, etc. A low power distance means that people in that culture are more inclined to support horizontal organization, where there is no clear hierarchy (Wackowski & Blyznyuk, 2017). *Individualism vs. Collectivism* describes the degree to which people prefer individual or collective approaches in life. This dimension reflects the cultural attitude towards interaction between people (Hofstede, 1980; Dathe & Helmold, 2020). *Masculinity vs. Femininity* reflects attitudes toward gender roles and their manifestation in behavior. In countries with high masculinity, endurance, competitiveness and success are important, as well as a clear delineation of gender roles, with men in the role of leaders and women in the role of housewives and mothers. In countries with high femininity, on the other hand, cooperation, care and mutual assistance are important, and gender roles are less important (Hofstede, 1984). *Uncertainty Avoidance* refers to the extent to which a society tolerates ambiguity, uncertainty, and risk (Hofstede, 1980, 1984). *Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation* refers to the extent to which a society values long-term versus short-term thinking. In societies with a Long-term Orientation, there is a greater emphasis on persistence, perseverance, and thrift. In societies with a Short-term Orientation, there is a greater emphasis on quick results, instant gratification, and meeting current needs (Hofstede et al., 2010). *Indulgence vs. Restraint* refers to the extent to which a society is comfortable with enjoying life's pleasures and indulging in personal desires versus restraining those impulses (Dathe & Helmold, 2020). Understanding a society's position on these dimensions can be helpful in developing effective cross-cultural communication strategies, building successful business relationships, and managing employees from different cultural backgrounds (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012).



**Figure 8 – Ukrainian culture through the lens of the 6-D Model of Hofstede (Estimated). Source: Hofstede Insights ([https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=ukraine\\*](https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=ukraine*)).**

Here is an analysis of Ukrainian culture based on these dimensions:

1. **Power Distance:** Ukraine demonstrates a relatively high power distance score of 92, indicating a societal acceptance and expectation of unequal power distribution. There is a noticeable distinction between individuals in positions of authority and those who are not. Ukrainian society exhibits a clear hierarchical structure, where decisions made by those in power are generally respected and followed (Wackowski & Blyznyuk, 2017).
2. **Individualism vs. Collectivism:** Ukraine demonstrates a low score of 25 on the dimension of individualism. This indicates a preference for collective values, emphasizing friendship, family ties, and cooperation within Ukrainian society. The sense of belonging to a group and the responsibility towards the collective are highly significant. However, it is worth noting that there is also a notable presence of individualism in Ukrainian society, particularly among younger generations who prioritize their personal needs and goals. The influence of interaction with Western countries and the impact of globalization on Ukrainian society contribute significantly to this trend (Kuśnierz et al., 2020).
3. **Masculinity vs. Femininity:** Ukraine scored only 27 points here, which means society tends to be more Feminine. Ukrainians are rarely driven by competition, they would prefer staying on one stable job for years rather than changing something, chasing a higher salary or more interesting opportunities (Blyznyuk, 2016). With the younger generation it is different, because they grew up with more information about the possibilities they can pursue elsewhere.
4. **Uncertainty Avoidance:** With a high score of 95, Ukrainians exhibit a strong aversion to ambiguous situations. This suggests a preference for structure and clarity, sometimes at the expense of risk-taking and innovation. In Ukrainian culture, following rules and procedures and having confidence in the future are highly valued. Consequently, Ukrainians can be conservative and detail-oriented, particularly in business and government contexts. The high level of uncertainty avoidance can also contribute to a greater emphasis on protecting rights and interests, but it can also lead

to increased corruption, especially in the absence of clear rules and procedures (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2019).

5. Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation: Ukraine scores highly at 86, indicating that it has a strongly pragmatic culture. In societies with a pragmatic orientation, there is a belief that truth is highly dependent on the situation, context, and time. Such societies demonstrate a remarkable ability to adapt traditions to changing conditions, display a strong inclination toward saving and investing, emphasize thriftiness, and exhibit perseverance in achieving desired outcomes (Blyznyuk,2016).
6. Indulgence vs. Restraint: Ukrainian culture exhibits a pronounced restrained nature, as reflected by its notably low score of 14 on this dimension. In societies characterized by low restraint, there is often a tendency towards cynicism and pessimism. Additionally, unlike indulgent societies, restrained societies place less importance on leisure time and exercise control over the satisfaction of their desires. Individuals with this orientation perceive their actions as being limited by social norms and may feel a sense of wrongdoing when indulging themselves (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020).

Trompenaars & Hampden – Turner (2012) critique Hofstede's approach and emphasize the importance of considering individual differences rather than generalizing an entire country's culture. They argue that cultures exhibit specific tendencies, which they classify using their seven dimensions. Their research is based on the behaviors of managers in different organizations across various countries (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 2012). Their primary criticism of Hofstede is that his dimensions were derived from observations within a single global organization, which inherently influences cultural behavior and thus biases his analysis (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 1998).

According to Trompenaars & Hampden – Turner (2012), international managers face challenges in understanding their foreign counterparts due to various factors, including their cultural background, the culture they operate in, and the organizational culture. To address these challenges, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner proposed seven cultural dimensions that could facilitate successful international business interactions and reaching agreements. Their framework considers different cultural practices, customs, traditions, and organizational values (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 1998). However, Hofstede criticized Trompenaars' theory for lacking support from a comprehensive database, thus questioning its validity (Hofstede, 1996).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner identified seven dimensions of culture. These dimensions help in understanding cultural differences and their impact on behavior, values, and interactions within societies. *Universalism/Particularism* refers to the extent to which cultures emphasize rules and standards (universalism) or adaptability and relationships (particularism) (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 2012). Ukrainian culture tends to lean towards particularism, emphasizing relationships and adaptability to individual circumstances rather than strict adherence to rules and standards (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018).

*Individualism/Collectivism* reflects the balance between individual interests and group harmony. Individualistic cultures prioritize personal goals and autonomy, while collectivistic cultures emphasize group cohesion and collective goals (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 2012). Ukraine exhibits a more collectivistic orientation, emphasizing the importance of family, community, and group harmony over individual pursuits (Modlinski, 2013). *Neutral/Emotional* describes the range of emotional expressiveness in a culture. Neutral cultures tend to control and suppress emotions, while emotional cultures are more open in expressing feelings (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 2012). Ukrainian culture tends to be more emotional, with expressive and passionate communication styles (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018).

*Specific/Diffuse* focuses on the degree of separation between personal and professional relationships. Specific cultures maintain clear boundaries between personal and work life, while diffuse cultures integrate personal and professional relationships (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 2012). Ukrainian culture leans towards specificity, maintaining clear boundaries between personal and professional relationships (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2022). *Achievement/Ascription* examines the basis for evaluating status and success. Achievement-oriented cultures emphasize individual achievements and merit, whereas ascription-oriented cultures place importance on inherited status and personal attributes (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 2012). Ukraine leans towards ascription, where social status and personal attributes play a significant role in evaluating success, though there is also a growing emphasis on achievement and merit (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018).

*Sequential/Synchronic Time* deals with the approach to time and its management. Sequential cultures value linear and structured time, while synchronic cultures have a more flexible and fluid approach to time (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 2012). Ukrainian culture

generally follows a sequential approach to time, valuing punctuality and adherence to schedules (Modlinski, 2013). *Internal/External Control* reflects the belief in personal control over events and outcomes. Internal control cultures emphasize personal agency and responsibility, while external control cultures attribute outcomes to external factors or fate (Trompenaars, F.; Hampden-Turner, 2012). Ukraine tends to lean towards external control, with a belief that events and outcomes are influenced by external factors (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2022).

These dimensions help provide insights into Ukrainian cultural values, behaviors, and expectations. It's important to note that individual variations within Ukrainian culture exist, and not all individuals may perfectly align with these dimensions.

Consequently, the Ukrainian culture has a higher power distance, leading to workers expecting additional compensation for any extra effort or initiative. Due to their collective work orientation, taking responsibility for their actions and decisions can be challenging, hence the need for additional incentives for independence. Additionally, Ukrainian culture is more feminine, with a greater emphasis on relationships and fulfillment rather than achieving results and goals in the workplace (Kormakova et al.,2023).

### **3.2. Impact of the Russian invasion on Ukrainian business**

The Russian invasion has had a significant impact on Ukrainian business. The conflict has created a sense of instability and uncertainty in the country, which has affected business activities and investments. Many foreign investors adopted a cautious approach, delaying or scaling back their investment plans due to geopolitical risks and economic instability (Lim et al.,2022). The ongoing conflict has disrupted supply chains, damaged infrastructure, and caused economic downturns in certain regions. This has led to challenges in maintaining and developing business relationships, both domestically and internationally (Markus,2022).

The political tensions between Ukraine and Russia have also strained diplomatic and economic ties between the two countries. Following the Russian invasion, Ukrainian businesses faced disruptions in trade with Russia and the loss of the Russian market. In response, they sought to diversify their export destinations and reduce reliance on the Russian market (Ratten,2022). European countries became an attractive alternative for Ukrainian businesses due to their proximity, market size, and potential for economic cooperation (Zahra,2022). Also, the conflict has strained relationships between Ukrainians

and Russians, as well as between individuals with different political views and loyalties. Tensions and divisions have emerged, affecting social interactions and personal connections. Families and friends may have been separated or experienced disagreements due to differing perspectives on the conflict (Lim et al.,2022). However, the Russian invasion has led to a strengthening of relationships between Ukrainians and Europeans. The conflict has brought Ukraine closer to the European Union (EU) and other European countries, as they have shown support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Ratten,2022). Moreover, the conflict has resulted in a shift in focus for Ukrainian businesses. Many have had to divert resources and attention towards addressing the immediate challenges posed by the conflict, such as ensuring the safety of employees and securing supply chains. This shift in priorities has impacted the overall business environment and the ability to cultivate and strengthen relationships with partners (Markus,2022). Some businesses in Ukraine continued to employ expatriate professionals, particularly in managerial and specialized technical roles. These professionals often brought valuable expertise and international perspectives to the organizations they worked for (Jackson,2022).

Ukrainians have come together as a nation, demonstrating a strong sense of unity and solidarity. They have supported each other, volunteered in various capacities, and provided aid to those affected by the war. This collective spirit has helped foster a sense of national identity and resilience (Sytych & Dukach,2023). Despite the difficult circumstances, Ukrainian businesses have displayed an entrepreneurial spirit. They have sought new opportunities, explored alternative markets, and embraced innovation to sustain their operations and find growth avenues even during the war (Ratten,2022). Business relationships have also been strengthened through shared experiences and a common goal of rebuilding and recovering from the impact of the invasion. This collective spirit has fostered a sense of unity and collaboration within the business community. Also, they have shown a commitment to their employees during the war. They have prioritized the well-being and safety of their staff, offering support and assistance to those affected by the conflict. This commitment to their workforce has helped maintain morale and productivity (Zahra,2022).

Building strong relationships and trust has always been an important aspect of Ukrainian business culture, and this remains true during the period of war. Businesses have prioritized maintaining and nurturing relationships with clients, partners, and suppliers, recognizing that trust and collaboration are vital for long-term success (Williams,2007). Ukrainian businesses

have shown a heightened sense of social responsibility during the war. Many have actively engaged in corporate social responsibility initiatives, supporting communities affected by the conflict, providing employment opportunities for displaced individuals, and contributing to humanitarian efforts. This reflects the importance placed on giving back and making a positive impact within Ukrainian business culture (Ratten,2022)

Despite the challenges posed by the Russian invasion, most of technological companies in Ukraine were able to ensure business continuity and maintain productivity levels between 85-90% during the initial stages of the conflict (Rak,2023). From April onwards, positive growth dynamics have been restored. However, it is important to note that every IT company faced difficulties as a result of the war. According to available data, approximately 34.3% of companies have successfully adapted to the new realities, while the majority (61.3%) continue to face challenges but maintain stable operations overall (IT Ukraine Association,2022). Some of the main challenges for these companies include employee migration and relocation, travel restrictions for IT professionals, military recruitment of IT personnel, client retention, and managing risks associated with client relationships. Additionally, currency regulations and restrictions imposed by the National Bank of Ukraine have added to the complexities faced by the industry. The positive performance indicators in the IT industry can be attributed to the industry's rapid and large-scale reformatting during the war. Many companies effectively implemented business continuity plans, adopted flexible work models, relocated teams, and diversified their offices both within Ukraine and abroad (Rak,2023). For example, A Ukrainian technology company specializing in software development and IT services retained an expatriate Chief Technology Officer (CTO) from a Western country. The CTO brought extensive industry experience, innovative ideas, and a global network of contacts. Despite the challenges of the war, the company relied on the CTO's expertise to guide their technology strategy, enhance product development, and maintain a competitive edge in the international market (Sytch & Dukach,2023). Despite blackouts and other disruptions, these companies continue to operate, fulfill their tax obligations, attract new customers, and actively enter the global market (Jackson,2022).

Overall, the features of Ukrainian business culture, such as resilience, community spirit, employee commitment, entrepreneurialism, long-term perspective, and relationship-building, have been evident in the way businesses have responded to the challenges of the

war (Lim et al.,2022). These cultural values have provided a foundation for Ukrainian businesses to navigate the difficult circumstances and work towards a brighter future.

### **3.3.Doing Business in Ukraine – The Dos and the Don'ts**

When firms expand into countries with different ownership laws, cultural gaps, and language barriers, it is essential to determine the most suitable entry strategy based on business goals, available resources, and market analysis. This can include options such as setting up a subsidiary, forming a joint venture with a local partner, acquiring an existing business, or entering into distribution agreements (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2019). In addition, gaining knowledge in cross-cultural management is crucial for effectively navigating cultural differences and bridging gaps between one's own cultural background and the Ukrainian business environment. Developing skills in intercultural communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, and team dynamics will facilitate smoother business operations. Staying updated on changes in the Ukrainian market, consumer preferences, and the business environment is crucial. Continuously adapting strategies based on market feedback and emerging opportunities is key to remaining competitive (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). Working with local experts, consultants, and industry associations is highly advisable. Their expertise and local insights can greatly facilitate entry into the Ukrainian market and increase the chances of success. Their guidance will help navigate the complexities of internationalization in Ukraine and make informed business decisions (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018).

Doing business in Ukraine requires a comprehensive understanding of the country's unique cultural and business practices. In Ukrainian business culture, emphasis is placed on establishing personal relationships and building trust with local counterparts (Kormakova et al.,2023). Neglecting relationship-building and relying solely on business merits may hinder progress. Therefore, it is important to invest time in face-to-face meetings and social events to foster strong connections (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). While technology enables remote communication, Ukrainians highly value in-person interactions. Thorough discussions and extended negotiations are common in Ukrainian business culture. Rushing the process can be seen as disrespectful, so patience is key. Active participation in detailed conversations is expected. Punctuality is also highly regarded, so being on time for appointments and meetings is crucial. However, it is important to be prepared for slight

delays as meetings may start a little later due to relationship-building and informal conversation (Małota,2017).

Ukrainians highly value formalities, so it is advisable to address Ukrainian colleagues using their title and surname, unless they explicitly suggest using their first name. Maintaining a professional demeanour and showing respect for the hierarchy are important in Ukrainian business culture (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). Neglecting these cultural norms can create a negative impression and impede relationship building. Therefore, it is crucial to have a solid understanding of Ukrainian culture and to demonstrate respect accordingly. To foster positive interactions, it is important to refrain from making silly remarks or jokes and to be mindful of cultural nuances. Prior to meetings, it is important to allocate time to become familiar with Ukrainian customs, traditions, and taboos. This will help avoid unintentional insults or misunderstandings. Being aware of these cultural sensitivities will contribute to successful business interactions in Ukraine (Möllering & Stache,2007).

Ukrainians are known for their directness and value straightforward communication. They tend to be clear and concise in their conversations while maintaining a polite and respectful tone. Small talk plays an important role in Ukrainian business culture. Colleagues often engage in discussions about well-being, family, and personal interests before delving into business matters. This practice helps establish mutual understanding and build a foundation of trust. Ukrainians highly appreciate well-prepared business partners (Blyznyuk,2016). Thoroughly studying the market, understanding local regulations, and preparing relevant documents for meetings are essential. Demonstrating dedication and knowledge will earn respect and credibility. Collaborating with local partners who possess deep knowledge of the Ukrainian market can be immensely beneficial. They can offer valuable insights, assist in navigating local regulations, and help establish strong relationships with local businesses (Kuśnierz et al.,2020).

### **3.4. Business Meeting and Greeting – Etiquette**

The business etiquette in Ukraine differs significantly from that of European countries. Ukrainian people possess a strong sense of integrity, which is widely acknowledged. Despite the slow pace of the country's development, the high moral values of the people contribute to a highly satisfying business etiquette in Ukraine (Blyznyuk,2016; Kuśnierz et al.,2020).

Business individuals aiming to establish and grow their businesses in new Ukrainian markets will greatly benefit from observing the local business etiquette. Familiarity with these rules and adherence to them will provide an advantage when working with Ukrainian partners (Podolyan,2005). Business meetings and greetings in Ukraine typically adhere to formal protocols. It is customary to schedule meetings in advance and arrive punctually, as punctuality holds great value in Ukrainian culture. However, be prepared for slight delays as meetings may start a little later due to relationship-building and social conversation (Weck & Ivanova,2013). Dressing in a formal and conservative manner is also expected, particularly in traditional and conservative industries like finance and law (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2019).

When entering the meeting room, it is customary in Ukraine to greet the most senior person first. This is typically done with a firm handshake, direct eye contact, and a warm smile. It is also customary to address individuals by their professional titles until given permission to use their first names (Ohbaidze et al.,2022).

Throughout the meeting, it is important to maintain a professional and respectful demeanour. Interrupting or speaking over others is considered impolite, so it is advisable to listen attentively and give others the opportunity to express their thoughts. The exchange of business cards is common practice in Ukraine and often takes place at the beginning or end of the meeting. Business cards should be presented and received with both hands as a sign of respect. It is polite to briefly study the card before putting it away (Małota,2017).

After the meeting, it is customary to send a thank-you email or note to express appreciation for the opportunity to meet and discuss business matters (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). By adhering to these business etiquette practices in Ukraine, you can establish a positive impression and build strong relationships with your Ukrainian counterparts (Möllering & Stache,2007).

### **3.5. Building Business Relationships**

When building business relationships in Ukraine, it can be advantageous to consider insights from renowned researchers like Geert Hofstede, Edward T. Hall, and Fons Trompenaars. Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2017) suggest that in Ukraine, where power distance tends to be higher, it is important to demonstrate respect for hierarchy and authority. Emphasizing collective values and prioritizing trust and mutual respect can be beneficial in

relationship-building (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). Edward T. Hall's (1976) concepts of high-context and low-context cultures highlight the significance of personal connections and contextual cues in Ukraine. While these factors hold importance, Ukrainians also appreciate direct and clear communication (Prykarpatska,2008). Striking a balance between building relationships and maintaining concise business interactions is crucial. Fons Trompenaars' dimensions (2012) recognize that Ukrainians may place value on particularistic values, emphasizing relationships and personal connections. Respecting their emotional expression in communication and being mindful of their preference for context-specific decision-making are essential elements to consider (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018).

Overall, Ukrainian business relationships involve establishing personal connections, effective communication, trust-building, and maintaining professionalism (Möllering & Stache,2007). By investing time and effort in cultivating strong relationships, businesses can enhance their chances of success in the Ukrainian market.

### **3.5.1. Trust and Respect**

Trust and respect play an important role in Ukrainian business relationships. Ukrainians prefer working with individuals they know and trust on an emotional level. For instance, a manager may prioritize hiring someone they have known for a longer period, even if others possess similar qualifications (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). In Ukrainian culture, building trust requires time and is rooted in personal connections and mutual understanding (Kuśnierz et al.,2020).

Ukrainians highly value personal connections and believe in establishing relationships based on trust and mutual respect. It is essential to invest time in getting to know your Ukrainian counterparts, demonstrating genuine interest in their well-being, and establishing a rapport. Building trust is a gradual process that involves demonstrating professionalism and integrity in your business dealings (Williams,2007).

Maintaining a strong work ethic, fulfilling commitments, and being dependable are crucial for earning the trust and respect of Ukrainian partners. Open and honest communication is highly valued in Ukrainian business relationships (Lewicki et al.,2006). Transparency in intentions, sharing relevant information, and addressing concerns directly contribute to building trust (Bordian et al.,2023).

Respecting Ukrainian customs, traditions, and cultural norms is essential. Being aware of and sensitive to cultural differences helps prevent misunderstandings and demonstrates respect for their way of doing business (Möllering & Stache,2007). Ukrainian business relationships often have a long-term focus, and demonstrating commitment to long-term collaboration and loyalty can strengthen trust over time (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017).

Following through on commitments and delivering on promises is vital for maintaining trust. If challenges or delays arise, open communication and proactive problem-solving are essential to preserve trust in the relationship (Bordian et al.,2023). Upholding high ethical standards in business practices is greatly valued in Ukrainian culture. Doing business with honesty, fairness, and integrity earns respect and trust from Ukrainian partners (Williams,2007).

It is important to note that trust and respect are not instantaneously achieved, but rather developed through consistent actions, open communication, and cultural sensitivity. Building strong and trustworthy relationships with Ukrainian counterparts enhances business success in the Ukrainian market (Möllering & Stache,2007).

### **3.5.2. Time and Scheduling**

In Ukrainian business relationships, time and scheduling are essential factors. Punctuality holds great significance in Ukrainian business culture. It is important to be punctual for meetings and appointments as it signifies respect for others' time and professionalism (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). Being late may be perceived as disrespectful or a lack of commitment. Meetings in Ukraine typically follow a structured schedule with designated timeframes (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). Adhering to the agreed-upon duration is crucial, unless explicitly allowed to exceed it. Respecting time constraints demonstrates consideration for everyone's schedules. Demonstrating effective time management skills is important as Ukrainians value efficiency and expect meetings to stay on track. Preparing an agenda in advance and allocating sufficient time for each item promotes productive discussions (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018).

While punctuality is valued, it is also important to be flexible and understanding of any delays or schedule adjustments that may arise. Ukrainian business culture recognizes the significance of building relationships, which may require dedicating additional time to personal conversations before diving into business matters (Lepeyko & Blyznyuk, 2010).

In the event of changes to the scheduled time or anticipation of running late, it is courteous to communicate these updates as soon as possible. Promptly notifying Ukrainian counterparts exhibits professionalism and respect for their time. Allocating time for relationship building is crucial in Ukrainian business relationships (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2019). This may involve socializing, getting to know each other on a personal level, and engaging in small talk before delving into business discussions. Ukrainians value this personal touch and appreciate the opportunity to establish trust and rapport (Williams,2007).

By considering these aspects of time and scheduling in Ukrainian business relationships, one can effectively navigate cultural expectations and demonstrate respect for the time of Ukrainian counterparts (Małota,2017).

### **3.5.3. Communication**

Effective communication plays a crucial role in establishing strong connections and achieving successful outcomes in Ukrainian business relationships. In the context of Ukrainian business culture, there is a preference for direct and straightforward communication. However, the level of directness may vary depending on the relationship and social status of the individuals involved (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). It is common for senior individuals to be more direct when speaking to subordinates, while juniors may speak indirectly to higher-ranking individuals. Respect for elders is highly valued, and extra politeness is often shown towards older individuals (Martynyshyn et al.,2019).

When expressing thoughts and ideas, it is important to be clear and concise to avoid misunderstandings. Excessive use of ambiguous or indirect language should be avoided. Maintaining a respectful and professional tone is crucial, and polite language should be used to show consideration for others' opinions (Tepliuk et al.,2021).

In Ukrainian business culture, it is common for individuals to avoid giving a straightforward "no" to avoid upsetting others. They may seem to agree with ideas they are not truly interested in. It is important to ask follow-up questions and read between the lines to understand their true thoughts and opinions (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). Actively listening to Ukrainian counterparts, paying attention to non-verbal cues, and asking relevant questions demonstrate engagement and are highly valued (Małota,2017).

Maintaining direct eye contact during conversations is considered a sign of attentiveness and respect, indicating genuine interest and sincerity in the interaction. During conversations, Ukrainians tend to stand at a distance closer than arm's length (Lepeyko & Blyznyuk, 2010). Respecting their personal space and maintaining an appropriate physical distance is important. Hand gestures are commonly used by Ukrainians to emphasize or support their verbal communication. Nodding, shaking the head, and other hand movements can convey agreement, disagreement, or understanding (Williams, 2007).

Building personal connections and trust is emphasized in Ukrainian business culture. Engaging in small talk and establishing rapport before discussing business matters is important (Bordian et al., 2023). Non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language, carries significant meaning (Martynyshyn et al., 2019).

Written communication, such as emails and official correspondence, should be clear, concise, and professional. Attention should be given to grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Using overly informal language should be avoided unless a more personal relationship has been established (Wackowski & Blyznyuk, 2017).

Learning and using the Ukrainian language in business interactions is highly appreciated, even if English proficiency is present among Ukrainian counterparts. Using Ukrainian phrases or greetings shows respect and a commitment to building relationships. English is commonly used in international business settings, but it is important to confirm the English proficiency of counterparts before assuming it will be the primary language of communication (Fomenko et al., 2020).

By understanding and respecting these cultural aspects of communication in Ukrainian business relationships, it becomes possible to enhance mutual understanding, establish rapport, and foster successful collaborations (Martynyshyn et al., 2019).

#### **3.5.4. Contracts & Negotiations**

Effective negotiation plays a vital role in Ukrainian business relationships, and it is essential to grasp the cultural subtleties and approaches to negotiation for achieving positive outcomes. Understanding the cultural nuances and adapting your negotiation strategies accordingly is key to success in Ukraine (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2020).

Negotiations in Ukraine may take time, as Ukrainians prioritize long-term perspectives and prioritize relationship building. In Ukrainian business relationships, it is common for discussions about finances and negotiations on prices to be addressed as the final topic. It is advisable to avoid employing aggressive negotiation tactics that focus solely on figures and prices. It is important to avoid rushing the process and to be patient (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). Multiple rounds of discussions and negotiations should be expected before reaching an agreement. Ukrainians prefer consensus-based decision-making, involving all relevant stakeholders and allowing for open discussions and input from different perspectives. Seeking consensus and win-win solutions can contribute to successful negotiations. Ukrainians appreciate flexibility and willingness to compromise during negotiations (Williams,2007).

Building a solid foundation of trust and rapport is crucial before engaging in negotiations with Ukrainians. It is worth noting that Ukrainians often have an indirect communication style during negotiations, relying on subtle cues, non-verbal signals, and diplomacy to express their thoughts and opinions (Möllering & Stache,2007).

During negotiations in Ukraine, it is unlikely to receive immediate conclusive answers, even if the key decision-maker is present. Ukrainians may need time to consult with their team and seek advice from experts (Martynyshyn et al.,2019). Introducing new ideas or sudden changes to the plan can cause discomfort, as higher-level approval may be required before committing to them. Therefore, it is important to exercise patience and understanding during the negotiation process (Tepliuk et al.,2021).

Capturing and exchanging written understandings after meetings and at key negotiation stages is essential, as oral statements may not always be reliable. The Ukrainian side often emphasizes the importance of having a protocol (meeting minutes) signed by both parties at the end of a meeting. These minutes serve to record the discussed topics but should not be mistaken for a final agreement or contract. It is crucial to understand that any part of an agreement can still undergo significant changes before the final contract is signed (Möllering & Stache,2007).

Written contracts should be clear, concise, and avoid excessive detail in terms and conditions. While signing the contract is important from a legal perspective, it also serves as a strong confirmation of the Ukrainian partners' commitment (Kyselova,2013). To further strengthen the personal and business relationship, it is worthwhile to invite Ukrainian

counterparts to a celebratory lunch or dinner after signing the contract. This gesture helps Ukrainian partners view the investor not only as a business partner but also as a trustworthy contact (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020).

Maintaining a professional and respectful demeanour throughout the negotiation process is crucial. It is important to avoid aggressive or confrontational behaviour and to show respect for the opinions and positions of Ukrainian counterparts (Bordian et al.,2023). By considering these factors and adapting your negotiation approach to the cultural context of Ukraine, it becomes possible to navigate negotiations successfully and build strong business relationships in the country (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017).

### **3.6. The Quality of the Entire Team**

In the context of Ukrainian business, the quality of the entire team is of utmost importance. Ukrainians value not only individual skills and expertise but also the collective strength and cohesion of the team (Korostelina,2013). Building a high-quality team is essential for successful business relationships in Ukraine (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020).

Emphasizing the team's track record of success and their commitment to excellence is crucial in Ukrainian business culture. Ukrainian counterparts value proven results and a strong work ethic. Highlighting the team's achievements, past successes, and their dedication to delivering high-quality outcomes will inspire confidence and trust (Andrienko,2021).

Collaboration and teamwork are highly valued in Ukrainian business culture. Creating a cooperative and supportive team environment is important, where individuals are encouraged to work together, communicate openly, share knowledge, and support one another (Carpio et al.,2017). Ukrainians appreciate teams that collaborate effectively and contribute to the overall success of the partnership. In addition to individual skills and expertise, cultural fit and interpersonal dynamics within the team are also significant. Building positive and respectful relationships among team members is key. Taking the time to foster personal connections, trust, and camaraderie within the team will positively impact the business relationship and enhance collaboration (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turne,2020).

Regular team meetings and updates are essential for effective communication and coordination. Keeping Ukrainian counterparts informed about the team's progress, achievements, and ongoing activities demonstrates transparency and inclusiveness

(Małota,2017). Involving them in important decision-making processes when appropriate shows a commitment to collaborative decision-making and a willingness to value their input and perspectives (Tepliuk et al.,2021).

The number of foreigners and stateless individuals officially employed in Ukraine has been increasing annually. As of the beginning of 2021, 10,800 new work permits have been issued, and 4,200 permits have been extended. Among foreign citizens, 58% held leadership and managerial positions, while 27% occupied specialist and professional roles. The most prominent occupations for foreigners included computer program and computing systems developers, commercial and administrative managers, engineers, programmer technicians, and others (Hlushchenko,2021).

One of the most successful cases that come to mind is that McDonald's is a global fast-food chain that has successfully adapted to the Ukrainian market. The company's success lies in its ability to understand and respect Ukrainian cultural preferences while maintaining its brand identity. McDonald's Ukraine has built a diverse and talented team that understands the local market and adapts the menu, marketing strategies, and customer service to cater to Ukrainian tastes and preferences.

### **3.6.1. Hierarchy, authority, and decision making.**

In Ukrainian business culture, there is a recognition of the importance of hierarchy and authority in ensuring the quality of the entire team. The hierarchical structure provides a framework for clear roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes within organizations (Croucher,2010). However, Ukrainian businesses also recognize the importance of collective input and collaboration in decision-making. Team members are encouraged to contribute their ideas, share their perspectives, and provide feedback. The goal is to leverage the collective knowledge and skills of the team to make well-informed decisions that benefit the entire team (Borysenko,2017).

Ukrainian businesses often have a top-down management approach, where authority and decision-making power are concentrated at the higher levels of the organization. The leaders or managers are expected to provide guidance, set goals, and monitor the performance of the team (Carpio et al.,2017). The quality of the entire team is influenced by the leadership style and effectiveness of the higher-ranking individuals. It is their responsibility to establish a

vision, create a supportive work environment, and provide the necessary resources and training for the team members to excel in their roles (Andrienko,2021).

Ukrainians generally value expertise and competence, and the authority of leaders is often based on their knowledge and experience. Respect for authority figures is important, and team members are expected to follow instructions and carry out tasks according to the established hierarchy (Małota,2017). However, the quality of the entire team is not solely dependent on the authority of the leaders. It also requires collaboration, effective communication, and mutual respect among team members. Everyone's contribution is important in achieving the overall team goals and maintaining high-quality work (Carpio et al.,2017).

Team members are expected to actively participate in discussions, express their opinions, and provide constructive input. This collaborative approach helps to foster a sense of ownership and engagement among team members, ultimately contributing to the quality of the team's work. In some cases, decision-making may involve consensus-building, where efforts are made to reach a shared agreement among team members (Borysenko,2017). This can lead to a greater sense of buy-in and commitment to the decisions made, as everyone's perspectives and concerns are taken into consideration (Małota,2017).

In Ukrainian business culture, a strong hierarchical structure combined with a focus on teamwork and collaboration can lead to the development of high-performing teams. The authority of leaders is balanced with the collective efforts of the team, allowing for the best utilization of individual skills and expertise (Croucher,2010).

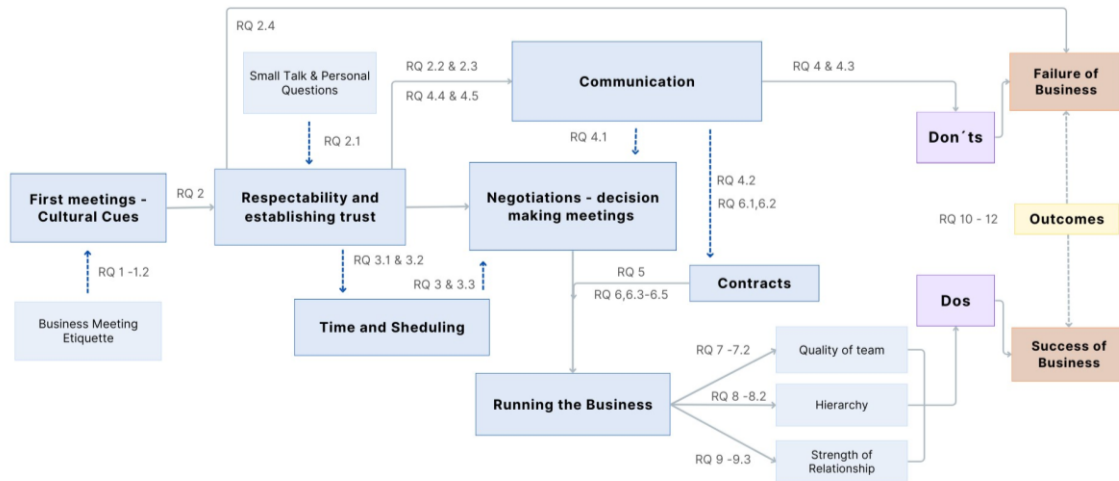
Overall, in Ukrainian business relationships, hierarchy and authority are seen as important factors in ensuring the quality of the entire team. Decision-making involves a balance between hierarchical authority and collective input. It is a combination of strong leadership, effective teamwork, and mutual respect that contributes to the overall success and performance of the team (Małota,2017).

## 4. The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework offers valuable insights into the dos and don'ts of doing business in Ukraine, providing a comprehensive understanding of the specific factors that can either lead to business failure or contribute to success. The research questions will be designed to explore these aspects and their impact on business endeavors in Ukraine.

- **First meetings – Cultural Clues** are influenced by business etiquettes such as card exchange and the deference shown to the counterpart. The initial step towards trust is determined by the execution of these actions.
- **Respectability and establishing trust** are among the most critical factors that can potentially result in the failure of a deal if it's not established between partners, ultimately leading to unfavourable "don'ts". Ukrainians highly value personal connections and believe in establishing relationships based on trust and mutual respect. If challenges or delays arise, open communication and proactive problem-solving are essential to preserve trust in the relationship.
- **Time and Scheduling** are important as Ukrainians value efficiency and expect meetings to stay on track. Punctuality and efficient use of time are highly regarded dos, while tardiness and overextending meetings can be common pitfalls. Adhering to agreed-upon schedules and respecting time constraints on agenda items is essential for successful business interactions in Ukraine.
- **Communication** plays a crucial role in establishing strong connections and achieving successful outcomes in business relationships. Effective communication involves clear and respectful interactions, prioritizing relationship-building, and active listening. Conversely, being overly direct or confrontational in communication can hinder the successful building of business in Ukraine.
- **Contracts & Negotiations** play a pivotal role in decision-making meetings, where contract terms and other agreements are discussed. Negotiations encompass the art of building rapport, displaying respect, and exhibiting patience, all of which are deeply ingrained in Ukrainian business culture. A well-negotiated contract not only outlines the terms but also serves as a testament to trust and reliability. Conversely, a mismanaged negotiation, marked by impatience or a lack of cultural sensitivity, can lead to a breakdown in trust and potentially hinder the overall success of a business endeavor.

- The success of **Running the Business** depends on the strength of the relationship established between partners. In Ukrainian business culture, a strong hierarchical structure combined with a focus on teamwork and collaboration can lead to the development of high-performing teams. The quality of the team selected plays a pivotal role in determining the overall success of the business, and failing to make the right choices in this aspect can be a detrimental factor leading to business failure.



**Figure 9 - Conceptual model.**

**Source: Based on Neto (2021) and own interview guide.**

#### 4.1. Research Questions

**RQ. 1.** Which are the features of a partner in the Ukraine you feel are important? For example, Trust. From the above which do you think is the most important? Please state your opinion by using the scale from 1 - not important, to 5 - extremely important.

**RQ. 1.1** How did you initiate the greetings with Ukrainian counterpart? Did you attempt to use any Ukrainian phrases or greetings?

**RQ. 1.2** Did you exchange business cards with your Ukrainian counterpart during the meeting? If yes, could you describe the process of exchanging cards, including any cultural norms or etiquettes observed during the exchange?

**RQ. 2.** During your first meeting with Ukrainian counterpart, how did you sense the level of formality and respect in the interaction? Were there any specific cultural cues or gestures that conveyed respect during the meeting?

**RQ. 2.1** *Did you start with small talk? How long did it take? What topics were discussed? If there was no small talk, did you feel the communication was straightforward and to the point?*

**RQ. 2.2** *During the meeting, did your Ukrainian counterpart ask you personal questions, and if so, how did you interpret the reasons behind these questions and were you comfortable responding to them?*

**RQ. 2.3** *Based on the interaction, did you perceive that your Ukrainian counterpart was trying to establish a personal relationship rather than solely focusing on the business aspect?*

**RQ. 2.4** *How did the establishment of a personal relationship (if any) impact the business discussions and decision-making process?*

**RQ. 3.** *Were there any instances where cultural differences related to time perception influenced the meeting's flow or decision-making process? How time perception impacted the pace of discussions or decision-making?*

**RQ. 3.1** *How punctual is your Ukrainian counterpart at the start of meetings?*

**RQ. 3.2** *How your Ukrainian counterpart demonstrated attentiveness to time?*

**RQ. 3.3** *How did the Ukrainian counterpart respond to any changes or adjustments made to the meeting schedule or duration? How did your Ukrainian counterpart react to it?*

**RQ. 4.** *Did you sense any cultural differences in their communication style or behavior? What is different?*

**RQ. 4.1** *When you made your bid/spoke about your proposal during the meeting with your Ukrainian counterpart, did you receive a clear "yes" or "no" response? How did you interpret your Ukrainian counterpart's response when they used phrases like "we will look into this" or "we will think about it" instead of a straightforward "yes" or "no"?*

**RQ. 4.2** *Did your Ukrainian counterpart go silent at any one time during the meeting? How long did you think it was? What was your impression or reaction during this silence?*

**RQ. 4.3** *During the meeting with your Ukrainian counterpart, did you express any disagreements and explain your reasons? How was the reaction?*

**RQ. 4.4** *Did your Ukrainian counterpart stand very close to you? How close? How did you react?*

**RQ. 4.5** *Did your Ukrainian counterpart at any time touch you in your arm or back? If yes, where? How did you react?*

**RQ. 5.** Regarding your business conditions, did you propose a contract during your meetings with your Ukrainian counterpart? How did your Ukrainian counterpart react to the contract proposal or what were the reasons for not proposing a contract?

**RQ. 6.** How long did it take you to establish and sign a definite business plan or contract with your Ukrainian counterpart? How many meetings are required to reach an agreement and close the deal with your Ukrainian counterpart?

**RQ. 6.1** *During negotiations, how would you describe the level of formality or information sharing?*

**RQ. 6.2** *How did you approach negotiations regarding finances and prices with your Ukrainian counterparts?*

**RQ. 6.3** *How did you handle potential delays or multiple rounds of discussions before reaching an agreement with your Ukrainian counterparts?*

**RQ. 6.4** *Did you have to meet with higher-ranking individuals such as the CEO, General Manager, Board Director, or other key decision makers during the negotiation process? Did you have to make further concessions you were not initially planning on?*

**RQ. 6.5** *Did your Ukrainian counterpart ever want to change or readapt any of the conditions already signed (contract)?*

**RQ. 7.** After the business plan was established, how important was the choice of the team set up by your Ukrainian counterpart?

**RQ. 7.1** *Were you given the opportunity to provide your opinion on the person/people chosen, even if at a later stage of the process?*

**RQ. 7.2** *Were you able to rely on your contacts to ensure that the necessary tasks were effectively carried out by the team?*

**RQ. 8.** How did the hierarchical structure impact communication and collaboration during your business dealings with Ukrainian counterparts? Did it facilitate or hinder open communication and idea sharing? Were there any challenges in collaborating across different levels of the hierarchy?

**RQ. 8.1** *How does decision-making flow within the structure? Are decisions made collectively, or is there a top-down approach from higher-level management? How much*

*influence do team members have in decision-making processes? Please state your opinion by using the scale from 1 – low influence, to 5 – high influence.*

**RQ. 8.2** *From your experience, how did the hierarchical structure in Ukrainian businesses impact career advancement and opportunities for employees during your business interactions? Were promotions and growth typically tied to seniority and experience?*

**RQ. 9.** Now that the business had been established, did you feel there was a mutual appreciation between yourself and your Ukrainian counterpart? Did your counterpart share financial information or other business details with you?

**RQ. 9.1** *How frequently did you or any of your managers visit the country/market for business purposes before the war in Ukraine during your interactions with your Ukrainian counterpart?*

**RQ. 9.2** *If you or any of your managers visited the country before the war in Ukraine, did you perceive any improvement in the business after these visits, or did you not notice any significant impact? Did you feel that such visits were necessary for the business?*

**RQ. 9.3** *Can you rate the relationship you established with your Ukrainian counterpart? Please state your opinion by using the scale from 1 - not important, to 5 - extremely important.*

**RQ. 10.** How important was it to be aware of Ukrainian cross-cultural concepts and considerations when engaging with Ukrainian counterparts? Please state your opinion by using the scale from 1 - not important, to 5 - extremely important.

**RQ. 10.1** *Did you have a successful experience while doing business in Ukraine?*

**RQ. 10.2** *Did your understanding of Ukrainian business etiquette and communication styles affect the success of your business interactions with Ukrainian counterparts?*

**RQ. 11.** Have you continued or are you continuing to work with Ukrainian counterparts during the war, particularly considering the challenges and uncertainties associated with the Russian invasion?

**RQ. 11.1** *After the Russian invasion, have you noticed any significant changes in the way business is conducted in Ukraine, particularly concerning cross-cultural aspects? Do you believe that having knowledge of cultural differences would be important for doing a successful business in Ukraine after the end of the war?*

**RQ. 12.** Based on your experience, what advice would you give to foreigners looking to do business in the Ukrainian market, focusing on the importance of cross-cultural understanding? What key dos and common don'ts should foreigners keep in mind for successful cross-cultural interactions with Ukrainian counterparts?

## 5. Research Methodology

In response to our research questions, this study employs a qualitative approach. Qualitative research emphasizes the value of open-ended questions because they allow respondents to provide rich narratives and nuanced perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This approach goes beyond the traditional role of respondents and encourages participants to actively engage in the research process, sharing their observations, insights, and opinions authentically.

In our data collection process, we have utilized semi-structured interviews. It was drawn upon a series of predefined questions, with a strong emphasis on open-ended questions, allowing respondents to articulate their personal experiences and insights within their relevant areas (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Sekaran & Roger, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

However, it is important to acknowledge that, even with the advantages it offers, the semi-structured interview method has certain limitations. One notable constraint is its potential impact on sample size. This limitation, in turn, may influence the scope and depth of our analysis, emphasizing the importance of selecting a diverse and representative set of respondents to maximize the validity and generalizability of our findings.

This study integrates the findings of 12 semi-structured interviews, 9 of which were recorded and transcribed. Each interview was set up at a specific time and date. The interviews occurred during September 4th to 11th and in general took from 30 to 40 minutes, depending on the depth of the insights and the time the respondents had available. Three interviews were received in written format according to the respondents' requests due to frequent business travels and time constraints. These 3 interviews were sent to the respondents precisely in the same format as those used in face-to-face interviews via WhatsApp (see Appendix A). According to the Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection, there are no guidelines for the number of interviews. It was used a convenience sample, as the access to potential respondents in the company was obtained through specifically professionals in the network LinkedIn or friends aligned with purpose of the research, i.e., doing business with Ukrainian partners for up to 5 years.

An interview guide was prepared for conducting the interviews. The guide, designed to cover the main objectives of the study, included questions regarding various critical aspects of cross-cultural business interactions with Ukrainian counterparts, such as partner features,

communication styles, formality, respect, relationship building, cultural differences, time perception, communication behaviors, contract negotiations, team dynamics, hierarchical structures, mutual appreciation, the importance of cross-cultural understanding, and advice for foreigners seeking success in the Ukrainian market. A five-point Likert scale was used to rate the opinion of respondents, where five was extremely important and one, not important. Some questions were based on Neto (2021) research. In the beginning of each individual interview the researcher presented herself, explaining the study's theoretical framework and objectives, and assured anonymity and confidentiality of the information gathered. Information about the company and the respondent profile was collected. Consent was requested to voice-record the interviews to generate the most reliable data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Data were analysed through content analysis through MAXQDA software 2022.

The use of computer-assisted qualitative content analysis has experienced substantial expansion in the field of qualitative research. These software applications empower researchers to systematically code words and text sequences within their datasets. Subsequently, these coded elements can be retrieved for interpretation and analyzed in correlation with the research questions at hand (Bryman, 2016). Using software such as MAXQDA 2022 ensures the accurate transcription of audio interviews and safeguards accuracy and credibility (Rädiker & Kuckartz, 2020).

The recorded audio interviews were later imported into MAXQDA 2022 to be coded and analysed. The written questionnaires were also imported into MAXQDA 2022 and treated the same way. The audio recording method allowed to reanalyse the data when necessary and to find common themes which bestowed a rich source of information to the study (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

### **5.1. Respondent's Profile**

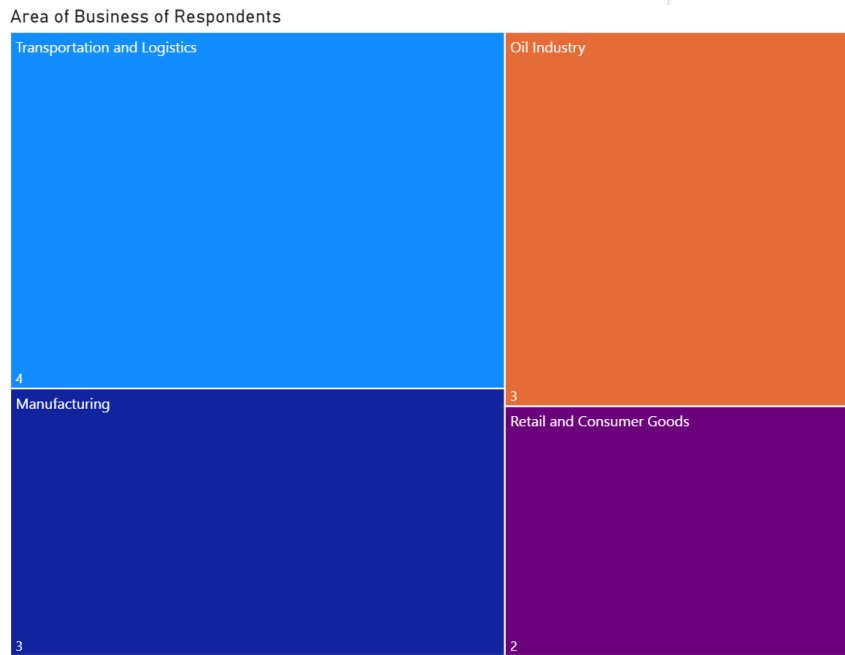
The sample of the current study consists of 12 managers of foreign companies, that deal with Ukrainian companies, 7 female and 5 male, who perform various functions in companies they represent. To preserve anonymity, each participant has an identifiable code composed by two letters: the first letter is the order of the letters in the alphabet, the second corresponding to gender, being "M" male and "F" female. The code of each respondent, their job title, and their business areas is distributed in Table 1.

Respondents	Job Title	Business Area
AF	Logistics Manager	Transportation and Logistics
BF	Operations Manager	Transportation and Logistics
CF	Procurement Manager	Transportation and Logistics
DM	Strategic Planning Manager	Transportation and Logistics
EF	Project Manager	Oil Industry
FM	Operations Manager	Oil Industry
GM	Supply and Trading Manager	Oil Industry
HF	Sales Director	Manufacturing
IM	Operations Manager	Manufacturing
JF	Project Manager	Manufacturing
KF	Product Development Manager	Retail and Consumer Goods
LM	Sales Director	Retail and Consumer Goods

**Table 1 – Characterisation of the respondents.**

**Source: Own construction from the results obtained.**

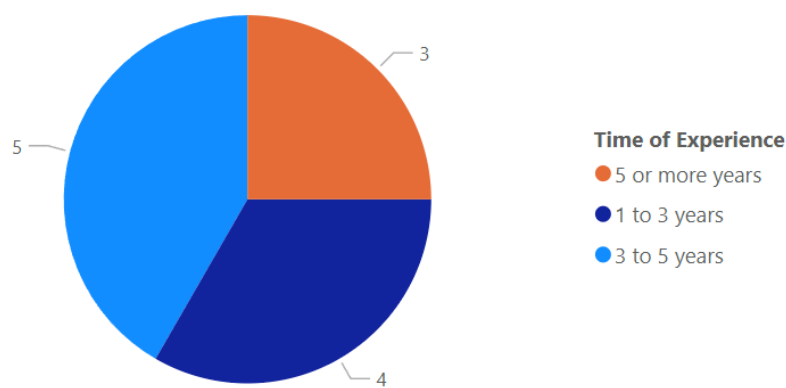
The selection of foreign respondents was a strategic move aimed at capturing diverse insights from various business areas in Ukraine. Our study tapped into the experiences of four transportation and logistics managers, three managers deeply entrenched in the oil industry, three managers in the manufacturing area, and two individuals involved in the dynamic world of retail and consumer goods (Graph 1). The experiences and insights they provided have not only enriched our understanding but also equipped us with practical knowledge for successful business in Ukraine.



**Graph 1 – Area of Business of Respondents.**

**Source: Own construct, based on respondents' information.**

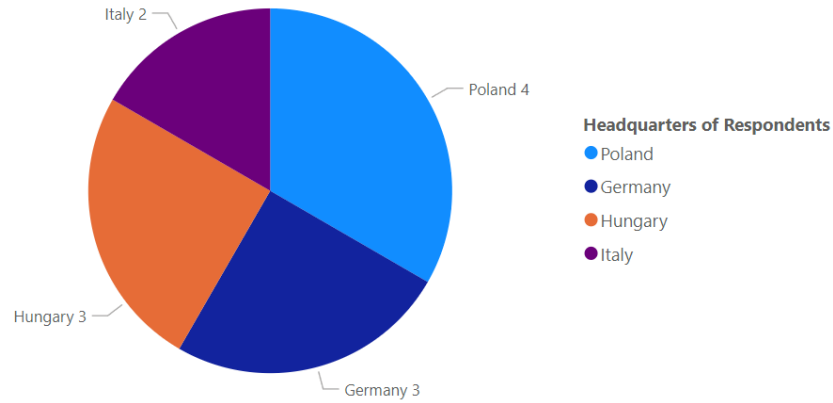
The respondents have different time of experience in the Ukrainian market. Specifically, there are 5 respondents with 3 to 5 years of experience, 3 respondents with 5 or more years of experience, and 4 respondents with 1 to 3 years of experience (Graph 2). The different time of experience of the respondents is important because it gives a complete picture of the cross-cultural business environment in Ukraine.



**Graph 2 – Time of Experience.**

**Source: Own construct, based on respondents' information.**

All the respondents are European, with 4 from Poland, 3 from Germany, 3 from Hungary, and 2 from Italy (Graph 3). Their collective experience and knowledge of dos and don'ts in Ukraine can serve as a valuable resource for foreign companies looking to invest internationally and increase their chances of success in the Ukrainian market.

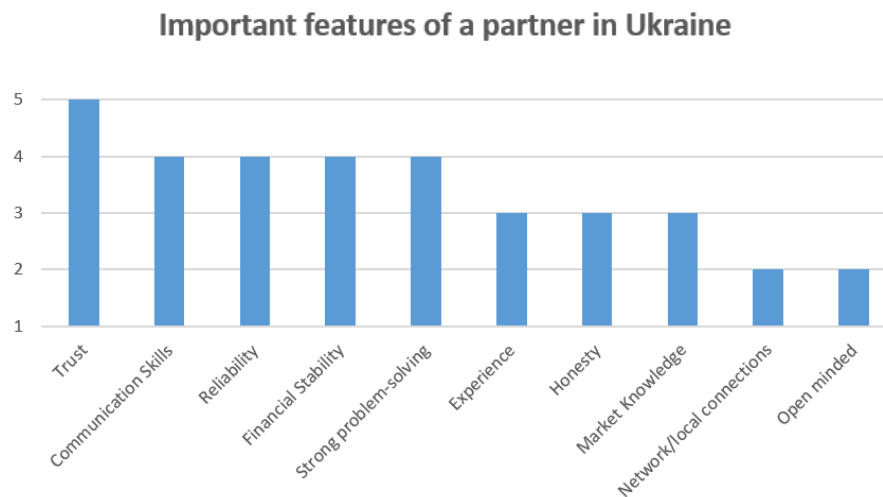


**Graph 3 – Headquarters of Respondents.**

**Source: Own construct, based on respondents' information.**

## 6. Analysis and Discussion of the Results

When searching for the right business partner in Ukraine, it's crucial to identify specific features that will play a significant role in establishing the business and ensuring long-term success. R.Q.1 aims to identify specific features valued when selecting a Ukrainian business partner. In response to R.Q.1, our respondents emphasized the importance of features such as trust, communication skills, reliability, financial stability, as well as strong problem-solving in accordance with the literature (Blyznyuk,2016; Kuśnierz et al.,2020, Möllering & Stache,2007). After itemizing these features, respondents were asked to rank them on a Likert scale, which revealed several features that our respondents considered most important when looking for a partner, as shown in the graph below.

















**Graph 4 – Important features of a partner in Ukraine.**

**Source: Own construct, based on respondents' information transcribed into MAXQDA.**

The top valued features in Ukrainian business partners, as indicated in the responses, include trust, effective communication skills, reliability, financial stability, and strong problem-solving. For instance, several respondents emphasized trust, highlighting its pivotal role in building enduring relationships within the Ukrainian business culture (Table 2). Trust is viewed as the foundation upon which fruitful collaborations are constructed, and it extends beyond mere words to actions and a steadfast commitment to the partnership's success. As one of the respondents discloses, “Trust and reliability are crucial qualities in a Ukrainian

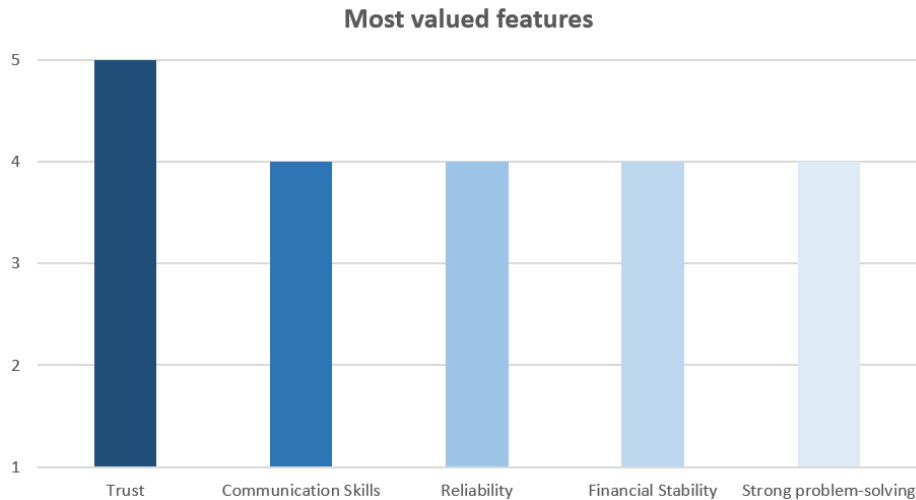
partner without them, it's tough to navigate the business landscape effectively” (Respondent: HF, Pos. 2).

<i>R.Q.1</i>	<i>AF</i>	Effective communication skills, both in English and Ukrainian are a must, because miscommunication can lead to misunderstandings that hinder progress.  AF, Pos. 2  Important in a partner RQ 1 (0)
	<i>BF</i>	Financial stability and the ability to honor contractual obligations  BF, Pos. 1  Important in a partner RQ 1 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	Trust, open communication, and cultural sensitivity are important features.  FM, Pos. 2  Important in a partner RQ 1 (0)
	<i>GM</i>	For me, trust is undoubtedly the most important feature when working with Ukrainian partners. Additionally, open communication, flexibility, and a strong sense of commitment to long-term relationships are crucial asp  GM, Pos. 1  Important in a partner RQ 1 (0)
	<i>HF</i>	Trust and reliability are crucial qualities in a Ukrainian partner without them, it's tough to navigate the business landscape effectively.  HF, Pos. 2  Important in a partner RQ 1 (0)
	<i>JF</i>	Apart from trust, I found that reliability and a strong commitment to the partnership are important traits in Ukrainian partners.  JF, Pos. 1  Important in a partner RQ 1 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	Strong problem-solving skills are important  LM, Pos. 2  Important in a partner RQ 1 (0)

**Table 2 – Important features of a partner in Ukraine.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

Furthermore, others stressed the importance of clear communication and reliability, recognizing the potential for misunderstandings and emphasizing the need to honour commitments to navigate the intricacies of Ukrainian business culture effectively. Financial stability is crucial for partners to maintain their operations and financial commitments, especially in the ever-changing landscape of Ukraine's business environment (Kuśnierz et al.,2020). Moreover, strong problem-solving skills empower partners to not only adapt to evolving business conditions but also to thrive amidst uncertainty.





**Graph 5 – Most valued features.**

**Source: Own construct, based on respondents’ information transcribed into MAXQDA.**

In the context of Ukrainian business culture, trust emerges as a central and unifying theme (Graph 5). It serves as the foundation upon which other important qualities, such as reliability and commitment, are built. Trust is the glue that binds successful business partnerships in Ukraine, ensuring stability and fostering enduring relationships. Ukrainians prefer working with individuals they know and trust on an emotional level. For instance, a manager may prioritize hiring someone they have known for a longer period, even if others possess similar qualifications (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017).











<i>R.Q.1.1</i>	<i>BF</i>	In our first meeting, I initiated the greetings with a firm handshake and maintained eye contact. I offered a warm smile to convey friendliness and respect. BF, Pos. 3  First meeting RQ 1.1 (0)
	<i>CF</i>	When I met her for the first time, we exchanged friendly greetings with handshakes. It was a positive and welcoming beginning. CF, Pos. 4  First meeting RQ 1.1 (0)
	<i>EF</i>	I initiated the greeting with a firm handshake and a friendly "Hello" in English. I did not attempt to use Ukrainian phrases or greetings as I wanted to ensure clear and effective communication. The initial interaction was polite and set a positive tone for our discussions. EF, Pos. 2  First meeting RQ 1.1 (0)
	<i>HF</i>	I usually started with a simple Hello and a warm handshake. While I didn't use Ukrainian phrases, I found that Ukrainians appreciated the effort to greet them courteously HF, Pos. 4  First meeting RQ 1.1 (0)



	<i>JF</i>	My first meeting started with a polite handshake and a warm smile. I didn't attempt to use ukrainian phrases but focused on creating a positive and respectful atmosphere through my body language and tone.   JF, Pos. 2  First meeting RQ 1.1 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	First meeting began with a handshake and friendly smiles. It was a warm and inviting way to initiate our conversation.   LM, Pos. 4  First meeting RQ 1.1 (0)

**Table 3 –First meeting - greeting.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

According to the literature, the first meeting usually takes place with a firm handshake, direct eye contact, and a warm smile (Ohbaidze et al.,2022). R.Q.1.1 focuses on the use of Ukrainian phrases or greetings and the approach to greeting Ukrainian counterparts, highlighting cultural awareness in initial interactions. While answering R.Q.1.1, the respondents consistently highlight the use of a firm handshake and friendly smiles as the primary means of initiating greetings (Table 3). This approach reflects a universally recognized gesture of goodwill and professionalism. While some respondents chose not to use Ukrainian phrases or greetings to ensure clear communication, others noted that Ukrainians appreciate efforts to greet them politely, emphasizing the importance of respectful and positive initial communication during cross-cultural business meetings.









<i>R.Q.1.2</i>	<i>AF</i>	Yes, exchanging business cards was part of our meetings. We usually did it after the initial greetings. The process was formal but not overly so, with a brief exchange of cards and a smile.   AF, Pos. 6  First meeting RQ 1.2 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	Yes, we usually did it after the initial greetings. The process was formal but not overly so, with a brief exchange of cards and a smile   FM, Pos. 6  First meeting RQ 1.2 (0)
	<i>GM</i>	The exchange was a formal and polite process, with each of us showing our cards at the same time   GM, Pos. 3  First meeting RQ 1.2 (0)
	<i>HF</i>	Yes, it usually happened at the beginning of the meeting, and it was done with a slight bow and a smile. It's a sign of respect and a way to remember names and positions.   HF, Pos. 6  First meeting RQ 1.2 (0)
	<i>IM</i>	Yes, we did it with a handshake and a smile. It's a way to establish a personal connection and remember each other's details   IM, Pos. 6  First meeting RQ 1.2 (0)





	<i>KF</i>	<p>Yes, we exchanged business cards during the meeting. The process involved presenting my card with both hands, making sure the text faced the recipient. I received their card with a nod and examined it briefly before placing it on the table.</p> <p> KF, Pos. 4     First meeting RQ 1.2 (0)</p>
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**Table 4 – First meeting – exchanging business cards.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

Following the literature, we found that exchanging business cards in Ukraine is a customary and formal practice, reflecting respect and politeness (Małota,2017). The process typically involves presenting the card with both hands and making sure the text faces the recipient, emphasizing the importance of visual presentation. Exchanging business cards is not just a practical matter but also a symbol of building a personal relationship and signifies the beginning of a professional connection in Ukrainian business culture (Małota,2017). R.Q.1.2 examines business card exchange with Ukrainian counterparts, emphasizing its cultural significance in cross-cultural business interactions. From the answers provided to R.Q.1.2, it is evident that exchanging business cards is indeed a common and customary practice during meetings with Ukrainian counterparts (Table 4). The process is characterized by a sense of formality and respect, often occurring after the initial greetings. Respondents mentioned key elements such as presenting the card with both hands, ensuring the text faces the recipient, and exchanging cards with a nod, a smile, or a slight bow. This ritual serves to establish a personal connection, remember names and positions, and demonstrate professionalism.







<i>R.Q. 2</i>	<i>CF</i>	<p>The first meeting was especially official. She addressed me using my last name and title, which I found quite respectful. In addition, the meeting began with a brief exchange of pleasantries and inquiries about each other's well-being, emphasizing the importance of personal relationships.</p> <p> CF, Pos. 8     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 (0)</p>
	<i>EF</i>	<p>There were common gestures like a firm handshake and polite nods, which conveyed respect, but the atmosphere remained relatively informal.</p> <p> EF, Pos. 4     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 (0)</p>
	<i>FM</i>	<p>It was formal, and I felt a strong sense of respect. When we entered the meeting room, my Ukrainian counterpart gestured for me to sit in the central seat, a clear sign of honor. Additionally, offering a small gift as a token of appreciation was a customary gesture</p> <p> FM, Pos. 8     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 (0)</p>
	<i>IM</i>	<p>Interaction was formal but there was a sense of warmth. My Ukrainian counterpart initiated the meeting with a toast to our collaboration...this balance between formality and friendliness set a positive tone</p> <p> IM, Pos. 8     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 (0)</p>









	<i>JF</i>	Our first meeting had a formal tone, with greetings initiated through handshakes and maintaining eye contact. These gestures conveyed respect in the interaction.   JF, Pos. 4  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	My Ukrainian counterpart addressed me using my last name and maintained a courteous tone throughout. Additionally, a brief acknowledgment of the historical ties between our countries conveyed respect.   LM, Pos. 8  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 (0)

**Table 5 – Respectability and establishing trust.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

R.Q.2 explores the first meeting dynamics with Ukrainian counterparts, including the perception of formality, respect, and culturally specific cues. Based on the responses to R.Q.2, it's apparent that the level of formality and respect in the interactions during the first meetings with Ukrainian counterparts varied to some extent (Table 5). Most respondents noted a noticeable level of formality in these encounters, characterized by gestures such as firm handshakes, polite language, and the exchange of business cards with both hands. These elements are indicative of a respectful and professional approach in Ukrainian business culture. According to literature, formality and respect are indeed important aspects of business interactions in Ukraine. Ukrainians often address each other formally, using last names and titles, especially in initial meetings (Bordian et al.,2023). Additionally, gestures like firm handshakes and maintaining strong eye contact convey respect and professionalism. “The exchange of pleasantries and inquiries about each other's well-being”, as mentioned by one respondent, reflects the importance of building a personal rapport to establish a foundation of trust and respect in Ukrainian business interactions (Respondent: CF, Pos. 8).



<i>R.Q.2.1</i>	<i>AF</i>	We spent around 30 minutes. Local culture, recent events in Ukraine and our respective backgrounds. The extended small talk set a friendly tone   AF, Pos. 10  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Small talk RQ 2.1 (0)
	<i>EF</i>	Yes, we engaged in about 15 minutes of small talk. During this time, we discussed topics like our experiences in Kyiv and local restaurants we enjoyed. The small talk helped create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere for our business discussions.   EF, Pos. 5  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Small talk RQ 2.1 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	Yes, we engaged in about 20 minutes of small talk. We talked about our travels to Ukraine and shared some cultural observations. The small talk contributed to a more relaxed and open atmosphere.   FM, Pos. 10  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Small talk RQ 2.1 (0)













	<i>HF</i>	Yes, we engaged in about 15 minutes of small talk . During small talk, we discussed our travel experiences and favorite Ukrainian dishes. The small talk helped establish rapport, making our business conversation more productive.   HF, Pos. 10  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Small talk RQ 2.1 (0)
	<i>JF</i>	In our meetings, we often engaged in small talk for about 15 minutes. Topics included local culture, city attractions, and sometimes recent events. This small talk helped build rapport.   JF, Pos. 5  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Small talk RQ 2.1 (0)
	<i>KF</i>	Yes, I found it necessary to engage in small talk around 15 minutes. Topics such as travel experiences, local cuisine, and cultural attractions in Ukraine were commonly discussed. These discussions helped build rapport and establish a more comfortable atmosphere   KF, Pos. 6-7  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Small talk RQ 2.1 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	Yes, we spent around 10 minutes engaging in small talk. Topics ranged from local cuisine to the weather. The small talk made the business discussion more comfortable   LM, Pos. 10  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Small talk RQ 2.1 (0)

**Table 6 – Small talk.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

R.Q.2.1 examines the presence, duration, and topics of small talk before delving into business discussions with Ukrainian counterparts and its influence on communication styles. The responses to R.Q.2.1 clearly indicate that engaging in small talk before delving into business discussions is a prevalent practice in interactions with Ukrainian counterparts (Table 6). Small talk typically lasted between 10 to 30 minutes and covered various topics such as travel experiences, local cuisine, cultural observations, and recent events in Ukraine. Respondents noted that this extended small talk period helped set “a friendly and relaxed tone for their business discussions” (Respondents: AF, Pos. 10; EF, Pos. 5). Following the literature, engaging in small talk before delving into business discussions is a customary practice in Ukraine. It allows for the establishment of a personal connection, the building of rapport, and the creation of a more comfortable and open atmosphere (Blyznyuk,2016; Lepeyko & Blyznyuk, 2010). Topics such as travel experiences, local cuisine, and cultural observations are often used as conversation starters, reflecting a desire to connect on a personal level before addressing professional matters.

<i>R.Q.2.2</i>	<i>BF</i>	Yes, they did ask some personal questions. These questions mostly revolved around family, such as whether I was married, had children, or how many siblings I had. They were likely trying to get to know me better and create a more comfortable and friendly atmosphere for the meeting. Yes, I felt comfortable   BF, Pos. 7  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Personal questions RQ 2.2 (0)
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<i>CF</i>	<p>Yes, she asked about my family, hobbies, and interests. I perceived it as a way to establish trust and create a friendly atmosphere. I didn't mind sharing this information, and it seemed like a natural part of our conversation.</p> <p> CF, Pos. 12     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 &gt; Personal questions RQ 2.2 (0)</p>
<i>FM</i>	<p>Yes, about my family, interests, and whether I had visited Ukraine before. I saw it as an attempt to establish rapport and create a more personal connection. I felt comfortable answering these questions as they were asked politely</p> <p> FM, Pos. 12     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 &gt; Personal questions RQ 2.2 (0)</p>
<i>HF</i>	<p>Yes, they asked about my family, marital status, and hobbies. I interpreted it as an effort to establish rapport and build a more personal connection. I felt comfortable answering these questions as they were asked in a friendly manner</p> <p> HF, Pos. 12     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 &gt; Personal questions RQ 2.2 (0)</p>
<i>IM</i>	<p>No, there were no personal questions asked during the meeting. We stuck to the business agenda.</p> <p> IM, Pos. 12     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 &gt; Personal questions RQ 2.2 (0)</p>
<i>JF</i>	<p>Yes, they asked personal questions about family and travel. It seemed to me as an effort to establish rapport and trust. I felt good</p> <p> JF, Pos. 6-7     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 &gt; Personal questions RQ 2.2 (0)</p>
<i>LM</i>	<p>Yes, they asked about my family and interests. I saw it as an effort to establish rapport and create a friendly atmosphere. I felt comfortable answering these questions as they were asked respectfully.</p> <p> LM, Pos. 12     Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 &gt; Personal questions RQ 2.2 (0)</p>

**Table 7 – Personal questions.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**

R.Q.2.2 explores if personal questions were asked by Ukrainian counterparts during meetings, aiming to understand the reasons and comfort level in responding. Based on the insights provided in response to R.Q.2.2, it is evident that Ukrainian counterparts often asked personal questions during the meetings (Table 7). These questions typically revolved around family, interests, and travel experiences. Respondents generally interpreted these inquiries “as efforts to establish rapport, build personal connections, and create a more comfortable and friendly atmosphere for the meeting” (Respondents: BF, Pos. 7; CF, Pos. 12; LM, Pos. 12). Importantly, most respondents felt comfortable responding to these personal questions as they were asked politely and respectfully. According to literature, in Ukrainian business culture, asking personal questions is a common practice aimed at building rapport and trust. These questions often revolve around topics like family, hobbies, and travel experiences, reflecting a genuine interest in getting to know the person beyond their professional role (Kuśnierz et al.,2020). Respondents' comfort in answering these questions aligns with the



broader cultural norm of valuing interpersonal relationships and openness in Ukrainian business interactions.





<i>R.Q.2.3</i>	<i>BF</i>	Absolutely, they was keen on developing a personal connection beyond just the business. It was evident that they wanted to establish trust and rapport and also getting to know me better.  BF, Pos. 8  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Personal relationship RQ 2.3 (0)
	<i>JF</i>	I did perceive that they aimed to establish a personal relationship, and it was noticeable from the initial greetings and small talk.  JF, Pos. 7  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Personal relationship RQ 2.3 (0)
	<i>IM</i>	Not, we focused on the business aspect  IM, Pos. 14  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Personal relationship RQ 2.3 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	Indeed, building a personal relationship was a key part of our interactions.  LM, Pos. 14  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Personal relationship RQ 2.3 (0)

**Table 8 – Personal questions or business aspects.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In R.Q.2.3, we seek to identify if the Ukrainian counterparts in the interactions were inclined toward establishing personal relationships in addition to focusing on the business aspects of their engagements. Based on the responses, the Ukrainian counterparts, in most cases, were actively trying to establish a personal relationship alongside the business aspect of their interactions (Table 8). Respondents consistently noted that their Ukrainian counterparts prioritized “building personal rapport and trust, and there was a clear intention to get to know them beyond the confines of formal business discussions” (Respondent: BF, Pos. 8). Following to the insights from literature, this aligns with the broader cultural norms and practices in Ukraine's business environment. Ukrainian business culture places a significant emphasis on personal relationships, and establishing trust and rapport is often seen as essential for successful business dealings (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). The practice of engaging in personal conversations and inquiries about family, interests, and experiences reflects this cultural inclination toward building personal connections in tandem with professional relationships.









<i>R.Q.2.4</i>	<i>EF</i>	The personal relationship positively influenced business discussions, and I'd rate its importance at 4 out of 5.  EF, Pos. 8  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Personal relationship RQ 2.4 (0)
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	<i>KF</i>	Building a personal relationship positively influenced . It fostered trust and made decision-making feel more cooperative and efficient.   KF, Pos. 9  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Personal relationship RQ 2.4 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	Our personal relationship positively impacted our business discussions and decision-making, making it more productive. I'd rate it as a 4.   LM, Pos. 16  Respectability and establishing trust RQ 2 > Personal relationship RQ 2.4 (0)

**Table 9 – Impact of a personal relationships.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

R.Q.2.4 explores the impact, if any, of establishing a personal relationship on business discussions and decision-making in cross-cultural interactions. Based on the responses to R.Q.2.4, it is evident that the establishment of a personal relationship had a notably positive impact on business discussions and the decision-making process (Table 9). Respondents consistently noted that building personal rapport fostered “trust, made decision-making more cooperative, efficient, the overall quality of business discussions” (Respondent: KF, Pos. 9). Most respondents rated the importance of building personal relationships in the Ukrainian business culture as highly significant, with ratings of 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important). According to the literature, trust, which is often nurtured through personal rapport, plays a vital role in business relationships, and the collaborative and cooperative nature of decision-making is enhanced when personal connections are well-established (Möllering & Stache,2007). Overall, this underscores the significance of personal relationships as a key factor in effective business dealings in Ukraine.











<i>R.Q. 3</i>	<i>AF</i>	They often prioritize building relationships over punctuality. This occasionally delayed decision-making, especially when it came to finalizing contracts.   AF, Pos. 18  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 (0)
	<i>DM</i>	Yes, for example, they often had a more flexible approach to punctuality, and meetings sometimes started later than scheduled. This influenced the pace of discussions, as it required patience and adaptability. Decision-making could also be affected, as some decisions were postponed allowing for more thorough consideration, which can be seen as a sign of respect for the matter at hand.   DM, Pos. 10  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	Ukrainians have a more relaxed approach to time, and this sometimes led to delays in completing negotiations. For instance, a decision that could have been made in one meeting might take two due to lengthy discussions   FM, Pos. 18  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 (0)
	<i>HF</i>	Yes, there were instances where time perception played a role. Ukrainians tend to be more flexible with meeting start times, which sometimes led to delays. For example, a meeting scheduled for 10 am might start at 10:30 am.   HF, Pos. 19  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 (0)

	<i>JF</i>	Yes, they often engaged in lengthy small talk at the start of meetings, which sometimes caused discussions to run longer than planned.   JF, Pos. 10  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	Ukrainians' preference for informal conversations at the start of meetings occasionally meant less time for decision-making   LM, Pos. 18  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 (0)

**Table 10 – Time and Scheduling.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**











R.Q.3 examines how cultural differences in time perception affected meeting dynamics and decision-making speed in cross-cultural interactions. The responses to R.Q.3 clearly show that cultural differences related to time perception had a significant impact on how meetings flowed, and decisions were made (Table 10). Ukrainian counterparts tended “to prioritize relationship-building over punctuality, which occasionally led to delays in decision-making, especially when finalizing contracts” (Respondent: AF, Pos. 18). Examples included “meetings starting later than scheduled and discussions running longer due to extended small talk, impacting the overall pace of negotiations” (Respondents: DM, Pos. 18; JF, Pos. 10). Following the literature, Ukraine indeed exhibits a more flexible approach to time, where punctuality may not be as rigorously adhered to as in some Western cultures (Modlinski, 2013). The practice of engaging in small talk at the start of meetings is not uncommon and reflects a cultural emphasis on building personal connections before diving into business matters (Kuśnierz et al.,2020). While this may lead to delays in the initial phases, it can also contribute to a more relaxed and open atmosphere, potentially facilitating more efficient decision-making once discussions begin.

<i>R.Q.3.1</i>	<i>AF</i>	Always on time. She valued punctuality in business meetings.   AF, Pos. 20  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Start of meetings RQ 3.1 (0)
	<i>DM</i>	Usually, 15 minutes late. Punctuality wasn't a top priority, but meetings generally progressed smoothly   DM, Pos. 20  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Start of meetings RQ 3.1 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	Usually, 5 minutes late. They typically arrived slightly after the scheduled time.   FM, Pos. 21  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Start of meetings RQ 3.1 (0)
	<i>HF</i>	5 minutes late. She had a habit of starting meetings with a slight delay   HF, Pos. 19  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Start of meetings RQ 3.1 (0)
	<i>JF</i>	In my experience, my Ukrainian counterparts have usually been 5 minutes late to the start of meetings.   JF, Pos. 11  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Start of meetings RQ 3.1 (0)

**Table 11 – Start of meetings.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**

In R.Q.3.1, we seek to identify if Ukrainian counterparts exhibit punctuality in commencing meetings. From the responses to R.Q.3.1, it can be observed that punctuality at the start of meetings with Ukrainian counterparts varies (Table 11). While some respondents noted that their Ukrainian counterparts were always on time, valuing punctuality as an important aspect of business meetings, others indicated that being 5 to 15 minutes late was a common practice. The reasons for slight delays varied, but overall, “meetings were reported to progress smoothly despite these minor time differences” (Respondent: DM, Pos. 20). In Ukrainian business culture, there is a certain degree of flexibility regarding punctuality, as reflected in the responses. While punctuality is valued and observed by some, slight delays of 5 to 15 minutes are not uncommon. This aligns with cultural norms that prioritize relationship-building and informal conversations at the beginning of meetings, sometimes resulting in a more relaxed approach to the designated start times (Weck & Ivanova,2013). Nevertheless, the overall consensus is that once meetings commence, business discussions tend to progress efficiently.











<i>R.Q.3.2</i>	<i>CF</i>	Timers were frequently used to keep discussions within set timeframes, showing a commitment to efficient meetings  CF, Pos. 22  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Timelines during meetings RQ 3.2 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	Meeting agendas were well-structured, and timers were employed to ensure timely discussions  FM, Pos. 22  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Timelines during meetings RQ 3.2 (0)
	<i>HM</i>	used agendas and timelines to keep meetings on track. Also were conscious of sticking to the schedule.  HF, Pos. 23  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Timelines during meetings RQ 3.2 (0)
	<i>IM</i>	She actively used time management tools like agenda  IM, Pos. 21  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Timelines during meetings RQ 3.2 (0)
	<i>KF</i>	While they might arrive slightly late to meetings, they were generally aware of the scheduled time and made an effort to attend as close to the appointed time as possible.  KF, Pos. 12  Time and Scheduling RQ 3 > Timelines during meetings RQ 3.2 (0)

**Table 12 – Timelines during meetings.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**

According to literature, the use of agendas, timers, and time management tools in Ukrainian business culture reflects a commitment to efficiency and structured meetings. While some

flexibility in punctuality is observed, once meetings commence, there is a strong emphasis on respecting the allotted time for discussions (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018). This practice aligns with the cultural value of valuing one another's time and the importance of effective time management in business interactions. R.Q.3.2 examines how Ukrainian counterparts demonstrate attentiveness to time. The responses to R.Q.3.2 clearly indicate that Ukrainian counterparts demonstrated attentiveness to time during meetings in several ways (Table 12). They showed commitment to adhering to set timelines by frequently using timers to keep discussions within the specified timeframes. Additionally, even “if they arrived slightly late to meetings, they were generally aware of the scheduled time and made an effort to attend as close to the appointed time as possible” (Respondent: KF, Pos. 12). Meeting agendas were well-structured, and timers were employed to ensure that discussions progressed in a timely manner. Furthermore, Ukrainian counterparts were conscious of sticking to the schedule, utilizing agendas and timelines to keep meetings on track.











<i>R.Q.3.3</i>	<i>BF</i>	<p>There was an instance where a schedule adjustment was needed due to unexpected technical difficulties that delayed the start of our virtual meeting. She was understanding and flexible, acknowledging that such issues can arise, and was willing to adapt to the new timing to ensure a productive meeting.</p> <p> BF, Pos. 13     Time and Scheduling RQ 3 &gt; Schedule adjustment RQ 3.3 (0)</p>
	<i>CF</i>	<p>Once, we had to reschedule a meeting due to urgent matters.</p> <p> CF, Pos. 24     Time and Scheduling RQ 3 &gt; Schedule adjustment RQ 3.3 (0)</p>
	<i>EF</i>	<p>In one instance, we needed to adjust the meeting schedule due to unforeseen travel delays. Positively, he was understanding and flexible about the change. He asked for clarification about the adjustments and worked with us to find a new suitable time.</p> <p> EF, Pos. 12     Time and Scheduling RQ 3 &gt; Schedule adjustment RQ 3.3 (0)</p>
	<i>FM</i>	<p>There was a situation where we needed to shorten a meeting. My Ukrainian counterpart had a neutral reaction, neither positive nor negative</p> <p> FM, Pos. 24     Time and Scheduling RQ 3 &gt; Schedule adjustment RQ 3.3 (0)</p>
	<i>IM</i>	<p>We had to adjust the schedule to accommodate additional topics. My Ukrainian counterpart reacted positively, understanding the need for the changes</p> <p> IM, Pos. 23     Time and Scheduling RQ 3 &gt; Schedule adjustment RQ 3.3 (0)</p>

**Table 13 – Schedule adjustment.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In R.Q.3.3, we aim to understand how Ukrainian counterparts react to changes or adjustments in meeting schedules or durations, as well as their responses to such alterations. The responses to R.Q.3.3 highlight various situations where adjustments were required in

meeting schedules or durations and how Ukrainian counterparts responded to these changes (Table 13). In one specific situation, there was a need to shorten a meeting, but the Ukrainian counterpart had a neutral reaction, neither positive nor negative, as reported by a respondent (Respondent: FM, Pos. 24). Additionally, there was an instance where the schedule needed adjustment to accommodate additional topics. In this case, the Ukrainian counterpart reacted positively, understanding the need for the changes, and demonstrating flexibility and cooperation. Following the literature, flexibility and adaptability are valued traits in Ukrainian business culture (Lepeyko & Blyznyuk, 2010). These values are reflected in the responses, where Ukrainian counterparts displayed understanding and cooperation when faced with necessary changes to meeting schedules. Such reactions contribute to maintaining positive and productive business relationships.

R.Q. 4	DM	Yes, they tended to be more indirect in their communication, using nuanced language and non-verbal cues to convey their thoughts and opinions. Additionally, they placed a strong emphasis and rapport before engaging in business discussions, which was a departure from a more direct and business-focused communication style that I was accustomed to.   DM, Pos. 14  Communication RQ 4 (0)
	GM	Yes, one notable difference is that Ukrainians often avoid direct confrontations or saying "no" directly, which sometimes requires reading between the lines to understand their true stance.   GM, Pos. 13  Communication RQ 4 (0)
	HF	Yes, Ukrainians tend to be more indirect in their communication compared to my home country. They often use subtle cues and non-verbal communication to convey their thoughts.   HF, Pos. 27  Communication RQ 4 (0)
	IM	Ukrainians can be more reserved in expressing their opinions, especially in a group setting. It took some time to encourage open discussions   IM, Pos. 25  Communication RQ 4 (0)
	LM	Ukrainians may use humor to lighten the mood, but it's important to be sensitive to cultural nuances in humor   LM, Pos. 26  Communication RQ 4 (0)

**Table 14 – Communication.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**

R.Q.4 examines cultural variations in the communication style or behaviour of Ukrainian counterparts and highlights the distinctive elements observed. From the responses to R.Q.4, it is evident that there are notable cultural differences in communication styles and behaviours when engaging with Ukrainian counterparts (Table 14). Some of these differences include Ukrainians initially being more formal and taking time to establish a more open and friendly communication style. Additionally, they tend to employ “indirect

communication, using nuanced language and non-verbal cues to convey thoughts and opinions, which contrasts with a more direct and business-focused communication style” observed by some respondents (Respondents: DM, Pos. 14; HF, Pos. 27). One distinctive aspect is Ukrainians' avoidance of direct confrontations or explicitly saying "no," often necessitating the need to read between the lines to understand their true stance. Ukrainians are described as more reserved in expressing opinions, particularly in group settings, and it may take some effort to encourage open discussions. “Humor may also be used to lighten the mood, but sensitivity to cultural nuances in humor” is advised (Respondent: LM, Pos. 26). According to literature, these observed differences align with key cultural traits in Ukrainian communication, such as indirectness, the avoidance of confrontations, and the value placed on building rapport before delving into business discussions (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018).









<i>R.Q.4.1</i>	<i>AF</i>	<p>I rarely got . They often used phrases like 'we will think about it' or 'let's discuss it further.' I think it indicated they wanted to explore details before committing.</p> <p> AF, Pos. 28       Communication RQ 4 &gt; Bid/spoke RQ 4.1 (0)</p>
	<i>EF</i>	<p>No, I rarely received 'yes' or 'no.' Instead, typically responded with phrases like "we will look into this" or "we will think about it." I often indicating that they needed more time to deliberate or discuss the proposal internally.</p> <p> EF, Pos. 14       Communication RQ 4 &gt; Bid/spoke RQ 4.1 (0)</p>
	<i>HF</i>	<p>In many cases, I didn't receive a clear 'yes' or 'no' response. They often expressed agreement by saying 'we will consider it' or 'we will take it into account.' It suggested openness to further discussion.</p> <p> HF, Pos. 29       Communication RQ 4 &gt; Bid/spoke RQ 4.1 (0)</p>
	<i>JF</i>	<p>In one meeting, when I presented our proposal, they responded with a cryptic "we'll take it into account." Initially, I was unsure about their level of interest, but as the meeting progressed, they actively engaged in a discussion about the proposal's details. It turned out that this phrase was more of an invitation for a deeper conversation rather than a simple "yes" or "no."</p> <p> JF, Pos. 16       Communication RQ 4 &gt; Bid/spoke RQ 4.1 (0)</p>

**Table 15 – Bid/spoke.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In Ukrainian business culture, indirect expressions like "we will consider it" or "we will take it into account" are often used to convey an openness to further dialogue rather than providing a definitive "yes" or "no" response. This aligns with the cultural preference for careful consideration and consensus-building before making decisions (Martynyshyn et al.,2019). In R.Q.4.1, we seek to identify if when presenting proposals to Ukrainian counterparts, there is a clear "yes" or "no" response, and how responses containing phrases

like "we will look into this" or "we will think about it" are interpreted instead of a straightforward "yes" or "no". The responses to R.Q.4.1 reveal that clear "yes" or "no" responses were rarely received when discussing proposals with Ukrainian counterparts (Table 15). Instead, “they often used phrases like "we will think about it" or "let's discuss it further"” (Respondent: AF, Pos. 28). This was interpreted as an indication of their intent to explore the proposal in more detail before making a commitment. For instance, one respondent noted, “In one meeting, when I presented our proposal, they responded with a cryptic 'we'll take it into account. Initially, I was unsure about their level of interest, but as the meeting progressed, they actively engaged in a discussion about the proposal's details” (Respondent: JF, Pos. 16). This experience highlights the nuanced communication style of Ukrainian counterparts, where phrases like "we'll take it into account" often serve as invitations for deeper conversations rather than straightforward "yes" or "no" responses.











R.Q.4.2	CF	Yes, there were brief periods of silence, around 30 seconds. It didn't strike me as unusual instead, it seemed like a pause for thought. I couldn't always discern their agreement or disagreement during these moments   CF, Pos. 31  Communication RQ 4 > Silence RQ 4.2 (0)
	FM	there were moments of silence, often around 1 minute. It was somewhat surprising initially, but I later understood it as their way of processing information. It didn't clearly indicate.   FM, Pos. 30  Communication RQ 4 > Silence RQ 4.2 (0)
	JF	there was a brief silence of around 30 seconds. While it was a bit unexpected, I learned that he was taking a moment to consider the proposal before responding   JF, Pos. 17  Communication RQ 4 > Silence RQ 4.2 (0)
	KF	Yes, there was a moment of silence that lasted for approximately 30 seconds during the meeting. Such pauses are not uncommon and are often used for reflection and consideration. I didn't find it unusual but rather a part of their communication style. In their culture, silence is often used for thoughtful contemplation, and it doesn't necessarily indicate either agreement or disagreement.   KF, Pos. 16  Communication RQ 4 > Silence RQ 4.2 (0)

**Table 16 – Silence.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In R.Q.4.2, we examine the frequency of silences in meetings with Ukrainian counterparts and how respondents perceive and interpret them. We also explore whether these pauses are considered normal or unusual within the conversation and whether they indicate agreement or disagreement with discussed proposals. In several instances, respondents reported experiencing brief periods of silence during meetings with their Ukrainian counterparts, with durations ranging from around 30 seconds to 1 minute (Table 16). Initially, one respondent

found “it somewhat surprising”, but later, he understood it as a pause for thought and information processing within the context of the conversation (Respondent: FM, Pos. 30). This silence was not perceived as unusual but rather as part of the Ukrainian communication style, where moments of quiet reflection and consideration are common. It is worth noting that in Ukrainian culture, silence is often used for thoughtful contemplation, and it doesn't necessarily signify either agreement or disagreement. Following the literature on Ukrainian communication norms, these moments of silence align with the cultural practice of valuing careful consideration before responding, emphasizing the importance of thoughtful decision-making in business interactions (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020).









<i>R.Q.4.3</i>	<i>BF</i>	<p>Yes, I did attempt to seek agreement from one of their team members who I thought might share my perspective. He did not change the subject but rather encouraged a detailed discussion of the points of contention. He stayed engaged throughout the meeting, showing a willingness to address and resolve the disagreements. I expressed disagreements because I believed it was important to clarify and discuss differing viewpoints openly to reach the best possible decision.</p> <p> BF, Pos. 17     Communication RQ 4 &gt; Disagreements RQ 4.3 (0)</p>
	<i>HF</i>	<p>Yes, I expressed disagreements when necessary. Sometimes they tried to get their team members to agree with me, other times they changed the subject. In some cases, they remained engaged, but it depended on the issue.</p> <p> HF, Pos. 33     Communication RQ 4 &gt; Disagreements RQ 4.3 (0)</p>
	<i>IM</i>	<p>Yes, they sometimes sought consensus among team members or moved on to another topic. Overall, they maintained engagement during meetings</p> <p> IM, Pos. 31     Communication RQ 4 &gt; Disagreements RQ 4.3 (0)</p>
	<i>JF</i>	<p>Yes, I did express some disagreements during the meeting when discussing certain aspects of the proposal. He was receptive to hearing my reasons and engaged in a constructive discussion to address our differences. We didn't involve team members or change the subject, and they remained engaged throughout the meeting.</p> <p> JF, Pos. 18     Communication RQ 4 &gt; Disagreements RQ 4.3 (0)</p>
	<i>LM</i>	<p>Their response was diverse , they occasionally tried to gain support from team members or shifted the discussion. Despite disagreements, they usually stayed engaged</p> <p> LM, Pos. 32     Communication RQ 4 &gt; Disagreements RQ 4.3 (0)</p>

**Table 17 – Disagreements.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

According to the literature, open discussions and addressing disagreements directly can be a part of Ukrainian business culture, emphasizing the importance of clear communication and collaboration in reaching decisions and finding common ground (Williams,2007). In R.Q.4.3, we investigate whether any disagreements were voiced and the subsequent reactions during interactions with Ukrainian counterparts. In R.Q.4.3, respondents shared their experiences of expressing disagreements during meetings with Ukrainian counterparts

(Table 17). They explained their reasons for doing so and described the reactions they received. For instance, one respondent mentioned that they expressed disagreements because they believed it was essential to clarify and openly discuss differing viewpoints in order to arrive at the best possible decision (Respondent: BF, Pos. 17). Some respondents mentioned attempting to seek agreement from team members on specific points of contention, while others noted instances where their counterparts changed the subject. Despite these varied responses, it was generally observed that Ukrainian counterparts remained engaged throughout the meetings, indicating a willingness to address and resolve disagreements constructively.













R.Q.4.4	EF	No, my Ukrainian counterpart didn't stand very close. We maintained less than an arm's length. I reacted by maintaining a comfortable and respectful personal space while ensuring open and productive communication.  EF, Pos. 19  Communication RQ 4 > Distance RQ 4.4 (0)
	HF	They stood at a moderate distance. I reacted by maintaining a comfortable level of personal space while still engaging in the conversation.  HF, Pos. 35  Communication RQ 4 > Distance RQ 4.4 (0)
	IM	They stood close enough. My reaction was to engage in the conversation comfortably, ensuring effective communication  IM, Pos. 33  Communication RQ 4 > Distance RQ 4.4 (0)
	KF	He stood less than an arm's length, during our meeting. I reacted by maintaining a comfortable and professional demeanor, as this distance fell within the normal range for personal space.  KF, Pos. 18  Communication RQ 4 > Distance RQ 4.4 (0)

**Table 18 – Distance.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In R.Q.4.4, we examine whether Ukrainian counterparts stood very close or at a moderate distance during meetings and how respondents reacted to this proximity (Table 18). We aim to understand the balance between personal space and effective communication in these situations, providing insights into cultural dynamics during business interactions. In response to R.Q.4.4, the Ukrainian counterparts' proximity to the respondents varied, with some standing at a moderate distance and others closer but still within a comfortable range of personal space. The respondents' reactions were generally “to maintain a comfortable and respectful demeanor, ensuring effective and productive communication while respecting cultural norms and personal boundaries” (Respondents: EF, Pos. 19; KF, Pos. 18). In the context of Ukrainian business culture, maintaining a moderate distance during conversations











aligns with cultural norms, respecting both personal space and effective communication (Kormakova et al.,2023).

<i>R.Q.4.5</i>	<i>CF</i>	There was a brief touch on my back as we were leaving the meeting room. I interpreted it as a sign of appreciation. I nodded and smiled in response.   CF, Pos. 37  Communication RQ 4 > Touch RQ 4.5 (0)
	<i>EF</i>	No, my Ukrainian counterpart didn't touch me on my arm or back during our meetings. If such gestures were used, they were rare, and I would have likely reacted with a polite acknowledgment   EF, Pos. 20  Communication RQ 4 > Touch RQ 4.5 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	My Ukrainian counterpart shook hands when we met and departed, but there was no other physical contact during the meeting. It was a professional interaction   FM, Pos. 36  Communication RQ 4 > Touch RQ 4.5 (0)
	<i>HF</i>	Yes, they occasionally touched my arm during the meeting as a friendly gesture. I reacted by reciprocating the gesture, considering it a sign of rapport building.   HF, Pos. 37  Communication RQ 4 > Touch RQ 4.5 (0)
	<i>IM</i>	No, there was no physical contact during the meeting. It remained a respectful and professional interaction   IM, Pos. 35  Communication RQ 4 > Touch RQ 4.5 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	Yes, there was a friendly touch on my back during a casual conversation. I found it amicable and reciprocated with a friendly smile   LM, Pos. 36  Communication RQ 4 > Touch RQ 4.5 (0)

**Table 19 – Touch.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**



In R.Q.4.5, we aim to ascertain whether there were instances where the Ukrainian counterpart made physical contact, such as touching the respondent's arm or back, and to understand the respondent's reaction (Table 19). Some respondents reported instances of brief touches on the back or arm, interpreting them positively as signs of appreciation or rapport building (Respondents: CF, Pos. 37; HF, Pos. 37). In these cases, they reacted with acknowledgment, smiles, or reciprocation. Conversely, other respondent mentioned a lack of physical contact during their meetings, emphasizing the maintenance of a respectful and professional atmosphere (Respondent: IM, Pos. 35). These findings align with existing literature on cross-cultural communication, which highlights that physical gestures can vary in meaning and intention across cultures (Martynyshyn et al.,2019). Such interactions can serve as nonverbal cues to establish rapport or convey friendliness but should be interpreted with cultural sensitivity and context in mind.

<i>R.Q. 5</i>	<i>AF</i>	Yes, I presented a contract, and she appeared cautious initially. We had to clarify some points, but eventually, we signed the contract.  AF, Pos. 39  Reaction to contract RQ 5 (0)
	<i>GM</i>	Certainly, I introduced a contract, and my Ukrainian counterpart seemed somewhat surprised. We had to address their concerns, but in the end we reached an agreement.  GM, Pos. 21  Reaction to contract RQ 5 (0)
	<i>JF</i>	Yes, I proposed a contract initially there were some concerns and discussions about specific conditions, but later we have come to an agreement  JF, Pos. 21  Reaction to contract RQ 5 (0)
	<i>KF</i>	Yes, I proposed a contract, and he reacted positively, showing an eagerness to review and discuss the terms further.  KF, Pos. 20  Reaction to contract RQ 5 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	Yes, I brought up a contract, and my Ukrainian counterpart was receptive. We discussed the details, and they seemed committed to the partnership  LM, Pos. 38  Reaction to contract RQ 5 (0)

**Table 20 – Reaction to contract.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In Ukrainian negotiations, first reactions to contract proposals can vary based on cultural factors. This may involve cautious or receptive approaches, reflecting local norms. Successful outcomes require adaptability, patience, and a deep understanding of Ukrainian culture and business practices (Lubowiecki-Vikuk,2020). In R.Q.5, we aim to determine whether a contract proposal was presented during meetings with Ukrainian counterparts and assess their reactions or the reasons behind not proposing a contract. The responses to R.Q.5 highlight that the respondents indeed proposed contracts during their meetings with Ukrainian counterparts (Table 20). In several cases, there was an initial cautious or surprised reaction from the Ukrainian counterparts, which led to discussions to clarify specific conditions and concerns (Respondents: AF, Pos. 39; GM, Pos. 21; JF, Pos. 21). Ultimately, these negotiations resulted in signed agreements or partnerships, emphasizing the importance of effective communication and flexibility in cross-cultural business negotiations.

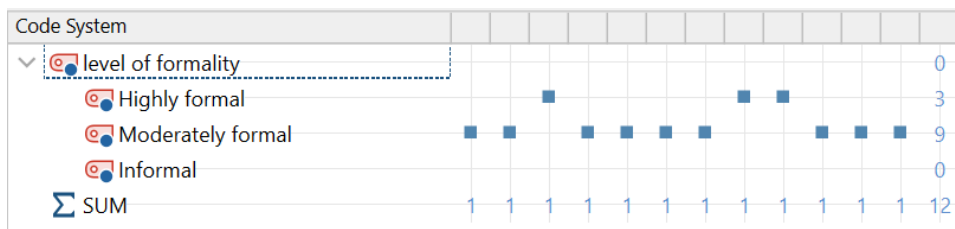
<i>R.Q. 6</i>	<i>CF</i>	For me, it took about 2 to 3 months to finalize a contract, and it required three meetings  CF, Pos. 41  Time to sign RQ 6 (0)
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<i>EF</i>	6 months to establish and sign a definite business contract and we needed a total of 4 meetings to reach an agreement and close the deal. EF, Pos. 22     Time to sign RQ 6 (0)
<i>FM</i>	After six months of negotiations and four meetings, we successfully signed a contract with our Ukrainian business partner FM, Pos. 40     Time to sign RQ 6 (0)
<i>JF</i>	We signed a contract within a month, requiring just two meetings to reach an agreement and close the deal. JF, Pos. 22     Time to sign RQ 6 (0)
<i>KF</i>	Our contract negotiations took approximately 2 to 3 months, involving three meetings. KF, Pos. 21     Time to sign RQ 6 (0)

**Table 21 – Time to sign.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

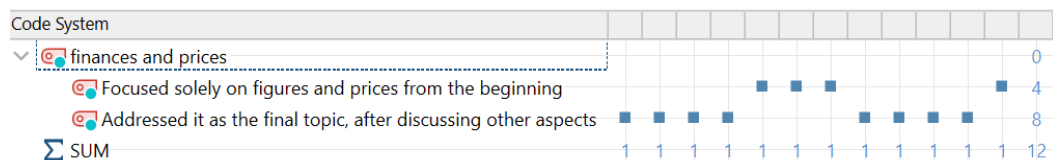
In R.Q.6, we investigate the duration and the number of meetings necessary to formalize a business plan or contract with Ukrainian counterparts. The responses to R.Q.6 reveal a range of durations for establishing and signing business contracts with Ukrainian counterparts (Table 21). These timelines varied from as short as one month with two meetings (Respondent: JF, Pos. 22) to as long as six months with four meetings (Respondent: FM, Pos. 40). This variation highlights the impact of factors such as the complexity of negotiations, communication effectiveness, and the willingness of both parties to adapt to each other's preferences and demands. In the context of Ukrainian negotiations, it's important to recognize that the timeframes for contract finalization can also depend on the specific industry or business area involved (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). Different sectors may have distinct negotiation norms and processes, leading to variations in the duration required to reach an agreement. This underscores the need for negotiators to be adaptable and considerate of these contextual factors when engaging in business dealings in Ukraine.



**Table 22 – Level of formality.**

**Source: MAXQDA Code Matrix based on respondents’ information.**

In R.Q.6.1, we seek to identify if there is a noticeable level of formality and information sharing during negotiations with Ukrainian counterparts. Most respondents, specifically 75% (9 out of 12), described the negotiation process as moderately formal (Table 22). This suggests that in their experiences, negotiations with Ukrainian counterparts involved a mix of formal and informal elements, allowing for some flexibility in protocols and communication. None of the respondents characterized the negotiations as entirely informal, indicating that a relaxed atmosphere with minimal formalities and open discussions was less common. Three respondents, representing 25%, described the negotiations as highly formal, indicating that strict adherence to established protocols, formal documents, and structured communication played a significant role in their interactions with Ukrainian counterparts. According to literature, Ukrainian business culture tends to have a moderate level of formality, combining formal and informal elements (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). However, this can still vary depending on the specific situation and individuals involved.

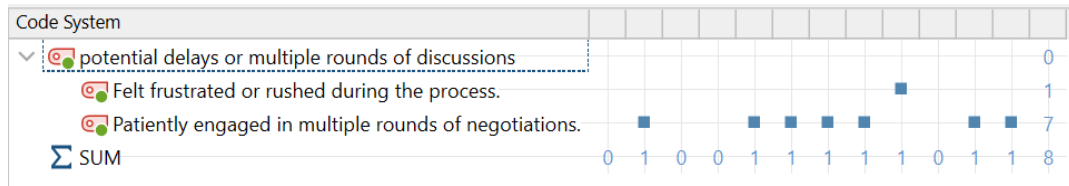


**Table 23 – Finances and prices.**

**Source: MAXQDA Code Matrix based on respondents' information.**

In R.Q.6.2, we investigate whether negotiators either addressed finances and prices as the final topic, following discussions on other aspects, or if they focused solely on figures and prices from the beginning when negotiating with Ukrainian counterparts (Table 23). Most respondents, constituting 67% (8 out of 12), indicated that they addressed finances and prices as the final topic, after discussing other aspects of the negotiations. This approach suggests a sequential negotiation style, where financial matters are considered after establishing rapport and discussing other aspects of the agreement. In contrast, 33% (4 out of 12) of respondents adopted a different strategy, focusing solely on figures and prices from the beginning of the negotiation process. In Ukrainian negotiations, the approach to discussing finances and prices can vary due to cultural norms and negotiation styles. Ukrainian business culture often places importance on relationship-building and context before addressing financial matters, making it strategic to discuss financial details later in the negotiation process to establish trust and rapport (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). Conversely, some cultures may prefer a direct and numbers-focused approach. Aligning the negotiation

approach with Ukrainian cultural expectations and preferences is essential for achieving successful and mutually beneficial agreements (Williams,2007).




**Table 24 – Potential delays or multiple rounds of discussions.**

**Source: MAXQDA Code Matrix based on respondents’ information.**

In the context of business negotiations in Ukraine, in accordance with the literature, patience is highlighted as a valuable attribute, especially when interacting with cultures that prioritize extensive deliberation. Haste or frustration can potentially disrupt the negotiation process and harm relationships(Möllering & Stache,2007). Therefore, negotiators are advised to adopt a patient approach, recognizing that multiple rounds of discussions may be necessary to achieve mutually agreeable terms and maintain positive working relationships. In R.Q.6.3, we aim to understand how respondents manage potential delays or navigate multiple rounds of discussions in the process of reaching an agreement with their Ukrainian counterparts. The responses to R.Q.6.3 indicate that a majority of respondents, representing 58% (7 out of 12), opted to patiently engage in multiple rounds of negotiations when faced with potential delays or extended discussions before reaching an agreement with their Ukrainian counterparts (Table 24). This suggests a willingness to accommodate the negotiation process and adapt to Ukrainian preferences for thorough deliberation. Conversely, one respondent, constituting 8% of the sample, reported feeling frustrated or rushed during the negotiation process.







R.Q.6.4	AF	No, I didn't meet with higher-ranking individuals during the negotiations, so I didn't have to make unexpected concessions.  AF, Pos. 43     Time to sign RQ 6 > Negotiation process RQ 6.4 (0)
	DM	Yes, I did have to meet with higher-ranking individuals such as the CEO and Board Director during the negotiation process. In some instances, meeting with these key decision makers did require making further concessions that were not initially planned.  DM, Pos. 25     Time to sign RQ 6 > Negotiation process RQ 6.4 (0)
	GM	Yes, I had to meet with the CEO during the negotiation process. Meeting with higher-ranking individuals required some additional concessions on our part  GM, Pos. 26     Time to sign RQ 6 > Negotiation process RQ 6.4 (0)





	<i>HF</i>	Yes, I had to meet with the CEO, and it was unexpected. I had to make some concessions to accommodate his preferences, which added complexity to the negotiations.  HF, Pos. 49  Time to sign RQ 6 > Negotiation process RQ 6.4 (0)
	<i>IM</i>	Yes, I met with the CEO, and it was an interesting experience. We had to adapt our proposal significantly to align with their strategic vision.  IM, Pos. 41  Time to sign RQ 6 > Negotiation process RQ 6.4 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	No, I didn't have to meet with higher-ranking individuals, and the negotiation process followed our planned strategy without unexpected concessions.  LM, Pos. 48  Time to sign RQ 6 > Negotiation process RQ 6.4 (0)

**Table 25 – Negotiation process.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

Literature refers that decisions frequently entail the participation of higher-ranking individuals (Andrienko,2021). These key decision makers may have distinct preferences and strategic visions, necessitating adaptations and concessions from negotiators. The ability to navigate such situations with flexibility and adaptability is vital for achieving successful outcomes in negotiations involving key decision-makers (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018). In R.Q.6.4, we aim to ascertain if meetings with higher-ranking individuals, such as CEOs, General Managers, or Board Directors, occurred during negotiations and whether these encounters led to unexpected concessions. The responses to R.Q.6.4 demonstrate that the involvement of higher-ranking individuals, such as CEOs and Board Directors, in negotiations with Ukrainian counterparts did lead to some negotiators making further concessions they had not initially planned (Table 25). Specifically, some respondents reported having to meet with key decision makers, resulting in the need for additional “concessions” (Respondents: DM, Pos. 25; GM, Pos. 26; HF, Pos. 49). This suggests that the presence of influential individuals in Ukrainian negotiations can influence the negotiation dynamics and require flexibility from negotiators.







<i>R.Q.6.5</i>	<i>CF</i>	Yes, she suggested contract changes. I reacted by engaging in open and constructive discussions to address their concerns while protecting our interests.  CF, Pos. 45  Time to sign RQ 6 > Change contract RQ 6.5 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	I didn't face any requests from my Ukrainian counterpart to change the signed contract.  FM, Pos. 50  Time to sign RQ 6 > Change contract RQ 6.5 (0)
	<i>HF</i>	Yes, they wanted to make some changes to the contract. I reacted by carefully evaluating their proposed changes and considering their rationale before making a decision.  HF, Pos. 51  Time to sign RQ 6 > Change contract RQ 6.5 (0)





	<i>KF</i>	<p>Yes, they did express a desire to readapt some of the conditions in a signed contract. I reacted by engaging in a discussion to understand their reasons and assess the feasibility of the proposed changes. I confronted with counterpart while it did lead to intense discussions, it did not significantly affect our overall relationship because we approached these confrontations with a commitment to finding mutually beneficial solutions. I believed that the contract held significant importance for my Ukrainian counterpart, as it represented a formal agreement and commitment.</p> <p> KF, Pos. 26     Time to sign RQ 6 &gt; Change contract RQ 6.5 (0)</p>
	<i>LM</i>	<p>My Ukrainian counterpart proposed contract adjustments. I responded by assessing the potential impact on our business and discussing these changes in detail to ensure mutual satisfaction</p> <p> LM, Pos. 50     Time to sign RQ 6 &gt; Change contract RQ 6.5 (0)</p>

**Table 26 – Change contract.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In R.Q.6.5, we aim to determine if Ukrainian counterparts have requested contract changes, how respondents reacted to these requests, and whether these interactions affected their overall relationship or revealed differences in the contract's significance. The responses from the respondents indicate a range of experiences regarding their Ukrainian counterparts' desire to change or readapt signed contracts (Table 26). In general, when faced with such requests, the respondents adopted a constructive approach. They engaged in open discussions, carefully evaluated proposed changes, and considered the rationale behind these requests (Respondents: CF, Pos. 45; HF, Pos. 51). Confrontations did occur in some cases, but they were approached with a commitment to finding mutually beneficial solutions, rather than escalating conflicts (Respondent: KF, Pos. 26). According to literature, confrontations should be opportunities for clarifying misunderstandings and negotiating in good faith, rather than imposing one party's will (Bordian et al.,2023). Contracts can hold varying importance and interpretation for different parties, so recognizing and respecting their significance is crucial. The goal is to maintain a positive, collaborative relationship while fulfilling the contract's core objectives.













<i>R.Q. 7</i>	<i>BF</i>	<p>their skills, knowledge and dedication impacted the execution of tasks.</p> <p> BF, Pos. 27     Running the Business RQ 7 (0)</p>
	<i>CF</i>	<p>was a key factor. Their skills and ability to work cohesively were essential for achieving our goals.</p> <p> CF, Pos. 47     Running the Business RQ 7 (0)</p>
	<i>HF</i>	<p>was important,their team's skills, dedication, and alignment with our goals greatly influenced the outcomes.</p> <p> HF, Pos. 53     Running the Business RQ 7 (0)</p>

<i>IM</i>	<p>It was of utmost importance once the business plan was in place. Team's capabilities and teamwork had a direct bearing on our business's performance.</p> <p> IM, Pos. 45    Running the Business RQ 7 (0)</p>
<i>LM</i>	<p>The team dedication and ability to adapt to changing circumstances were key drivers of our achievements.</p> <p> LM, Pos. 52    Running the Business RQ 7 (0)</p>

**Table 27 – Running the Business.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**









In alignment with literature, a well-rounded and dedicated team is a critical asset for the successful execution of any business plan. Effective teamwork contributes to improved performance and enhances the adaptability of the business in response to changing circumstances (Carpio et al.,2017). In R.Q.7, we seek to identify the importance placed on the choice of the team assembled by Ukrainian counterparts after the establishment of the business plan (Table 27). The respondents unanimously emphasize the significance of the team set up by their Ukrainian counterparts after establishing the business plan. They highlight the importance of the team's skills, knowledge, dedication, and ability to work cohesively. According to their accounts, these factors directly impacted the execution of tasks and the achievement of business goals.

<i>R.Q.7.1</i>	<i>AF</i>	<p>I had the chance to share my thoughts on the team members at a later stage, and my feedback was considered during the team formation.</p> <p> AF, Pos. 49    Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Opinion on the person chosen RQ 7.1 (0)</p>
	<i>EF</i>	<p>Yes, I had the chance to provide input on the team members chosen by him, and my suggestions were considered in making adjustments to the team's composition.</p> <p> EF, Pos. 31    Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Opinion on the person chosen RQ 7.1 (0)</p>
	<i>IM</i>	<p>welcomed my input on the team members, and we worked together to optimize the team, even after the initial selection.</p> <p> IM, Pos. 47    Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Opinion on the person chosen RQ 7.1 (0)</p>
	<i>JF</i>	<p>Yes, I was able to provide my opinion on the team members chosen, even at a later stage.</p> <p> JF, Pos. 26    Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Opinion on the person chosen RQ 7.1 (0)</p>
	<i>KF</i>	<p>I was given the opportunity to provide my opinion on the individuals chosen for the team, even if it occurred at a later stage. I relied on my contacts to ensure that the necessary tasks were effectively carried out by the team.</p> <p> KF, Pos. 28    Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Opinion on the person chosen RQ 7.1 (0)</p>
	<i>LM</i>	<p>I could provide feedback on the team members chosen by them, and my input was considered when making adjustments to the team, even after the initial selection.</p> <p> LM, Pos. 54    Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Opinion on the person chosen RQ 7.1 (0)</p>

**Table 28 – Opinion on the person chosen.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**

In R.Q.7.1, we aim to determine if respondents were allowed to offer their opinions on the selection of team members by their Ukrainian counterparts, even if this input was given at a later stage of the process (Table 28). The responses indicate that the respondents were indeed given the opportunity to provide their opinions on the team members chosen by their Ukrainian counterparts, even if it occurred at a later stage of the process. Furthermore, their feedback was considered, and adjustments were made to the team's composition based on their suggestions. Following the literature, this approach allows for a more comprehensive assessment of skills, expertise, and alignment with project objectives (Tepliuk et al.,2021). Such inclusivity not only enhances team performance but also fosters a sense of ownership and alignment among all team members, ultimately contributing to the overall success of the business (Martynyshyn et al.,2019).











<i>R.Q.7.2</i>	<i>BF</i>	<p>had enough influence to ensure the team's effectiveness, and their position in the company hierarchy was relatively high, which facilitated decision-making and coordination.</p> <p> BF, Pos. 29     Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Rely on contracts RQ 7.2 (0)</p>
	<i>CF</i>	<p>Yes, she had enough influence with the local company, she was General Manager</p> <p> CF, Pos. 51     Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Rely on contracts RQ 7.2 (0)</p>
	<i>FM</i>	<p>My Ukrainian counterpart's senior position in the company hierarchy ensured their influence, making it possible for us to depend on our contacts for effective task execution by the team.</p> <p> FM, Pos. 56     Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Rely on contracts RQ 7.2 (0)</p>
	<i>HF</i>	<p>I was able to rely on my contacts to ensure that the necessary tasks were effectively carried out by the team. He had a significant influence on the local company, ensuring the team's effectiveness.</p> <p> HF, Pos. 57     Running the Business RQ 7 &gt; Rely on contracts RQ 7.2 (0)</p>

**Table 29 – Rely on contacts.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

Literature refers that having a counterpart with significant influence and a senior position in the company hierarchy can indeed be a strategic advantage (Borysenko,2017).. These individuals are often better equipped to navigate the complexities of the local business environment, negotiate effectively, and ensure that project tasks are executed efficiently. Their authority and extensive connections in Ukraine can streamline decision-making processes and facilitate crucial communication, ultimately contributing to the successful execution of business plans and projects (Małota,2017). In R.Q.7.2, we seek to identify if the respondents were able to rely on their contacts to ensure effective task execution by the team and if their Ukrainian counterparts had sufficient influence within the local company hierarchy to guarantee team effectiveness (Table 29). The respondents' answers consistently

indicate that their Ukrainian counterparts possessed enough influence within the local companies to ensure the effectiveness of the teams. They also mention that their counterparts held relatively high positions in the company hierarchy, which “facilitated decision-making and coordination” (Respondent: BF, Pos. 29). This high level of influence and hierarchy placement allowed the respondents to rely on their contacts to ensure the successful execution of necessary tasks by the teams.











<i>R.Q. 8</i>	<i>AF</i>	<p>It was difficult to work together when there were big differences in the levels of authority. Lower-level workers didn't talk much to higher-ups.</p> <p> AF, Pos. 53     Hierarchical structure RQ 8 (0)</p>
	<i>DM</i>	<p>The hierarchical structure in Ukrainian business dealings could sometimes hinder open communication but also facilitated clear decision-making, with challenges arising in collaborating across different levels of the hierarchy.</p> <p> DM, Pos. 30     Hierarchical structure RQ 8 (0)</p>
	<i>HF</i>	<p>The way Ukrainian businesses are structured made it hard for people to freely talk and share ideas. People often didn't want to speak up.</p> <p> HF, Pos. 59     Hierarchical structure RQ 8 (0)</p>
	<i>JF</i>	<p>The hierarchical structure sometimes helped in getting messages across clearly, but it could also stop people from being creative or sharing new ideas.</p> <p> JF, Pos. 28     Hierarchical structure RQ 8 (0)</p>
	<i>LM</i>	<p>Open talk and idea sharing were usually held back by the structure. People often preferred following directions.</p> <p> LM, Pos. 58     Hierarchical structure RQ 8 (0)</p>

**Table 30 – Hierarchical structure.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

R.Q.8 examines how the hierarchical structure influenced communication and collaboration with Ukrainian counterparts and its impact on open communication, idea sharing, and inter-level collaboration. The responses to R.Q.8 indicate that the hierarchical structure in business dealings with Ukrainian counterparts had mixed impacts on communication and collaboration (Table 30). While it facilitated clear decision-making, it often hindered open communication and idea sharing. For instance, one respondent mentioned that in Ukrainian business dealings, the hierarchical structure made it challenging for people to freely talk and share ideas, as individuals often preferred to follow directions rather than engage in open discussions (Respondent: HF, Pos. 59). In accordance with the literature, hierarchical structures can have varying impacts on communication and collaboration. While they often facilitate clear decision-making and defined roles, they can also impede open communication and idea sharing (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). In such cases, employees









may be hesitant to speak up or share their thoughts due to organizational culture or perceived risks associated with challenging authority.

<i>R.Q.8.1</i>	<i>CF</i>	In our experience, the hierarchy meant that decisions came from higher-ups, and team members had little say, it's a 2 on the scale  CF, Pos. 55  Hierarchical structure RQ 8 > Decision making flow RQ 8.1 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	The hierarchy meant decisions came from above, and team members didn't have much say. it's a 2 on the scale  FM, Pos. 60  Hierarchical structure RQ 8 > Decision making flow RQ 8.1 (0)
	<i>HF</i>	Decisions were mainly made from the top down, with not much input from lower-level workers. In my opinion, it's a 2 on the scale  HF, Pos. 61  Hierarchical structure RQ 8 > Decision making flow RQ 8.1 (0)
	<i>IM</i>	Decisions usually came from above, and lower-level team members had little influence. it's a 2 on the scale  IM, Pos. 53  Hierarchical structure RQ 8 > Decision making flow RQ 8.1 (0)
	<i>KF</i>	Decision-making in Ukrainian business structures blends collective and top-down approaches, and team members usually hold a moderate level of influence in the process, scoring around 3 on the scale.  KF, Pos. 31  Hierarchical structure RQ 8 > Decision making flow RQ 8.1 (0)

**Table 31 – Decision making flow.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

According to the literature, in Ukrainian hierarchical structures, decision-making authority tends to be concentrated at the top, and lower-level employees often have less influence in the decision-making process (Croucher,2010). In R.Q.8.1, we seek to identify how decision-making flows within the hierarchical structure of Ukrainian business dealings, whether it is characterized by a top-down approach or collective decision-making, and the level of influence team members have in these processes (Table 31). The respondents consistently describe decision-making in Ukrainian business structures as top-down, where higher-level management makes decisions, and lower-level team members have limited influence. The respondents, on average, rated the level of influence that team members have in decision-making processes within Ukrainian business structures as 2 on a scale of 1 (low influence) to 5 (high influence), indicating a perception of low influence. However, it's worth noting that some companies may blend collective and top-down approaches to decision-making, as noted by one respondent, allowing for a “moderate level” of influence from team members (Respondent: KF, Pos. 31). This can lead to more inclusive and effective decision-making processes, which may vary from one company to another.

R.Q.8.2	AF	Promotions and opportunities for career growth were typically tied to the number of years worked and seniority.  AF, Pos. 57  Hierarchical structure RQ 8 > Career RQ 8.2 (0)
	EF	Ukrainian business hierarchies typically prioritize seniority and experience when it comes to career advancement.  EF, Pos. 36  Hierarchical structure RQ 8 > Career RQ 8.2 (0)
	HF	in Ukrainian businesses often depended on seniority and years of experience  HF, Pos. 63  Hierarchical structure RQ 8 > Career RQ 8.2 (0)
	JF	In our interactions often correlated with seniority and the amount of experience  JF, Pos. 31  Hierarchical structure RQ 8 > Career RQ 8.2 (0)

**Table 32 – Career.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In R.Q.8.2, we investigate how Ukrainian business hierarchy impacted employee career advancement and whether it often correlated with seniority and experience. In response to R.Q.8.2, the respondents consistently noted that in Ukrainian businesses, career advancement and opportunities were typically tied to seniority and the number of years worked within the company (Table 32). They observed that promotions and growth primarily depended on an individual's accumulated experience and tenure. Following the literature, in Ukraine prioritizing seniority and experience is a conventional way to determine an individual's eligibility for higher-level positions (Ohbaidze et al.,2022). However, it's important to note that such an approach may not always account for other factors such as performance, skills, or potential, which could be valuable in promoting a more dynamic and merit-based career advancement system.













R.Q. 9	BF	Yes, I felt, our collaborative efforts and shared goals had created a positive working relationship based on trust and respect.  BF, Pos. 33  Business RQ 9 (0)
	FM	Once we had our business set up, there was mutual appreciation, and my Ukrainian counterpart started disclosing financial information  FM, Pos. 64  Business RQ 9 (0)
	GM	Yes, there was a mutual appreciation, and he did share financial information and other business details with me  GM, Pos. 37  Business RQ 9 (0)

**Table 33 – Business.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In R.Q.9, we seek to identify if there was a mutual appreciation between the respondents and their Ukrainian counterparts after the business had been established and if their counterparts

shared financial information or other business details (Table 33). Based on the literature, sharing financial information and other business details can demonstrate transparency and a commitment to open communication, which are valued traits in business relationships within the Ukrainian business context (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). The respondents indicate that after establishing their business, they experienced mutual appreciation with their Ukrainian counterparts, which fostered “a positive working relationship based on trust and respect” (Respondent: BF, Pos. 33). Furthermore, some respondents mentioned that their Ukrainian counterparts did share financial information and other business details with them.











<i>R.Q.9.1</i>	<i>CF</i>	We rarely visited Ukraine for business before the war.  CF, Pos. 61  Business RQ 9 > Visit the country RQ 9.1 (0)
	<i>DM</i>	Yearly  DM, Pos. 34  Business RQ 9 > Visit the country RQ 9.1 (0)
	<i>HF</i>	We used to visit Ukraine for business once a season before the war.  HF, Pos. 67  Business RQ 9 > Visit the country RQ 9.1 (0)
	<i>IM</i>	It was standard for us to visit Ukraine twice a season for business before the war.  IM, Pos. 59  Business RQ 9 > Visit the country RQ 9.1 (0)
	<i>JF</i>	We visited the country once a season  JF, Pos. 33  Business RQ 9 > Visit the country RQ 9.1 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	We didn't frequently travel to Ukraine for business before the war.  LM, Pos. 66  Business RQ 9 > Visit the country RQ 9.1 (0)

**Table 34 – Visit the country.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In accordance with the literature, the frequency of business visits can reflect the level of commitment and engagement of a company in the market. However, it's important to note that business travel patterns can be influenced by various factors, including the nature of the industry, market conditions, and specific business objectives (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2022). Therefore, the frequency of visits should consider these factors to gain a comprehensive understanding of a company's approach to the Ukrainian market. In R.Q.9.1, we aim to determine how frequently the respondents, or their managers visited Ukraine for business purposes before the war, as it pertains to their engagements with their Ukrainian counterparts (Table 34). The responses indicate that before the war in Ukraine, the frequency of business visits to the country by the respondents and their managers varied. Some visited

Ukraine rarely, typically on a yearly basis, while others had more frequent visits, ranging from once a season to twice a season.

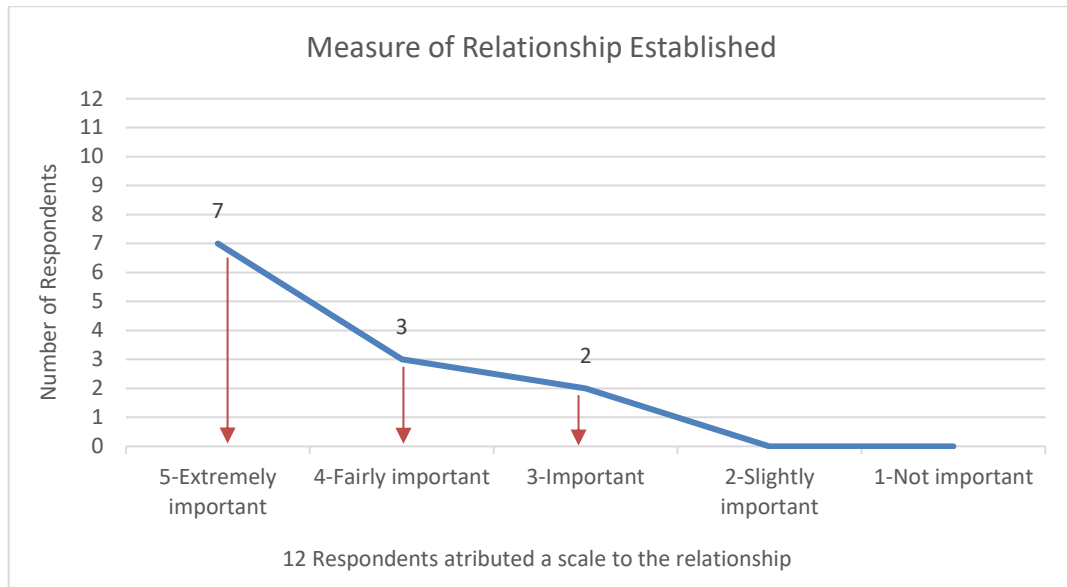
<i>R.Q.9.2</i>	<i>AF</i>	<p>No, we didn't notice significant changes in our business as a result of these visits. However, they played a vital role in maintaining our existing relationships and ensuring that our Ukrainian partners felt valued and supported.</p> <p> AF, Pos. 63     Business RQ 9 &gt; Improvement in the business RQ 9.2 (0)</p>
	<i>EF</i>	<p>Our visits to Ukraine before the war did have a positive impact on our business. They allowed us to establish stronger relationships, better understand the local market, and address any issues more effectively. We believed these visits were necessary to show our commitment to the market and to build trust with our Ukrainian counterparts.</p> <p> EF, Pos. 39     Business RQ 9 &gt; Improvement in the business RQ 9.2 (0)</p>
	<i>FM</i>	<p>Our business didn't require frequent visits to Ukraine, so we didn't feel the need to do so. Instead, we focused on effective communication and collaboration</p> <p> FM, Pos. 68     Business RQ 9 &gt; Improvement in the business RQ 9.2 (0)</p>
	<i>HF</i>	<p>Yes, we did see improvements in our business after visiting Ukraine before the war. These visits positively impacted our understanding of the local market and allowed us to build stronger relationships with Ukrainian counterparts.</p> <p> HF, Pos. 69     Business RQ 9 &gt; Improvement in the business RQ 9.2 (0)</p>
	<i>KF</i>	<p>Yes, I perceived an improvement in the business after these visits, as they facilitated better communication, relationship-building, and a deeper understanding of the local market. These visits were important because they allowed us to strengthen our business relationships, address challenges more effectively, and stay updated on market dynamics and opportunities.</p> <p> KF, Pos. 35     Business RQ 9 &gt; Improvement in the business RQ 9.2 (0)</p>

**Table 35 – Improvement in the business.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**

In R.Q.9.2, we aim to determine whether visits to Ukraine before the war led to noticeable improvements in business operations and if such visits were perceived as necessary for business success. Responses to R.Q.9.2 reveal varying perceptions regarding the impact and necessity of visits to Ukraine before the war (Table 35). Some respondents noted positive outcomes from these visits, such as stronger relationships and a deeper understanding of the local market, which they considered essential for demonstrating commitment and building trust with Ukrainian counterparts (Respondents: EF, Pos. 39; HF, Pos. 69; KF, Pos. 35). Others did not perceive significant changes directly resulting from these visits but highlighted their role in maintaining existing relationships and showing support. According to the literature, maintaining relationships and demonstrating commitment through visits are often highly regarded practices. These visits can contribute to trust-building and enhanced communication channels, which are critical aspects of doing business successfully in Ukraine (Kormakova et al.,2023). However, the perceived necessity and impact of such

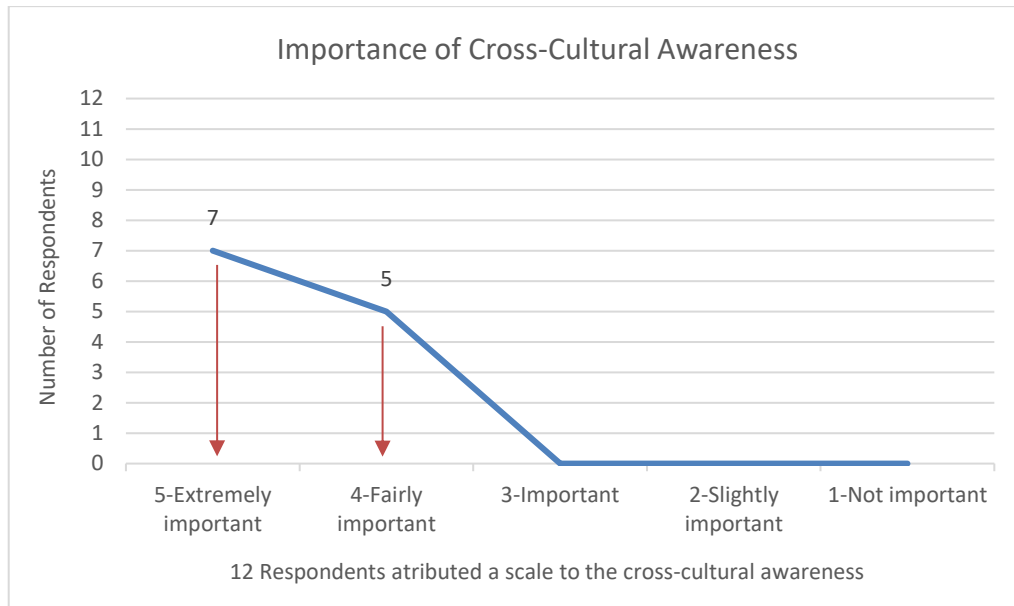
visits can vary based on specific business goals, market conditions, and objectives, as evident in the diverse perspectives of the respondents.



**Graph 6 – Measure of Relationship Established.**

**Source: Own construct, based on respondents' information transcribed into MAXQDA.**

In R.Q.9.3, we aim to assess the importance of the established relationship with the Ukrainian counterparts using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important). Responses to R.Q.9.3 indicate that 7 respondents rated it as "extremely important," 3 as "fairly important," and 2 as "important." (Graph 6). In business interactions, the significance of the relationship established with counterparts is a crucial aspect, as it often influences collaboration, trust, and effective communication. Most respondents in this case highlight the extreme importance of these relationships, emphasizing their role in successful business dealings. Following the literature, the importance of relationships in Ukrainian business culture cannot be understated. Building and maintaining strong relationships with Ukrainian counterparts is a foundational element of successful business interactions in the country (Kuśnierz et al.,2020; Markus,2022). Trust and mutual respect are highly valued, and investing in relationship-building can lead to long-term partnerships and fruitful collaborations.



**Graph 7 – Importance of Cross-Cultural Awareness.**

**Source: Own construct, based on respondents’ information transcribed into MAXQDA.**

In R.Q.10, we aim to assess the importance of understanding Ukrainian cross-cultural concepts and considerations when engaging with Ukrainian counterparts by employing a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important). Most respondents rated the importance of being aware of Ukrainian cross-cultural concepts and considerations as extremely important, with 7 respondents selecting this option, and 5 respondents rating it as fairly important (Graph 7). According to the literature, recognizing and respecting cross-cultural concepts and considerations is a hallmark of successful international business engagements (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2018). It demonstrates a commitment to understanding and adapting to the cultural context in which business operates, ultimately leading to more successful and mutually beneficial partnerships.











<i>R.Q.10.1</i>	<i>CF</i>	Absolutely, our business dealings in Ukraine were successful. <small>CF, Pos. 65    Successful experience RQ 10.1 (0)</small>
	<i>DM</i>	Yes, I had a successful experience while doing business in Ukraine. <small>DM, Pos. 38    Successful experience RQ 10.1 (0)</small>
	<i>GM</i>	Yes, my experience doing business in Ukraine was successful. <small>GM, Pos. 42    Successful experience RQ 10.1 (0)</small>

	<i>JF</i>	<p>Yes, result in profitable ventures and long-lasting partnerships. The successful experience helped us build trust and navigate any challenges that arose.</p> <p> JF, Pos. 37     Successful experience RQ 10.1 (0)</p>
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**Table 36 – Successful experience.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In R.Q.10.1, we aim to ascertain the overall success of business experiences in Ukraine. The responses to R.Q.10.1 indicate that several respondents had positive and successful experiences while doing business in Ukraine (Table 36). They emphasize the success of their business dealings and express satisfaction with the outcomes. One respondent even highlights the profitability of their ventures and the establishment of long-lasting partnerships as a result of their successful experience (Respondent: JF, Pos. 37). This suggests that Ukraine may offer opportunities for profitable business engagements and the development of trust and resilience in the face of challenges. In accordance with the literature, Ukraine has a relatively low cost of labour, a sizable consumer market, and a skilled workforce in fields like IT and engineering (IT Ukraine Association,2022). The emphasis on trust and building lasting partnerships mentioned in the responses is consistent with the importance of relationship-building in Ukrainian business culture, where personal connections often play a significant role in business success (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). Additionally, navigating challenges is essential in Ukraine due to its complex regulatory environment and occasional political instability.

<i>R.Q.10.2</i>	<i>AF</i>	<p>Without a doubt, our knowledge of Ukrainian business customs influenced our success.</p> <p> AF, Pos. 67     Understanding Ukrainian business etiquette RQ 10.2 (0)</p>
	<i>HF</i>	<p>Yes, understanding Ukrainian business etiquette greatly contributed to our successful interactions.</p> <p> HF, Pos. 77     Understanding Ukrainian business etiquette RQ 10.2 (0)</p>
	<i>JF</i>	<p>Yes, understanding helped us build rapport, establish trust, and navigate negotiations effectively.</p> <p> JF, Pos. 38     Understanding Ukrainian business etiquette RQ 10.2 (0)</p>
	<i>KF</i>	<p>Yes, my understanding positively affected. It helped in building rapport and effective communication, contributing to successful outcomes.</p> <p> KF, Pos. 39     Understanding Ukrainian business etiquette RQ 10.2 (0)</p>
	<i>LM</i>	<p>Indeed, our understanding of Ukrainian communication styles was a valuable asset in achieving success.</p> <p> LM, Pos. 76     Understanding Ukrainian business etiquette RQ 10.2 (0)</p>

**Table 37 – Understanding Ukrainian business etiquette and communication styles.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**

Literature refers that cultural competence, encompassing an understanding of communication styles and etiquette, is integral to achieving success in Ukrainian business as it facilitates effective communication and the establishment of trust and rapport with foreign counterparts (Blyznyuk,2016; Kuśnierz et al.,2020). Neglecting cultural nuances can lead to misunderstandings and hinder relationship-building, potentially compromising the success of international business ventures. In R.Q.10.2, we investigate whether familiarity with Ukrainian business etiquette and communication styles influenced the success of interactions with Ukrainian counterparts. The responses to R.Q.10.2 consistently highlight the positive impact of understanding Ukrainian business etiquette and communication styles on the success of business interactions with Ukrainian counterparts (Table 37). Respondents emphasize how this understanding played a crucial role in building rapport, establishing trust, and effectively navigating negotiations, ultimately contributing to successful outcomes in their business dealings in Ukraine (Respondents: JF, Pos. 38; KF, Pos. 39).











<i>R.Q.11</i>	<i>BF</i>	At the beginning of the war, we suspended our cooperation however, we are now actively resuming our meetings online  BF, Pos. 40  Work during the war RQ 11 (0)
	<i>EF</i>	Yes, we have continued to work with Ukrainian counterparts during the war,  EF, Pos. 44  Work during the war RQ 11 (0)
	<i>FM</i>	Our engagement with Ukrainian counterparts has endured despite the war's challenges.  FM, Pos. 78  Work during the war RQ 11 (0)
	<i>JF</i>	We have continued working  JF, Pos. 39  Work during the war RQ 11 (0)
	<i>LM</i>	Yes, we've persisted in working with Ukrainian counterparts despite the war's challenges.  LM, Pos. 78  Work during the war RQ 11 (0)

**Table 38 – Work during the war.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**

Ukraine has faced various challenges, including political instability and economic fluctuations in the past. The ability to persevere and adapt during difficult times reflects the importance of maintaining relationships and partnerships in the Ukrainian business culture (Ratten,2022). In R.Q.11, the aim is to determine whether businesses have supported or continue to work with Ukrainian partners in the context of war and difficulties associated with the Russian invasion (Table 38). The responses to R.Q.11 indicate a mixed but generally

resilient approach to working with Ukrainian counterparts during the war, despite the challenges and uncertainties associated with the Russian invasion. Some respondents highlight the continuation of collaborations, while others mention temporary suspensions followed by a shift to “online meetings” (Respondent: BF, Pos. 40).

<i>R.Q.11.1</i>	<i>BF</i>	<p>I can confidently say that our colleagues are actively seeking partners open to cooperation and are eager for success. They need support, and they truly appreciate it. Yes, having knowledge of cultural differences and understanding cross-cultural aspects would likely remain important for conducting a successful business in Ukraine after the end of the war.</p> <p> BF, Pos. 41    Changes in the way business during the war RQ 11.1 (0)</p>
	<i>EF</i>	<p>although there have been notable challenges related to logistics, security, and economic instability. These changes have required a more adaptive approach and heightened awareness of the evolving situation. Having knowledge of cultural differences remains crucial for conducting successful business in Ukraine, especially after the war. It helps build trust, navigate potential sensitivities, and foster resilience in the face of ongoing uncertainties.</p> <p> EF, Pos. 44-45    Changes in the way business during the war RQ 11.1 (0)</p>
	<i>FM</i>	<p>The invasion has brought about shifts in business practices, highlighting the need for flexibility and innovation. I believe it will be important</p> <p> FM, Pos. 79    Changes in the way business during the war RQ 11.1 (0)</p>
	<i>JF</i>	<p>conflict has emphasized adaptability and resilience, making cultural understanding even more important for successful business interactions in Ukraine post-war.</p> <p> JF, Pos. 39    Changes in the way business during the war RQ 11.1 (0)</p>
	<i>LM</i>	<p>The invasion has triggered changes in business practices, emphasizing cooperation and adaptability. I believe it will be important understand cultural nuances</p> <p> LM, Pos. 79    Changes in the way business during the war RQ 11.1 (0)</p>

**Table 39 – Changes in the way business during the war.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents’**

In R.Q.11.1, we seek to identify if the Russian invasion has led to significant changes in business practices in Ukraine, particularly in terms of cross-cultural aspects (Table 39). The responses to R.Q.11.1 collectively acknowledge significant changes in the way business is conducted in Ukraine following the Russian invasion. These changes have necessitated a more adaptive and aware approach due to “challenges related to logistics, security, and economic instability” (Respondent: EF, Pos. 44-45). Respondents consistently emphasize that having knowledge of cultural differences and understanding cross-cultural aspects will remain crucial for successful business operations in Ukraine, particularly after the war. They note that cultural understanding helps build trust, navigate potential sensitivities, and foster resilience in the face of ongoing uncertainties. As the responses suggest, these cultural nuances become even more critical during times of crisis and upheaval, such as a war (Sytch & Dukach,2023). Businesses that can adapt to these changes and demonstrate cultural

sensitivity are better positioned to navigate the evolving landscape and maintain successful partnerships.

<i>R.Q. 12</i>	<i>AF</i>	<p>Success in Ukraine means you've got to respect personal space, be polite during small talk and keep your cool in negotiations and don't rush decisions.</p> <p> AF, Pos. 71     Advice RQ 12 (0)</p>
	<i>EF</i>	<p>When doing business in Ukraine, prioritize building trust through personal connections and open communication. Respect the hierarchical structure, engage in hospitality, and consider learning basic Ukrainian phrases. Avoid rushing decisions, political discussions, and be punctual to show respect for local customs.</p> <p> EF, Pos. 46     Advice RQ 12 (0)</p>
	<i>FM</i>	<p>To do well in Ukraine, you've got to get the cross-cultural thing right. Start with formal greetings, handle business cards carefully, and stick to schedules. Don't be too pushy in negotiations and stay away from tough conversations.</p> <p> FM, Pos. 80     Advice RQ 12 (0)</p>
	<i>HF</i>	<p>It's super important to understand Ukrainian culture when doing business there. You should start meetings with friendly greetings, be patient during negotiations, and work on building trust over time and don't rush decisions.</p> <p> HF, Pos. 81     Advice RQ 12 (0)</p>
	<i>IM</i>	<p>In the Ukrainian business world, knowing the culture is a big deal. Be respectful when you say hi, exchange business cards properly, and be on time and don't use harsh language</p> <p> IM, Pos. 73     Advice RQ 12 (0)</p>
	<i>JF</i>	<p>My advice to foreigners looking to do business in Ukraine is to prioritize cross-cultural understanding. Dos include showing respect, building personal relationships, and being patient in negotiations. Common don'ts include rushing discussions and ignoring cultural nuances.</p> <p> JF, Pos. 40     Advice RQ 12 (0)</p>
	<i>KF</i>	<p>When doing business in Ukraine, prioritize building strong personal relationships, respect the hierarchical structure, and demonstrate patience in negotiations. Avoid rushing into business discussions without first establishing rapport, and refrain from being overly confrontational or aggressive in your approach.</p> <p> KF, Pos. 41     Advice RQ 12 (0)</p>
	<i>LM</i>	<p>In Ukraine, you've got to understand the culture. Say hello warmly, have some small talk, and don't be in a rush during meetings. Don't push your own culture onto them and take it easy.</p> <p> LM, Pos. 80     Advice RQ 12 (0)</p>

**Table 40 – Advice.**

**Source: MAXQDA Retrieved segments, based on respondents'**

In R.Q.12, we aim to provide practical insights for foreigners looking to do business in Ukraine by identifying the cultural nuances, advice, and etiquette essential for successful cross-cultural interactions in the Ukrainian market (Table 40). The responses to R.Q.12 highlight the importance of cross-cultural understanding when doing business in Ukraine. The key pieces of advice provided include the need to respect personal space, be polite

during small talk, maintain patience in negotiations, and avoid rushing decisions. Common dos involve prioritizing building trust through personal connections, respecting hierarchical structures, and showing patience in negotiations. For instance, one respondent offered the valuable advice "Avoid rushing discussions and political discussions" when asked about doing business in Ukraine (Respondent: EF, Pos. 46). These recommendations closely align with the insights from literature. Ukrainian business culture places a significant emphasis on personal relationships, trust, and hierarchical structures (Lepeyko & Blyznyuk, 2010). The importance of formal greetings, hospitality, and patience during negotiations is consistent with Ukrainian etiquette. Additionally, respecting personal space and avoiding confrontational approaches align with the preference for indirect communication and avoiding unnecessary conflict in Ukrainian business interactions (Glinkowska & Chebotarov, 2018).

## 7. Conclusion

This research has provided a holistic view of the do's and don'ts of doing business in Ukraine, with a particular emphasis on the role of cross-cultural aspects. By embracing cultural diversity, and staying adaptable to the local market, businesses can position themselves for success in this dynamic and promising market.

### 7.1. Main Remarks

Ukraine's path to international investment, despite ongoing challenges from conflict and geopolitical tensions, is a demonstration of the resilience and potential of this remarkable nation. In this paper, we have tried to highlight the intricacies of the Ukrainian business culture to help foreign investors who may be stepping into unfamiliar territory.

Ukraine's attractiveness lies not only in its rich history and diverse culture, but also in its promising future. The combination of geography, population, economy, political evolution, and cultural history creates a unique environment for investors looking for new opportunities. While this path may be fraught with challenges, the potential for economic growth and mutual prosperity in Ukraine is undeniable. Despite the protracted conflict, the Ukrainian market continues to operate, and when the war ends, it will need a variety of products and services (Garrigues,2023). The reconstruction of war-torn Ukraine can be a great opportunity for all types of businesses in all sectors of the economy.

The features of the Ukrainian business culture, shaped by the country's history, culture and business environment, come to the fore during the war (Glinkowska-Krauze et al.,2020). Ukraine is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for international companies seeking to establish a presence in the region. However, foreign managers, despite their knowledge and experience, often face difficulties in achieving the required results. These difficulties can be explained by the unique Ukrainian mentality, which is a crucial factor in understanding the dynamics of business interaction in the country. The Ukrainian mentality is a combination of cross-cultural traditions, with elements of individualism and collectivism from both Eastern and Western influences (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2019). This complex combination is deeply rooted in Ukrainian society and has a significant impact on business practices and relationships.

In order to successfully navigate the Ukrainian business environment, foreign managers need to familiarize themselves with these cultural aspects. In this way, they will be able to proactively address potential problems and conflicts, thus increasing their ability to build fruitful and mutually beneficial relationships with their Ukrainian partners (Blyznyuk,2016; Kuśnierz et al.,2020). In this ever-changing business environment, understanding and embracing the nuances of Ukrainian business culture can be the key to unlocking the country's vast potential and contributing to its growth and development (Borysenko,2017).

Expanding into a new market like Ukraine, with its unique ownership laws, cultural nuances, and language differences, requires a thoughtful and strategic approach. Choosing the most suitable entry strategy, whether it's establishing a subsidiary, forming a joint venture, acquiring an existing business, or entering into distribution agreements, should align with your business goals, available resources, and thorough market analysis (Glinkowska & Chebotarov,2019).

Navigating the complexities of the Ukrainian business environment demands a deep understanding of its distinct cultural and business practices (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). Ukraine's business etiquette, grounded in principles of integrity and high moral values, underscores the importance of personal connections, trust-building, and effective communication (Blyznyuk,2016; Kuśnierz et al.,2020). Direct and straightforward communication, coupled with the practice of engaging in small talk to build rapport, is vital in Ukrainian business culture. Building personal relationships and trust with local counterparts is paramount, and investing time in personal meetings and social events can foster strong connections (Wackowski & Blyznyuk,2017). Negotiations in Ukraine require maintaining professionalism and an avoidance of confrontational behaviour (Bordian et al.,2023). Patience, thorough discussions, and punctuality are highly valued, and respecting formalities and hierarchy is essential to make a positive impression. Being well-prepared and knowledgeable about the market and local regulations demonstrates dedication and earns respect (Borysenko,2017).

To succeed in Ukraine's dynamic market, staying updated on market changes, consumer preferences, and the business environment is crucial. Adapting strategies based on analysis and emerging opportunities is key to remaining competitive. Collaborating with local experts and consultants can provide valuable insights and guidance for navigating the intricacies of internationalization in Ukraine (Kuśnierz et al.,2020).

Having achieved the main objective of the research, which was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the key considerations, strategies, and guidelines necessary for successful business in Ukraine, considering the cross-cultural aspects that significantly influence business interactions, it is evident that this study has contributed valuable insights to the field of international business.

## **7.2. Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this research significantly contribute to the theoretical knowledge on IB literature and cross-cultural management in the context of doing business in the Ukrainian market. Building on the works of most researchers, this research emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and understanding the cultural nuances specific to Ukraine in the context of international business. It aligns with the growing body of research that emphasizes the role of culture in shaping business practices. The application of renowned cross-cultural theories, as proposed by researchers, in the Ukrainian business context serves to validate and extend the utility of these theoretical frameworks. It demonstrates that these theoretical frameworks remain relevant tools for comprehending the intricacies of business interactions in diverse cultural settings. Cultural adaptation is a fundamental aspect of Ukrainian business success. By delving into how cultural dimensions manifest in Ukraine, this research enriches our understanding of how these dimensions influence communication, decision-making, and relationship-building. The inclusion of real-world case studies serves as a practical illustration of the theoretical concepts discussed. These case studies offer tangible evidence of the consequences of cultural misalignment and the potential benefits of cultural adaptation, reinforcing the importance of integrating theory with practical insights.

In essence, this research not only adds to the existing body of knowledge on cross-cultural management. It reinforces the significance of cultural competence in the realm of international business and emphasizes Ukraine's unique position as a cultural context for cross-cultural research and practice.

## **7.3. Managerial Implications**

The findings of this research provide managerial implications that can help businesses in Ukraine by offering a practical guide, promoting effective communication, fostering adaptability, and contributing to cross-cultural knowledge.

Trust is crucial, going beyond words to actions, dedication, and understanding cultural differences that strengthen collaborations. As one respondent in our study wisely remarked, "Trust and reliability are crucial qualities in a Ukrainian partner; without them, it's tough to navigate the business landscape effectively." Greetings in Ukraine include a firm handshake and a friendly smile. Following common etiquette, such as presenting a business card with both hands, ensures respectful and professional communication.

During meetings with Ukrainian counterparts, expect extended small talk, usually lasting between 10 and 30 minutes. It is important to use this time to discuss a variety of topics, as it sets a friendly and relaxed tone for subsequent business discussions. Also, it should be recognised that Ukrainians tend to prioritise relationship building over punctuality. Sometimes meetings are delayed due to prolonged small talk. Having patience in this regard is important for maintaining a positive relationship. A well-structured meeting agenda, accompanied by timers, helps to ensure that discussions are on track. Ukrainian counterparts appreciate that schedules are kept to and expect effective meetings.

Negotiations with Ukrainian partners may require more time and patience. It is important to be prepared for several rounds of discussions, as haste or frustration can damage the relationship. In addition, it is worth getting to know the nuances of indirect communication styles in Ukraine. Ukrainians often use tones of voice and non-verbal cues to convey thoughts and opinions. It is important to be prepared to read between the lines and encourage open discussions. During Ukrainian negotiations, approach disagreements constructively and maintain a comfortable and respectful demeanor. It is important to cultivate cultural sensitivity by respecting personal boundaries and understanding that Ukrainians may have different levels of physical contact during meetings. If Ukrainian partners want to make some changes, it is advisable to be open to discussing changes. It is important to recognize that influential individuals, such as CEOs and Board Directors, often play a significant role in negotiations with Ukrainian partners. It is possible that additional concessions or adjustments will have to be made to accommodate their wishes and ensure a successful outcome.

Once the business plan is created, the team assembled by the Ukrainian partners should be given importance. In addition, the skills, knowledge, commitment, and ability of the team to work in a coordinated manner to achieve business goals should be emphasized. Due to the impact of geopolitical events on doing business in Ukraine, it is necessary to be prepared to

adapt to changing circumstances, maintain cultural sensitivity and prioritize relationship building in times of uncertainty. The ability to persevere and adapt during difficult times reflects the importance of maintaining relationships and partnerships in the Ukrainian business culture.

The managerial implications derived from this research emphasize the need for cultural sensitivity, patience, adaptability, and relationship-building in business interactions with Ukrainian counterparts. By embracing these principles, companies can enhance their effectiveness in the Ukrainian market and foster mutually beneficial partnerships.

#### **7.4. Limitations of the Research**

While this research has shed light on various aspects of doing business in Ukraine and navigating cross-cultural interactions, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Like any study, this research has certain constraints that impact the scope and generalizability of its findings.

One significant limitation is the sample size. The number of respondents in this study, while providing valuable insights, may not fully represent the diverse range of experiences and perspectives encountered in business dealings with Ukrainian counterparts. A larger and more diverse sample could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in this context. Additionally, the research relies primarily on self-reported data from respondents. This introduces the potential for self-reporting bias, where respondents may provide answers that align with social desirability or personal perceptions. While efforts were made to maintain anonymity and encourage candid responses, this bias cannot be entirely eliminated. Also, respondents may not accurately recall specific details or may perceive past experiences differently over time, affecting the accuracy of their responses. Furthermore, the research is conducted in a specific timeframe and may not capture the dynamic nature of business interactions in Ukraine. The ongoing geopolitical situation, economic conditions, and cultural dynamics can change rapidly, influencing the way business is conducted. The findings may not fully account for these evolving factors.

Future research efforts should aim to address these limitations to further enhance our understanding of cross-cultural interactions in the Ukrainian market.

## 7.5. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research in the domain of cross-cultural business interactions in Ukraine can build upon the findings and limitations of this research to further enrich our understanding of this complex context. Here are some suggestions for future research:

- *Increased Sample Size:* Depending on the specific research objectives, future studies may benefit from a larger and more diverse sample size. A larger sample can help capture a broader range of experiences and perspectives, making the findings more representative of the population.
- *In-depth Interviews:* Complement survey data with in-depth interviews to delve deeper into the experiences of foreign business professionals in Ukraine. Qualitative research can provide richer insights into the nuances of cross-cultural interactions.
- *Comparative Analysis:* Compare the experiences of foreign businesses in Ukraine with those in neighbouring countries. This comparative approach can help identify unique challenges and opportunities specific to Ukraine.
- *Sector-specific Studies:* Explore how cultural nuances and business practices vary across different sectors within Ukraine, such as IT, agriculture, or manufacturing. Each sector may have distinct negotiation norms and cultural considerations.
- *Local Perspective:* Include perspectives from Ukrainian counterparts in future research to gain a more balanced view of cross-cultural interactions. Understanding their perceptions and expectations is crucial for effective collaboration.
- *Post-war Dynamics:* Investigate how the ongoing geopolitical situation and the aftermath of the conflict in Ukraine impact international business operations. This includes examining the resilience and adaptability of businesses during crises.
- *Cross-cultural Training Models:* Develop and evaluate cross-cultural training models tailored specifically to the needs of foreign professionals engaging in business activities in Ukraine.

These suggestions encompass a wide range of research areas, each of which can contribute to a better understanding of cross-cultural interactions and successful business in Ukraine.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A- Interview Guide

#### Semi-structured Interviews:

#### The dos and the don'ts of doing business in the Ukraine.

My name is Yuliia Pankiv and I'm a student in the 2nd year of the International Business Master's Degree at the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, School of Technology and Management (ESTG).

Now, I'm collecting data to ascertain knowledge of common business habits and cultural aspects that can facilitate business meetings, negotiations, and business relationships towards Ukraine international negotiation success. As part of my research project, I kindly ask for your participation in a semi-structured interview to gain insights from your valuable experiences in doing business in the Ukrainian market. All your responses will be anonymous and confidential and will fill the unique purpose of the research. The semi-structured interview will take approximately 25-30 minutes.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention!

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#### Company and respondent profile

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1. How do you like to be treated?
  - a- She/Her/Ms
  - b- He/Him/Mr
  - c- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is / was your job position in the company?
3. How long have you worked or are you working for the company?
  - a- less than 1 year
  - b- 1 to 3 years
  - c- 3 to 5 years
  - d- 5 or more years
4. What is your nationality?
5. What was the entry mode strategy selected by the company in the Ukrainian market?  
*(Please select the more adequate option to your company).*
  - a. Franchise

- b. Licensee
- c. Intermediary
- d. Export
- e. Joint venture
- f. Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

6. **RQ. 1.** Which are the features of a partner in the Ukraine you feel are important?

1. Please can you list them:

*Example: Trust, ...*

2. From the above which do you think is the most important? (*Please state your opinion by using the scale from 1 - not important, to 5 - extremely important*)

7. Describe your first meeting with a Ukrainian counterpart.

1. **RQ. 1.1** How did you initiate the greetings with your Ukrainian counterpart? Did you attempt to use any Ukrainian phrases or greetings?

2. **RQ. 1.2** Did you exchange business cards with your Ukrainian counterpart during the meeting? If yes, could you describe the process of exchanging cards, including any cultural norms or etiquettes observed during the exchange?

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### **Respectability and establishing trust.**

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1. **RQ. 2.** During your first meeting with your Ukrainian counterpart, how did you sense the level of formality and respect in the interaction? Were there any specific cultural cues or gestures that conveyed respect during the meeting?

2. **RQ. 2.1** Did you find it necessary to engage in small talk before discussing business matters?

a- If yes, how long did it take before transitioning to business discussions?

*(Options: 5 minutes, 15 minutes, 30 minutes, or more)*

b- If you engaged in small talk, what topics were discussed?

*(e.g., trip, city sightseeing, hotel conditions, sports, world events, etc.)*

c- If there was no small talk, did you feel the communication was straightforward and to the point?

3. **RQ. 2.2** During the meeting, did your Ukrainian counterpart ask you personal questions?

a- If yes, what kind of personal questions were asked?

*(e.g., family, marital status, children, religion, politics, etc.)*

- b- How did you interpret the reasons behind your Ukrainian counterpart's personal questions? Were they to establish rapport or trust?
  - c- Did you feel comfortable responding to the personal questions asked by your Ukrainian counterpart?
4. **RQ. 2.3** Based on the interaction, did you perceive that your Ukrainian counterpart was trying to establish a personal relationship rather than solely focusing on the business aspect?
5. **RQ. 2.4** How did the establishment of a personal relationship (if any) impact the business discussions and decision-making process?
- a- In your opinion, how important is building a personal relationship in the Ukrainian business culture? (*Please state your opinion by using the scale from 1 - not important, to 5 - extremely important*)

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### Time and Scheduling

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1. **RQ. 3.** Were there any instances where cultural differences related to time perception influenced the meeting's flow or decision-making process?
- a- Can you provide examples of how time perception impacted the pace of discussions or decision-making?
2. **RQ. 3.1** How punctual is your Ukrainian counterpart at the start of meetings?
- a- Always on time
  - b- Usually, 5 minutes late
  - c- Usually, 15 minutes late
  - d- Often more than 30 minutes late
  - e- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
3. **RQ. 3.2** How did your Ukrainian counterpart demonstrate attentiveness to time during meetings?
- a- In what ways did your Ukrainian counterparts indicate their focus on adhering to set timelines during meetings?
4. **RQ. 3.3** How did the Ukrainian counterpart respond to any changes or adjustments made to the meeting schedule or duration?
- 1. Can you share an instance where a schedule adjustment was needed?
  - 2. How did your Ukrainian counterpart react to it?

- a- Positively - She/he was understanding and flexible.
  - b- Neutral - Her/his reaction was neither positive nor negative.
  - c- Curious - She/he asked for clarification about the changes.
  - d- Resistant - She/he was hesitant or unwilling to accept the adjustments.
  - e- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- 

### **Communication**

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1. **RQ. 4.** Did you sense any cultural differences in their communication style or behavior?  
If yes, what is different?
2. **RQ. 4.1** When you made your bid/spoke about your proposal during the meeting with your Ukrainian counterpart, did you receive a clear "yes" or "no" response?
  - a- How did your counterpart express their (dis) agreement? Were there any cultural communication cues that indicated their approval or any specific reasons and suggestions for improvement?
  - b- How did you interpret your Ukrainian counterpart's response when they used phrases like "we will look into this" or "we will think about it" instead of a straightforward "yes" or "no"? Did these expressions suggest potential interest in further discussion or consideration?
3. **RQ. 4.2** Did your Ukrainian counterpart go silent at any one time during the meeting?
  1. If so, for how long did you think it was?
    - a- Approximately 30 seconds
    - b- Around 1 minute
    - c- 2 minutes or more
  2. What was your impression or reaction during this silence? Did you find it unusual or within the normal course of the conversation?
  3. Based on the context and your perception, did it seem to you that he/she agreed or disagreed with your proposal during the silence?
4. **RQ. 4.3** During the meeting with your Ukrainian counterpart, did you express any disagreements and explain your reasons?
  1. If yes, how was the reaction?
    - a- Did you try to get one of their team members present to agree with you?
    - b- Did your counterpart change the subject?

- c- Did your counterpart stay engaged throughout the meeting?
- 2. If not, what were the reasons for not expressing your disagreement?
- 5. **RQ. 4.4** Did your Ukrainian counterpart stand very close to you?
  - 1. At what distance did he stand?
    - a- Very close, almost touching.
    - b- Close enough, within conversational distance
    - c- A moderate distance, less than an arm's length
    - d- A significant distance, more than an arm's length
  - 2. How did you react?
- 6. **RQ. 4.5** Did your Ukrainian counterpart at any time touch you in your arm or back? If yes, where? How did you react?

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### Contracts & Negotiations

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- 1. **RQ. 5.** Regarding your business conditions, did you propose a contract during your meetings with your Ukrainian counterpart?
  - a- If yes, how did your Ukrainian counterpart react to the contract proposal?
  - b- If no, what were the reasons for not proposing a contract?
- 2. **RQ. 6.** How long did it take you to establish and sign a definite business plan or contract with your Ukrainian counterpart?
  - a- Less than 1 month
  - b- 1 month
  - c- 2 to 3 months
  - d- 6 months
  - e- 1 to 2 years
  - f- More than 2 years
- 3. How many meetings are required to reach an agreement and close the deal with your Ukrainian counterpart?
  - a- 1 meeting
  - b- 2 meetings
  - c- 3 meetings
  - d- 4 meetings
  - e- 5 meetings, or more

4. **RQ. 6.1** During negotiations, how would you describe the level of formality or information sharing?
  - a- Highly formal - Strict adherence to established protocols, formal documents, and structured communication.
  - b- Moderately formal - A mix of formal and informal elements with some flexibility in protocols and communication.
  - c- Informal - A relaxed atmosphere with minimal formalities, emphasis on open and informal discussions.
5. **RQ. 6.2** How did you approach negotiations regarding finances and prices with your Ukrainian counterparts?
  - a- Addressed it as the final topic, after discussing other aspects.
  - b- Focused solely on figures and prices from the beginning.
  - c- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
6. **RQ. 6.3** How did you handle potential delays or multiple rounds of discussions before reaching an agreement with your Ukrainian counterparts?
  - a- Patiently engaged in multiple rounds of negotiations.
  - b- Felt frustrated or rushed during the process.
  - c- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
7. **RQ. 6.4** Did you have to meet with higher-ranking individuals such as the CEO, General Manager, Board Director, or other key decision makers during the negotiation process?
  1. If yes, did you have to make further concessions you were not initially planning on?
8. **RQ. 6.5** Did your Ukrainian counterpart ever want to change or readapt any of the conditions already signed (contract)?
  1. If yes, how did you react?
  2. Did you confront with Ukrainian counterpart, as you had a signed contract with specific conditions?
    - a- What was his/her reaction?
    - b- Did you feel that this confrontation changed things between you?
  3. Did you think a contract for your Ukrainian counterpart meant the same as it meant to you?

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## Running the Business

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1. **RQ. 7.** After the business plan was established, how important was the choice of the team set up by your Ukrainian counterpart?
  1. **RQ. 7.1** Were you given the opportunity to provide your opinion on the person/people chosen, even if at a later stage of the process?
  2. **RQ. 7.2** Were you able to rely on your contacts to ensure that the necessary tasks were effectively carried out by the team?
    - a- Did your counterpart have enough influence with the local company to ensure the team's effectiveness?
    - b- How high up in the hierarchy of the company was your counterpart?
2. **RQ. 8.** How did the hierarchical structure impact communication and collaboration during your business dealings with Ukrainian counterparts?
  - a- Did it facilitate or hinder open communication and idea sharing?
  - b- Were there any challenges in collaborating across different levels of the hierarchy?
3. **RQ. 8.1** How does decision-making flow within the structure?
  - a- Are decisions made collectively, or is there a top-down approach from higher-level management?
  - b- How much influence do team members have in decision-making processes?  
*(Please state your opinion by using the scale from 1 – low influence, to 5 – high influence)*
4. **RQ. 8.2** From your experience, how did the hierarchical structure in Ukrainian businesses impact career advancement and opportunities for employees during your business interactions?
  - a- Were promotions and growth typically tied to seniority and experience?
5. **RQ. 9.** Now that the business had been established, did you feel there was a mutual appreciation between yourself and your Ukrainian counterpart?
  - a- Did your counterpart share financial information or other business details with you?
6. **RQ. 9.1** How frequently did you or any of your managers visit the country/market for business purposes before the war in Ukraine during your interactions with your Ukrainian counterpart?

- a- Once a season
  - b- Twice a season
  - c- Yearly
  - d- Rarely
  - e- Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
7. **RQ. 9.2** If you or any of your managers visited the country before the war in Ukraine, did you perceive any improvement in the business after these visits, or did you not notice any significant impact?
- 1. Did you feel that such visits were necessary for the business?
    - a- If yes, why did you believe these visits were important?
    - b- If no, what were the reasons for not feeling the need to visit frequently?
8. **RQ. 9.3** Can you rate the relationship you established with your Ukrainian counterpart? *(Please state your opinion by using the scale from 1 - not important, to 5 - extremely important)*

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### Concepts & Considerations

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- 1. **RQ. 10.** How important was it to be aware of Ukrainian cross-cultural concepts and considerations when engaging with Ukrainian counterparts? *(Please state your opinion by using the scale from 1 - not important, to 5 - extremely important)*
- 2. **RQ. 10.1** Did you have a successful experience while doing business in Ukraine?
- 3. **RQ. 10.2** Did your understanding of Ukrainian business etiquette and communication styles affect the success of your business interactions with Ukrainian counterparts?
- 4. **RQ. 11.** Have you continued or are you continuing to work with Ukrainian counterparts during the war, particularly considering the challenges and uncertainties associated with the Russian invasion?
  - 1. After the Russian invasion, have you noticed any significant changes in the way business is conducted in Ukraine, particularly concerning cross-cultural aspects?
    - a- If yes, how have these changes influenced business interactions and relationships with Ukrainian counterparts?
    - b- Do you believe that having knowledge of cultural differences would be important for doing a successful business in Ukraine after the end of the war?

5. **RQ. 12.** Based on your experience, what advice would you give to foreigners looking to do business in the Ukrainian market, focusing on the importance of cross-cultural understanding? What key dos and common don'ts should foreigners keep in mind for successful cross-cultural interactions with Ukrainian counterparts?

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Thank you for your participation!

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**Appendix B - Practical Guide – Dos and Don'ts of Doing Business in Ukraine**

<b>DOS</b>	<b>DON'TS</b>
<b>Respect Personal Space:</b> Ukrainians value personal space, so maintain a comfortable distance during interactions.	<b>Rush Decisions:</b> Avoid rushing into business decisions. Ukrainians appreciate a thorough and thoughtful decision-making process.
<b>Politeness in Small Talk:</b> Engage in polite and friendly small talk as a way to build rapport before diving into business discussions.	<b>Engage in Political Discussions:</b> Steer clear of political discussions, as these topics can be sensitive and divisive.
<b>Keep Your Cool in Negotiations:</b> Be patient and composed during negotiations. Ukrainians appreciate a calm and collected approach.	<b>Be Pushy in Negotiations:</b> Refrain from being overly assertive or pushy during negotiations. Maintain a collaborative and patient approach.
<b>Build Trust:</b> Prioritize building trust through personal connections. Invest time in relationship-building, both in and out of business settings.	<b>Use Harsh Language:</b> Avoid using harsh or confrontational language. Maintain a respectful and professional tone.
<b>Respect the Hierarchical Structure:</b> Be mindful of the hierarchical structure in Ukrainian organizations. Show deference to senior members and decision-makers.	<b>Impose Your Culture:</b> Respect and adapt to Ukrainian culture rather than imposing your own cultural norms onto business interactions.
<b>Engage in Hospitality:</b> Embrace hospitality customs. Accept invitations for meals and gatherings, as these are opportunities to strengthen relationships.	<b>Ignore Cultural Nuances:</b> Pay attention to cultural nuances and customs. Ignoring them can harm relationships and hinder business success.
<b>Learn Basic Ukrainian Phrases:</b> While not mandatory, learning a few basic Ukrainian phrases can demonstrate your commitment to understanding the culture.	
<b>Formal Greetings:</b> Start meetings with formal greetings, including a handshake. Address people using their titles and last names until invited to use first names.	
<b>Handle Business Cards Carefully:</b> When exchanging business cards, do so with respect. Receive cards with both hands and take a moment to read them before putting them away.	
<b>Stick to Schedules:</b> Be punctual to meetings and appointments to show respect for local customs and to avoid causing offense.	