In: Murath, Judith & Oláh-Hubai, Ágnes (Hrsg.) 2007.
Interdisciplinary Aspects of Tranlation and Interpreting.
Wien: Praesens Verlang, 337-366.

Culture Specific Differences in Business Communication with New Media?[1]

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1 Introduction

New information and communication technologies have an essential role in today's business life and businesses have to present themselves and their products both on-line and off-line. In order to be able to compete on the international market, enterprises have to present themselves and their products also in foreign languages. To meet the needs of the target groups not only language skills are required but also knowledge about culture specific communication styles. National culture bound differences in business communication have been the subject of several contrastive studies (Henneke 1999, Koskensalo 1995, Reuter 1992, Schröder 1992 und 2001, Stolze 1998, Vesalainen 2001, Zeuner 2001), and they also play an important role in enterprise presentations on the web (Hermeking 2005, Wazel 2001, Wrobel 2001, Würtz 2005).

In order to discover culture specific differences in Finnish and German business communication on the web, studies of Finnish and German enterprise websites were carried out. Our first study was carried out within a Leonardo project supported by the European Commission. On the basis of this study, an information and language training programme "*WEBVERTISING German/Finnish*" was developed in 1996 – 2000. In 1996, when the project was launched, using the web for advertising purposes was a fairly new idea, and small and middle sized enterprises did not use it very much. Presentations back then meant sometimes just transferring traditional advertising brochures to the web. Consequently, employees in marketing and public relations of small and middle sized enterprises were chosen as the target group of the programme.[2] One aim of the present study was to find out what kind of developments in webvertising, if any, could be found in the past nine years. Our first corpus was collected in 1997 and all the websites were reanalysed systematically in 2006. In addition, spot checks of websites were carried out in 2002, 2003 and 2005 (see also Ylönen 2003). It became apparent that today also small and middle sized enterprises make widely use of the possibilities of the new media, such as hypertext, multimodal and interactive components. Another aim of the study was to investigate whether culture bound differences can still be found or whether globalization and transcultural communication on the internet has led to cultural hybridisation and elimination of cultural differences in enterprise presentations and advertising on the web. Although developments that might be interpreted as results of hybridisation can be detected, our study clearly indicates cultural differences as well. The results of our study also allow implications on translating and translation studies.

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[1] Best thanks are due to Helena Valtanen for proof reading the article.

[2] Project partners included both educational institutions and small and middle sized enterprises: The project was coordinated by the *Institute for Intercultural Communication e.V. (IIK)* Berlin (Germany). Project partners were the *Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University of Jyväskylä* in Finland, the wireless software house *Digia Oy* in Helsinki/Finland (1996 – 1997), the communication design company *treesign* (1999 – 2000), and the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Jena/Germany (*Industrie- und Handelskammer Ostthüringen/IHK, Geschäftsstelle Jena)*. The results of the project, including the multimedia language training programme on CD-ROM, are published in Hahn & Ylönen 2001.

2 Study of German and Finnish enterprise websites

2.1 Aims, Material and Methods

The aims of our previous study on websites in 1997 were to discover, first, the **genre conventions** for advertising on the web, and second, the **media specific characteristics** of webvertising compared to traditional advertising (Lehtovirta & Ylönen 2001, Ylönen & Peltola 2002). Finally, we were interested in **culture specific differences** in business presentations with new media (Ylönen 2003). The main emphasis of this study will be on the intercultural aspect and on comparing the results of our previous analysis with recent findings.

The data for the study in question consisted of some 100 websites, collected in 1997. The same websites were checked again in 2006. In 1997, the corpus consisted of websites from 58 Finnish and 38 German enterprises of different sizes and from different branches, approaching different target groups from Business-to-Business to Business-to-Consumer. A list of the analysed enterprise websites can be found at the "WEBVERTISING" project website: http://www.iik.de/produktion/projekte/leonardo/eng/corpus.htm. In 2006, five German and 16 Finnish enterprises had ceased to exist. Their domain names were for sale or the server could not be located or they were bought by a bigger company (such as *Heltel* that became a subsidiary of *Elisa* in 2002). Another two of the Finnish enterprises analysed in 1997 had merged and both had changed their (Finnish) names into an English one (*Tieto* and *Tietovalta* became *tjgroup* in 1999). On the other hand, one Finnish enterprise with an English name (*LappPineHomes*) had split into two separate businesses with Finnish names (*Haavikko* and *Ikihirsi*). One Finnish business (*Ascentia*) had access for clients only and a user name and password were required to login to the website.[3] In addition, nine German and 18 Finnish enterprises were found under new domain names. Some of them had only changed their domain name, others had merged with another company remaining an equal partner in the new one (such as *Telia* that merged with *Sonera* in 2003 and became *TeliaSonera* or *Daimler-Benz* that merged with *Chrysler* in 1998 and became *DaimlerChrysler*), which was expressed in the new enterprise and domain names. Thus, the corpus in 2006 consisted of 33 German and 42 Finnish websites. The analysis of websites in 1997 and 2006 was supplemented by spot checks in 2002, 2003 and 2005.

In this contrastive and diachronic study, we analysed the websites on three different levels: media specific, textual, and linguistic-stylistic. On the media specific level, we analysed the use of interaction potential (for example, online feedback sheets or online shopping opportunities), the occurrence of multimodal components (audiovisual material, animations) and of tools for navigation (sitemaps, search engines). On the textual level, we looked at the layout (colours, pictures) as well as text structure and length. On the linguistic stylistic level, we studied concepts of politeness and the use of foreign words, for example. The number of web pages was not counted and the material was not analysed statistically. Instead, we analysed the pages qualitatively although the amount of the material was rather large. However, in 2006, the media specific features were also quantitatively analysed.

In the following, the results of the studies in 1997 and 2006 will be compared in a summarized form and this overview will be illustrated with the help of examples, including those of the spot checks. I will focus in more detail on the use of interaction potential, on structuring websites, on

[3] This seems surprising, since the enterprise does not use the opportunity to advertise its expertise or products.

media specific features (animations, audio-visual material), and on some linguistic-stylistic features (such as the concepts of politeness and the use of foreign words).

2.2 Results

In general, there are more similarities than differences between German and Finnish enterprise websites. Website design depends, in the first place, on the size, the branch or the target group of the enterprise. In 1997, bigger enterprises usually had larger and more polished (more carefully designed) presentations. However, in 2006, the websites of smaller enterprises seemed often more polished than those of bigger ones because bigger enterprises had often very massive sites and navigation was sometimes confusing. Some enterprises (especially in modern branches such as IT) used and still use lots of anglicisms – obviously to appear modern and dynamic - whereas others (mostly older enterprises steeped in tradition) prefer a more conservative language. Most differences, thus, have other than intercultural reasons which has also been found in Finnish-German studies of traditional advertising. Koskensalo (1995:279), for example, found only a few serious differences, compared to many similarities, in her study of German and Finnish advertising brochures. Also Vesalainen (2001:392) observed basically common rhetoric conventions in German and Finnish advertising brochures.

Nontheless, some culture bound differences between German and Finnish target ads can be found, and the comparison with websites in 2006 showed that the main culture specific differences were still the same as in 1997 (see Table 1 and Ylönen 2003:223).

Table 1. Culture bound differences in German and Finnish target ads (1997 and 2006) and developments in 2006 compared to 1997.

	German Businesses	**Finnish Businesses**
Media specific features	**1997 and 2006** • More interactive components, such as feedback sheets, login areas, online shops, download possibilities, contests and other entertaining components • More flash pictures and flash texts, more audio-visual components • More tools for navigation support	**1997 and 2006** • Less frequent use of interaction potential • More restrained pages because of fewer animations, less multimedia components • Fewer tools for navigation support (search engines, sitemaps)
	Developments in 2006 • Fewer guest books and forums for discussion; more feedback sheets than in 1997 • More multimedia components than in 1997 • More tools that support navigation than in 1997	
Textual features and layout	**1997 and 2006** • Complex structure and detailed information • Longer and more detailed texts	**1997 and 2006** • Simple structure • Shorter texts, direct and informative

<table>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">Developments in 2006
• Almost all Finnish enterprises (98 %) have now always presentations in Finnish. In 1997, 24 % had presentations in English only.
• In 1997, German websites were more colourful compared to Finnish websites. In 2006, there is no significant difference: favoured colour is (light) blue on a white background in both groups.
• German enterprises have now fewer submenus than in 1997.
• Layout with short news (on different topics and for different target groups: press, customers, business partners) on start pages is more common.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Linguistic-stylistic features</td><td>1997 and 2006
• More detailed, chatty, colourful and more importance given to interaction
• Reference often in the first person form “wir”
• Form of address: almost always the formal “you”-form “Sie”
• Ornateness and more frequent use of gradiation particles in imperatives (z. B. bitte, doch, einfach, mal)
• Many anglicisms</td><td>1997 and 2006
• Plainer, more compact, undemonstrative, objective (fewer attributes, imperatives, questions and exaggerations)
• Self-reference often in distanced third person form “the enterprise”
• Form of address: varied between the formal “you” form “Te”, the informal “you” form “sinä” and passive forms
• Minimised, direct imperatives
• Fewer anglicisms, adherence to Finnish pronunciation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Developments in 2006
• The use of personal and dialogic expressions varies in German and Finnish presentations depending on the date of publication. All the varieties that both languages offer are used to change style when the websites are updated.
• At the German websites, verbal abundance is reduced at the expense of the structure: navigation is much more complex now.
• Spelling of anglicisms is more standardized in Finnish, i. e., in written Finnish, development towards either English spelling or translation into Finnish seem to replace the adaptation of English words to the Finnish language. In both German and Finnish presentations, English words reflect the developments in IT.</td></tr>
</table>

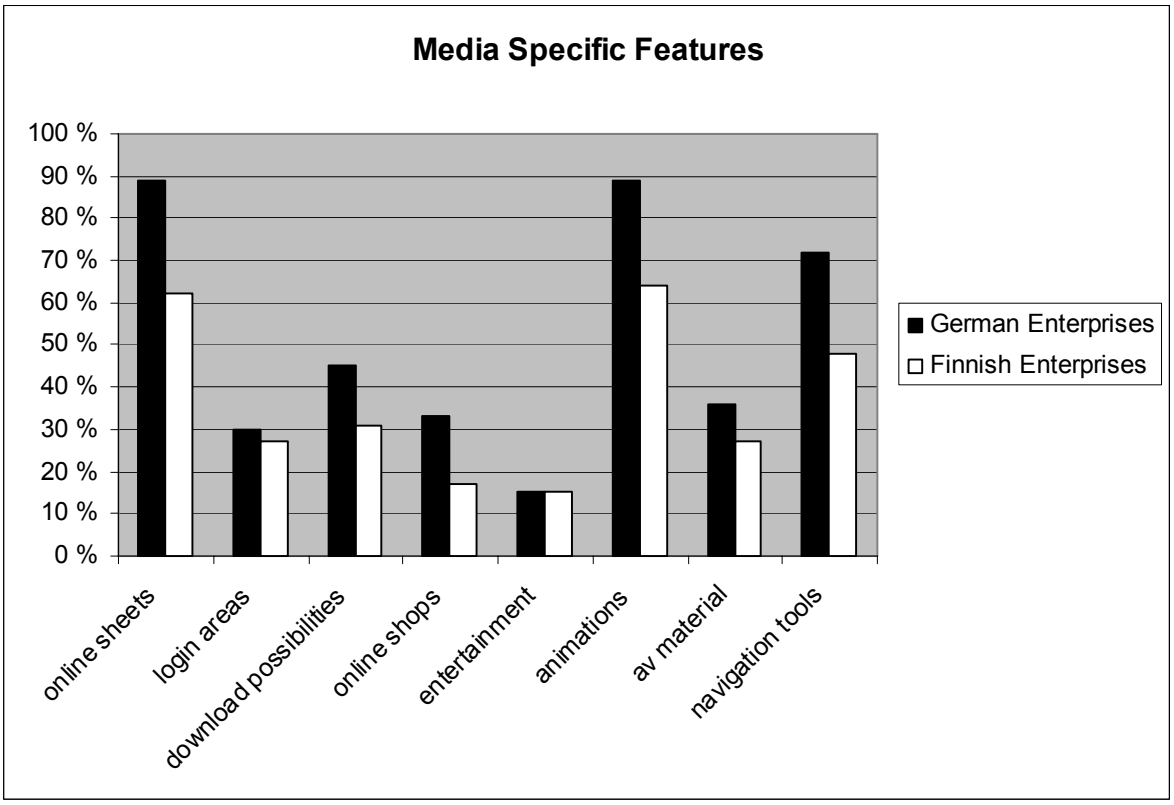
The differences found in our study partly match the results of Koskensalo’s and Vesalainen’s analyses. Many of the linguistic-stylistic features presented in Table 1 can be described as general German-Finnish differences. In addition, new media specific differences between German and Finnish websites could be found in, for example, the use of interaction potential, available space, or animated pictures and texts.

2.2.1 Media specific features

On the media specific level, German presentations included much more interactive features in 1997, such as forums for discussion, games or online-shopping opportunities. This, however, seems to be changing, as our spot check in 2002 already indicated. In 2006, also Finnish websites

offered various possibilities for online feedback or questions to the enterprise, for shopping or booking a trip online and so on. Still, also in 2006, Finnish enterprises used fewer interactive and multimedia components as well as tools for navigation support than German enterprises (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Comparison of media specific features used by German and Finnish enterprises in 2006



Compared to 1997, the amount of multimedia material (animations and audio-visual material) and the use of feedback sheets have increased most noticeably. This, of course, was expected because of the rapid developments in ICT. Forums for discussion and guest books, on the other hand, seemed to provide a fascination lost. They were found only in nine percent of the German and two percent of the Finnish websites (not mentioned in Figure 1). One reason might be their susceptibility to spam, especially when not password-protected. Ads for poker, bingo, Viagra and Prozac were found en masse in a Finnish travel agency's guestbook, for example.

Animations were used most frequently by both German (89 %) and Finnish (64 %) businesses, followed by online sheets (89 % : 62 %), mostly for giving feedback or for applying for a job. Also navigation tools, i. e., search engines and sitemaps, were used fairly often (72 % : 48 %). Audio-visual material was found in one third of the German and one fourth of the Finnish websites. Entertaining components, such as contests, games, polls and e-cards, were used to the same extent on both German and Finnish websites (15 %). It was interesting that only the Finnish enterprises in the corpus used polls. In addition, calendars and clocks were found only on the Finnish sites (10 %, not mentioned in Figure 1). Almost one third of both German and Finnish businesses used clubs, extranet, intranet and other login areas as ties to bind customers or

partners, or for internal communication. Download possibilities were offered by 45 % of the German and 31 % of the Finnish enterprises. Especially business and product information was offered quite often in the form of downloadable pdf-files (statistics, research and marketing information, brochures, instructions or recipes). Sometimes also multimedia material, such as pictures, PowerPoint presentations, video films or voice files, could be downloaded. In general, more informative than entertaining material was offered for downloads free of charge. Sometimes registering was a prerequisite to download the material.

One third of the German and only 17 % of the Finnish enterprises offered online shopping opportunities. On Finnish websites, often only a list of *retailers* („*Jälleenmyyjät*“) was given, as the example from the Finnish *Nokia* website shows (see Figure 2, picture on the right). In comparison, users of the German *Nokia* website were directed to *enter the online shop* instead (“*Ab in den Shop* >>”, see Figure 2, picture on the left).

Figure 2. Online shop versus retailer list at the German and Finnish *Nokia* websites in 2006

2.2.2 Textual features and layout

On the textual level, not all Finnish enterprises in 1997 had presentations in the national languages, Finnish and Swedish, but 14 of the 58 businesses presented themselves only in English whereas all German businesses had presentations in German. In 2006, only one of the 42 Finnish enterprises had pages in English only (*Woodworld*). In addition, the above mentioned *LappPineHomes* from 1997 still had a page at http://www.lapp-pine.com with an English slogan (*“Investment in your quality of life”*) and the following information in English, French and German: *“You can now find us at: *Ikihirsi, *Haavikko”*. Just like most of the other Finnish enterprises in our corpus, both *Ikihirsi* and *Haavikko* have now presentations also in Finnish.

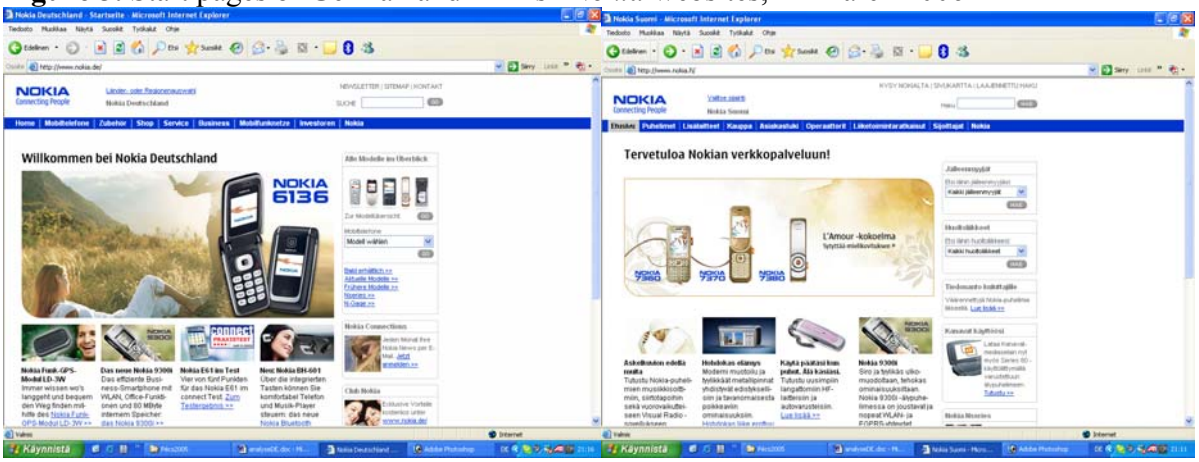
In 1997, Finnish websites appeared to be more reserved because of fewer colours which did not stand out. In 2006, no significant difference could be found. Both German and Finnish enterprises preferred (light) blue colours on a white background. Stronger and darker colours (such as orange, black, red and others) were used by only a few enterprises of both groups. Also, bigger or smaller pictures were used to the same extend.

The pictures used at *Nokia* websites, for example, clearly indicate that websites are designed with culture specific viewing habits and traditions in mind. Just as in the pictures of the “Shop”/”Kauppa” pages in Figure 1 and in our case study in May 2002 (see Ylönen 2003) the same difference can also be found on recent start pages (see Figure 3): on the German pages,

people enjoying personal mobile phones were shown; on the Finnish pages, the pictures focussed on the products only.

The comparison with other *Nokia* websites strongly indicates that culture bound differences are taken into account in designing websites. On the Chinese website from May 2002, for example, three series of pictures with mass events were shown in succession: an open-plan office, a popular event, and a car park. These three scenes were first shown in an overview after which the camera zoomed in an empty space: an empty chair in the open-plan office, an empty seat in the popular event, and a parking space. The texts that then appeared to fill these empty spaces emphasised the idea of connecting collectiveness and mobility, meaning: you can participate without being present (the screenshots are published in Ylönen 2003:228 and 230).

Figure 3. Start pages of German and Finnish *Nokia* websites, 21 March 2006



A culture specific design was found on the Chinese *Nokia* start page also in 2006 (see Figure 4). Again, three pictures alternated: dancing people, a disc jockey, and the silhouette of a mirror-flipped man above the symbolic Tian An Men building in Peking. The text on the first picture is *"Wild dancing makes the e-sound explode."*, on the second picture *"The famous DJ Jamaster A introduces the coolest music trends"* and on the third picture *"There is also the rhapsody 'Tian An Men' to download free of charge."*. Hence, this time *Nokia* products are introduced as guarantors for combining modern and traditional life styles.[4]

Figure 4. Start page of the Chinese *Nokia* website, 21 March 2006

[4] I would like to thank Xu Li from Chongqing/Sichuan and Ding Yingchun from Bochum very much for translating the Chinese texts.

Nokia updates its websites frequently and homepages may soon look very different. However, one may assume that also future websites will be designed with culture specific viewing habits and traditions in mind.

Another development in the layout of enterprise websites concerns the arrangement of texts on the screen: in 2006, especially on the start pages, more short news (ended in the link "*read more*") were given, often in the side columns but also in the middle column. These news were sometimes news releases about the company to be used by journalists or investors, sometimes news about products or services for customers or business partners. This type of structuring screens and information was not common in 1997. In general, more text, pictures and multimedia elements can be found nowadays on the web pages than nine years ago, and the font size is often smaller. One reason for this may be the development towards bigger screens and screen solutions that enable more material to be fitted on one screen. Still, some enterprises, mostly small and middle sized from media branches, seem to value plainer designs with emphasis on demonstrating their artistic skills (for example the German *Cyperfection* and the Finnish *Webway* enterprises).

In 1997, German websites, in general, had a more complex structure with more detailed information. However, a tendency towards a more condensed structure can be noticed especially at the websites of bigger German enterprises. As an example, the structures of company presentations of two big telecommunication enterprises, *Deutsche Telecom* in Germany and *Sonera/TeliaSonera* in Finland, in 2002, 2003 and 2006 are shown in Tables 2 – 4. The differences were considerable in 2002: under the main menu „*The enterprise*", *Deutsche Telecom* had 19 submenus, compared to seven at „*Sonera in short*", and there were also a greater number of submenus of the submenus as shown in the „*environment*" example (Table 2). In 2003, the relationship was 10 to six, after *Sonera's* merger with another telecommunicator *Telia* and adoption of the name *TeliaSonera* as of September first (Table 3), and only eight to six in April 2006 (Table 4).

Table 2. Structure of enterprise presentations: *Deutsche Telecom* and *Sonera* , May 2002

***Deutsche Telecom*: Das Unternehmen (*The enterprise*)**	***Sonera*: Sonera lyhyesti (*Sonera in short*)**
➢ TIMES-Märkte (*TIMES markets*) ➢ 4-Säulen-Strategie (*4 pillar strategy*) ➢ Internationalisierung (*internationalisation*) ➢ Konzern-Zahlen (*group in figures*) ➢ Management ➢ Weltweit (*worldwide*) ➢ T-Mobile Day ➢ CeBIT 2002 ➢ IPK 2002 ➢ Voice Stream „Special" ➢ Hauptversammlung 2002 (*general meeting 2002*) ➢ Pressemitteilungen (*press releases*) ➢ Personalbericht (*staff report*) ➢ Umwelt/Nachhaltigkeit (*sustainable development/environment*) ➢ Wirtschaft (*economy*) ➢ Umwelt (*environment*)	➢ VISIO (*vision*) ➢ LIIKETOIMINTA (*business activity*) ➢ HALLINTO JA ORGANISAATIO (*administration and organisation*) ➢ HISTORIA (*history*) ➢ TUTKIMUS JA TUOTEKEHITYS (*research and product development*) ➢ YMPÄRISTÖ JA YHTEISKUNNALLINEN VASTUU (*environment and community involvement*) • YMPÄRISTÖJOHTAMINEN (*environmental management*) • YMPÄRISTÖASIOIDEN HALLINTA (*environmental focus areas*) • TELEVIESTINTÄ JA EKOTEHOKKUUS (*telecommunication and ecoefficiency*) • OTA YHTEYTTÄ (*contact us*) ➢ OTA YHTEYTTÄ (*contact us*)

• Politik und Organisation (*politics and organisation*) • Umweltschutz bis heute (*environmental protection to date*) • Energie und Emissionen (*energy and emissions*) • Abfall (*waste*) • Rücknahme und Recycling (*taking back and recycling*) • Fuhrpark und Verkehr (*car pool and traffic*) • Elektromagnetische Felder (*electromagnetic fields*) • Umweltprogramm (*environmental programme*) ➢ Soziales (*social issues*) ➢ Euro ➢ T-Aktie/Investor Relations (*T-share/*)	

Table 3. Structure of enterprise presentations: *Deutsche Telecom* and *TeliaSonera*, August 2003

***Deutsche Telecom*: Konzern**	***TeliaSonera*: About TeliaSonera**
➢ Konzernprofil (*group profile*) ➢ Strategie und Vision (*strategy and vision*) ➢ Weltweit (*worldwide*) ➢ Aufsichtsrat (*supervisory board*) ➢ Vorstand (*management*) ➢ Mitarbeiter (*employees*) ➢ Sponsoring (*sponsoring*) ➢ Chancengleichheit (*equal opportunities*) ➢ Nachhaltigkeit/Umwelt (*sustainable development/environment*) ➢ Initiativen (*initiatives*)	➢ Konsernin strategia (*Group Strategy*) ➢ Liiketoiminta (*Business & Operations*) ➢ Vastuunjako (*Division of responsibilities*) ➢ Hallinto (*Governance*) ➢ Yhteiskuntavastuu (*CSR = Corporate Social Responsibility*) ➢ Legal Notice

Table 4. Structure of enterprise presentations: *Deutsche Telecom* and *TeliaSonera*, April 2006

***Deutsche Telecom*: Konzern**	***TeliaSonera*: About TeliaSonera**
➢ Konzernprofil (G*roup Profile*) ➢ Weltweit (W*orldwide*) ➢ Aufsichtsrat (S*upervisory Board*) ➢ Vorstand (M*anagement*) ➢ Mitarbeiter (*Employees*) ➢ Chancengleichheit (*Equal Opportunities*) ➢ Engagement (*Engagement*) ➢ Innovation (*Innovation*)	➢ Visio, tavoitteet, strategia (*Vision, Goals, Strategy*) ➢ Liiketoiminta (*Business & Operations*) ➢ Vastuunjako (*Division of responsibilities*) ➢ Hallinto (*Corporate Governance*) ➢ Yhteiskuntavastuu (*CSR = Corporate Social Responsibility*) ➢ Sponsorointi (*Sponsoring*)

In 2006, there was no difference between bigger German and Finnish enterprises in the complexity of their sites in general. Both used about the same number of links in the main menu, sub menus, and many news-like short texts with links to "the whole story", especially on the start pages. However, there was a difference between German and Finnish small and middle sized enterprises in this respect. More Finnish enterprises had plain sites with only a few links in the main menu and few or no sub menus. Two of these (*Graficscreen* and *Perbi OY*) had only one page with no links at all. Also the texts themselves were, on Finnish websites, often shorter and contained only central information in a brief form.

2.2.3 Linguistic-stylistic features

On the linguistic-stylistic level, culture bound differences were found to be basically related to the different concepts of politeness. Most obvious was the difference in addressing the visitor. Differences in self reference and the use of dialogical expressions as well as in explicitness were found also.

2.2.3.1 Addressing the visitor

The way of addressing a potential client is an important rhetorical means in advertising language and target group specific addressing requires knowledge about culture specific habits. Different habits of addressing are the most obvious culture bound linguistic features in this study. In German target ads, the formal you (*Sie*) is usually used. Only on pages designed for children or youngsters, the informal you (*Du*) may appear. In Finnish target ads, the informal you (*sinä*) is prefered, and the formal "Te" extremely rarely. Examples of mixing forms of address could be found both in 1997 and 2006 on Finnish websites (Example 1a and 1b). However, examples of this kind are an exception and may be the result of less carefully designed "home made" pages.

> (1a) Kun **valitset** Atriconin, valitset yhteistyökumppanin, johon **voit** luottaa sataprosenttisesti. Haluamme palvella **Teitä** kaikissa esityslaitteisiin ja multimediatuotantoon liittyvissä hankkeissa. (Atricon, 1997)
> *When **you (sinä)** choose Atricon, you choose a partner whom you can rely on 100 percent. We would like to be of service to **you** (te) in all projects concerning demonstration equipment and multimedia production.*

> (1b) Lentoreitistä ja -yhtiöstä riippuen **voit** yhdistää matkaasi jonkin upean suurkaupungin ja rantalomakohteen, joko Euroopassa tai kaukana maailmalla... Toivottavasti näistä kertomuksista on apua oman **matkanne** ideoinnissa. (Helin matkat, 2006: http://www.helinmatkat.fi. Sentences found on different pages: 1. Yhdistelmiä/*Combined city-beach holidays*, 2. Matkakertomuksia/*Travel accounts*)
> *Depending on the route and the airline, **you** (sinä) can combine **your** trip with a stay in some gorgeous city or a beach resort, in Europe or far away… We hope that these travel reports will help **you** (te) in planning **your** trip.*

Sometimes addressing potential clients is entirely avoided (Example 2).

> (2) Tarjoamme **asiakkaillemme** kattavat jälkimarkkinapalvelut Larox- ratkaisun koko elinkaaren ajaksi. (Larox 2006: http://www.larox.com/aboutus/index.php?&lang=fi)
> *We offer **our customers** comprehensive post-market services for the entire life-span of the Larox solution.*

On German pages, more distanced addressing also appears but less often than on Finnish websites.

2.2.3.2 Self reference and dialogical expressions

In 1997, language appeared to be more dialogical on German sites that often used we–you–constructions, whereas Finnish enterprises preferred a more anonymous way of self reference (like „*Nokia*", „the enterprise", …). Our spot checks in 2002 confirmed this result, as shown in the examples of two chocolate enterprises (*Ritter* and *Fazer*, Examples 3 and 4).

> (3) **Wir**, die Alfred Ritter GmbH & Co. KG, sind ein unabhängiges Familienunternehmen (...), **Unsere** Erfolgsfaktoren sind das Konzept der 'anderen Schokolade' (...) (http://www.ritter-sport.de/sites/ueberuns/210_leitbild.htm, Mai 2002)

***We**, the die Alfred Ritter GmbH & Co. KG, are a family-owned private limited company […], The reasons for **our** success are the concept of 'the other chocolate' […]*

(4) **Fazer** on perheyritys (…),**Fazer-konsernin** tavoitteena on (…)
(http://www.fazer.fi/flash_frameset_index_konserni.html, May 2002)
***Fazer** is a family-owned company[…], The aim of **the Fazer group** is […]*

It was interesting, however, that also the German *Rittersport* company refers in June 2005 to itself with the unpersonal „das Unternehmen/*the enterprise*" in the first sentence of „Über uns" (= „*About us*") and the Finnish *Fazer* company uses cautiously the „we"-form in describing their philosophy (see Examples 5 and 6).

(5) Das Leitbild dient dem Ziel, zwischen Gesellschaftern, Beirat, Geschäftsführung und allen Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern ein Fundament des Vertrauens zu schaffen, eine über das Tagesziel hinausgehende verbindliche Zielorientierung zu gewährleisten und ein konzentriertes Handeln im langfristigen Interesse **des Unternehmens** sicherzustellen.
(http://www.rittersport.de/sites/ueberuns/210_leitbild.htm, 21. 6. 2005)
*The aim is to build a foundation of confidence between share holders, the advisory council, the management and all employees, to guarantee a binding goal orientation that goes beyond the goal of the day, and to assure concerted action in the long term interest of **the enterprise.***

(6) **Fazer-konsernin** perinteenä on mielihyvän tuottaminen. **Tarjoamme** aterioita, leipomotuotteita ja makeisia, jotka tuottavat asiakkaille**mme** miellyttäviä kokemuksia makuelämyksinä, tuoreutena, terveellisyytenä ja hyvänä palveluna.
(http://www.fazergroup.com/templates/Fazer_Information.aspx?id=1732&epslanguage=FI, 21. 6. 2005)
*The tradition of the Fazer group is to provide pleasure. **We** offer meals, bakery products and sweets that give **our** customers pleasurable experiences in the form of flavour, freshness, wholesomeness and good service.*

To investigate whether this could be interpreted as a result of cultural hybridisation due to transcultural communication on the internet, we reanalysed all the websites of the corpus in 1997 again in 2006. Dialogic expressions still seemed to be somewhat more frequent at German websites, although both dialogic and more distanced "objective" language was used by both German and Finnish enterprises. Addressing the client by welcome wishes was used by 30 % of the German and only 7 % of the Finnish enterprises, for example. At Finnish websites, distanced introductive texts were more frequent (see Examples 7 and 8).

(7) **Hallo und Willkommen** bei der GOT Intermedia Agency.
Wir sind die Agentur für Response Centered Solutions in New Media. (http://www.got.de, 28. 3. 2006)
Am besten lernen **Sie uns** durch **unsere** Arbeit kennen: ...
***Hello and welcome** to the GOT Intermedia Agency.*
***We** are the agency for Response Centered Solutions in New Media. …*
***You** will get to know **us** best through **our** work: …*

(8) Helpommin hyötyä Internetistä
Absolutions luo ratkaisuja, jotka tekevät **organisaatiolle** helpommaksi hyödyntää Internetiä liiketoiminnassaan. (http://www.absolutions.fi, 28. 3. 2006)
More Benefit from the Internet
***Absolutions** creates solutions that make it easier for **an organization** to benefit from the Internet.*

As a result of our analyses, cultural differences in the frequency of personal and dialogic expressions were still found, even though German and Finnish enterprises may utilise the varieties that both languages offer and change their style when updating their websites.

2.2.3.3 Maximizing and minimising of speech

In 1997, an abundance of words seemed to be a characteristic feature for the German style whereas Finns tended to be rather reserved. This was found to be the case also in contrastive analysis of the Finnish and German language in general (Muikku-Werner 1992:86). On German contact pages, for example, visitors were often kindly asked to fill in the feedback form in a certain way. In comparison, Finnish pages only tended to provide the form or a very short text – after all, the text genre indicates clearly what one *can* do here (see Examples 9 and 10 of the German and Finnish *Siemens* feedback sheets in 2002).

(9) ***SIEMENS*, German feedback sheet in 2002**

Wie können wir Ihnen helfen? (*How Can We Help You?*)
Wir möchten Ihre Frage, Ihren Kommentar oder Ihre Anregung so schnell und kompetent wie möglich beantworten. Deshalb bitten wir Sie, aus den unten angebotenen Themenmenüs den Unterpunkt auszuwählen, auf den sich Ihre Nachricht bezieht.
Wählen Sie aus organisatorischen Gründen bitte nur einen Unterpunkt pro Mail aus, da wir Ihre Anfrage sonst nicht bearbeiten können!
Wichtig: Bitte vergessen Sie nicht, Name, Adresse und Telefonnummer anzugeben. Vielen Dank!
(*We would like to answer your questions, comments and suggestions as quickly and competently as possible. Please choose the subject of your message from the following menus.*
For organizational reasons, please select only one subject for each mail because otherwise we will not be able to answer your request!
Important: *Please make sure you fill in your name, address, and telephone number. Thank you very much!*)

Formular: (*Form*)

Über Siemens --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus --- (*Please select a subject*)
(***About Siemens***) Fragen zu Siemens (*Questions about Siemens*)
Geschäftsbericht bestellen (*Order the annual report*)
Informationen für Investoren (*Information for shareholders and investors*)
Umweltschutz (*Environmental protection*)
Information und Kommunikation --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Industrie --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Energie --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Verkehr(*Transportation*) --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Medizin --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Licht (*Lighting*) --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Hausgeräte (*Domestic Appliances*) --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Jobs und Karriere (*Jobs and Careers*) --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Presse (*Press*) --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Siemens Financial Services --- Bitte wählen Sie einen Unterpunkt aus ---
Telefone und ISDN Produkte mehr dazu >> (Link zu engl. Seite)
(*more >> link to the English page)*
Für Fragen oder Kommentare zur WWW-Anwendung wenden Sie sich bitte an den
Webmaster von www.siemens.de

(*For questions and comments about the www application please contact the*

***webmaster of www.siemens.de*)**

Bitte teilen Sie uns Name und Adresse mit
(*Please tell us your name and address*)
Formular: **Vorname, Nachname, Firma, Straße, Postleitzahl, Ort, Staat, Land, Telefon, Fax, E-Mail**, Ihre Nachricht

(*Form: first* ***name, last name, company, street, postal code, city/town, state, country, telephone, fax, e-mail****, your message*)

Nachricht senden (*send message*) Formular löschen (*clear form*)

(10) ***SIEMENS*, Finnish feedback sheet in 2002**

Palautesivu (*Feedback page*)
Päivämäärä (*Date, appears automatically*)
Palautteesi aihe (*Topic of your feedback*) <valitse tästä> (*choose here*)
Matkapuhelimet ja kotipuhelimet […] (*mobile phones and telephones*)
Kodinkoneet […] (*Domestic Appliances*)
Fujitsu-Siemens tietokoneet […] (*Fujitsu-Siemens Computers*)
Osoitteen muutos […] (*change of address*)
Rekrytointi- ja henkilöstöasiat (*jobs and careers*)
Teollisuuden tuotteet […] *(industrial products*)
…
Muu […] (*something else*)
Otsikko (*heading*)
Viesti (*message*)
Nimi, Yritys, Sähköposti, Puhelinnumero, Lähiosoite, Postinumero, Postitoimipaikka (*name, company, e-mail, telephone, street, postal code, city/town*)
Muista, että tarvitsemme ainakin nimesi ja sähköpostiosoitteesi jos haluat että vastaamme palautteeseesi. (*Remember that we will need at least your name and your e-mail address if you want us to answer your feedback.*)
Lähetä (*Send message*)

The comparison shows the following: first, the German page started with the question „*How can we help you?*“, the Finnish page had only the heading „*Feedback sheet*“. Second, on the German page a text followed in which the visitor was kindly asked to choose only one topic and this request was explained. In addition, the visitor was twice reminded of filling in the contact information (before and after the choice of topics), and, to make it sure, the form was not sent unless all the fields with an asterisk were filled in. The text ended with the polite phrase „*Vielen Dank! Thank you very much!*“. The Finnish page contained only one sentence at the end of the form, quietly reminding the user to fill in his or her name and e-mail address if an answer from the enterprise was wished. Third, the German form had 12 fields with 56 topics in total from which the user was supposed to choose only one. In contrast, the Finnish form had only one field for choosing one topic out of 15.

In 2003, these pages looked very similar, even though the German form had been slightly revised: The redundant text under the topic fields had disappeared and the fields had been placed into one general and two target group specific categories (B2C and B2B).

In 2006, the contact pages of the German *Siemens* website are further improved. The visitor is first directed to choose a topic from three main categories: ***Consumer**, Business* and *Questions About Siemens* (first contact page). In the case a user had a question about his/her mobile phone, he/she has to navigate through six pages to get to the contact sheet. On the consumer menu, for example, the user may choose between the six areas: *Fujitsu Siemens Computers, Siemens Communications, Siemens Home Appliances, Siemens Audiology Group, Siemens Electrical Installation and VDO Dayton*. Here, clicking on the ***Mobile Phones/Telephones, ISDN Products* in the *Siemens Communications*** menu opens another contact page in a new window with a list consisting of four main categories: *Consumer, Enterprise, Carrier, Other contacts* (second contact page). Clicking on ***Mobile Phones* in the *Consumer*** menu leads to another portal in English (third contact page). Here, you have to choose the language (Germany/german [sic]) from a drop down menu to get to the German version of this page with four categories: *Mobile Phones, Mobile Pones customer care, Gigaset, Gigaset customer care* (fourth contact page). Now, clicking ***Mobile Phones customer care* in the *Consumer*** category opens the Customer Service *Service Finder* page with five submenus: *S.O.A. – Services over Air, Service Downloads, FAQ & Problem Solving, Contact & Hotlines, Mobile Settings* (fifth contact page). Alternatively, to contact *Siemens* staff to ask a question, the visitor can try to look for the answer him- or herself by interacting with the computer, using the guided tour through the pages or downloading the manuals at this *Service Finder* page. Clicking *Contact & Hotlines* leads to the feedback sheet (with only two drop down menus) and *Hotline* numbers (sixth contact page). On this feedback sheet in 2006, only one sentence is given on top: *Bitte füllen Sie einfach unser Kontakt-Formular aus. Wir kümmern uns dann so schnell wie möglich um Ihr Anliegen.* (*Please just fill in our contact sheet. We will then attend to your concern as soon as possible.*) Verbal abundance is, at the German *Siemens* contact pages, reduced at the expense of structure: navigation is much more complex now and requires more time and skills from the user. In contrast, the Finnish contact page looks very much the same as before.

2.2.3.3 Anglicisms

Culture bound differences were also found in the use of anglicisms. In general, anglicisms were frequently used on both German and Finnish websites. They appeared on all kinds of pages, but mainly on product and service related pages. In advertising language, anglicisms seem to aim at presenting a modern and open-minded image, as Example 11 and 12 show.

> (11) Wir sind die Agentur für **Response Centered Solutions in New Media**. [...] Mit einem **Animatic**, **Mood** oder **Dummy** kann die angefragte Agentur dem Kunden schon im **Pitch** das **Look and Feel** der Idee präsentieren. (http://www.got.de, 28. 3. 2006)

The main difference is that in German foreign words, and especially anglicisms, are used more often and mostly in their original form (and pronunciation), as you can see in Example 12. In Finnish, the attempt to translate foreign words is much more noticeable but lately English words have been increasingly borrowed directly – indeed, often adapted to the Finnish language in spelling, inflection and pronunciation, as shown in Example 13.

> (12) Smartphone mit Touchscreen, Personal information management (PIM), Car Kit Upgrade, Streaming Media, Crossmedia, Permission Marketing, Rankingservice, Virtual Workspace Module, Compositing, Viral Marketing, Rehosting, Legacy-System, just-in-time Fertigung, Supply Chain Management, IT-Backlog … (2006)

(13) digitaalinen zoomi, megapikselikamera, surffailua, communicatorisi (your communicator), operaattorit, Deittaile Sensorilla!, mobiiliprofiili, videoitu koreografia- treeniä, operaattori, klubilainen, klubiposti, … (2006)

Compared to 1997, the spelling of English words did not vary that much anymore at Finnish websites but was more standardized in 2006. In 1997, for example, *webbi, weppi, veppi, netti, and klubi* were found whereas in 2006 only *www*, *web and club* were used or the loans were transated into Finnish (*palvelin* for *server*, *verkko* for *net* or *web*). Thus, in written Finnish, a development towards either an English spelling or translation into Finnish seem to replace the adaptation of English words to the Finnish language, whereas in spoken language anglicisms are still often adapted to Finnish in inflection and pronunciation. Finally, English words mirror the developments in IT. Mobile phone vocabulary, such as *chatti, tsätti*, *animoiduilla näytönsäästäjillä* and *mobiilipeliä* yielded to *digitaalinen zoomi* or *videoitu koreografia- treeniä* in the age of audiovisual mobile phone applications. Corresponding developments naturally concern German websites as well.

Differences in the use of foreign words in German and Finnish are not restricted to language for advertising on the web but can be found in general language use. However, the use of anglicisms seems to be essentially promoted by the new media.

4. Summary and implications for translation studies

New information and communication technologies have an essential role in today's business life, and, not least, in promoting the process of globalization. To meet the needs of target groups in other countries, not only language skills are required but also knowledge about culture specific communication styles. In order to discover the culture specific differences in Finnish and German business communication on the web, a study of Finnish and German enterprise websites was carried out in 1997 and used as the basis for the Webvertising programme on CD-ROM with links to the web. In 2006, the same corpus was re-analysed to find out whether globalization and transcultural communication on the internet had led to cultural hybridisation and the elimination of cultural differences in enterprise presentations and advertising on the web. The corpus of 1997 consisted of 96 enterprise websites. Nine years later, only 75 of these enterprises could be found (22 businesses had ceased to exist or merged with another, and one had split into two; the domain name of 27 enterprises had changed). The study was supplemented by spot checks in 2002, 2003 and 2005. We analysed the websites on three different levels: media specific, textual, and linguistic-stylistic. The number of web pages was not counted in this contrastive and diachronic study. Instead, the pages were analysed qualitatively. Only media specific features were analysed statistically in 2006.

From the **diachronic** perspective, developments towards more multimodal presentations (voice and moving pictures) on the one hand, and fewer guest books and forums, on the other, were found in general at the media specific level. Recent web presentations also included more tools for navigation support. The layout had changed towards shorter news items on both German and Finnish websites. At the linguistic-stylistic level, the use of English words reflected the developments of IT in general.

On German websites, a tendency towards fewer submenus and colours that did not stand out was found. In this respect, the difference between German and Finnish presentations had all but

disappeared. Linguistic-stylistically, verbal abundance was reduced at the expense of the structure.

All Finnish enterprises except for one had now presentations also in Finnish whereas in 1997, 24 % of the websites were in English only. English spellings or translating anglicisms into Finnish seemed to have replaced the adaptation of English in written Finnish.

Although developments that might be interpreted as results of hybridisation can be detected, our study clearly indicates **cultural** differences as well. Our spot check in 2005 indicated hybridisation in terms of dialogic expressions: the same German company that had made a frequent use of them in 2002 used a more distanced style in 2005. In contrast, the same Finnish company that had used distanced expressions in 2002 made use of personal and dialogic ones in 2005. However, our extended analysis of the corpus in 2006 did not confirm this hypothesis. German websites still prevailed against Finnish ones in terms of personal and dialogic expressions.

The results of our study imply that culture specific communication styles are taken into account when designing websites for different target groups in different countries, as shown in the analysis of pictures used on *Nokia* websites, for example. On the linguistic-stylistic level, differences between German and Finnish website presentations were found to be basically related to different concepts of politeness (addressing the visitor, self reference and use of dialogical expressions, maximizing or minimizing of speech). These findings have been received with great interest and were also applied to translation studies, for example, at the University of Joensuu in Savonlinna, Finland. In translating exercises into German, for example, students were encouraged to keep culture specific communication styles in mind and to use more personal and dialogic expressions, for example.

Webvertising is a comparatively young genre that is developing very quickly as a result of the fast technological developments. On the one hand, the process of globalization seems to further transcultural developments to some extend, that is, communicative concepts are moving *through* and *across* cultural systems. On the other hand, globalization also presupposes website localization. Tailor-made, multilingual websites for specific target groups in different countries support the ability of an enterprise to compete on the international market, and website localization is a growing employment area for translators. In our study, differences were found on all levels: the media specific, textual, and linguistic-stylistic level of web presentations. Thus, not only linguistic and cultural competence is needed but future translators will also need competence in technical know-how to support the efficient and successful localization of corporate websites.

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Appendix 1. List of German websites analysed in 2006

Name (Name in 1997)	Address	Branch
1. Lastminute.de (5 vor 12)	www.lastminute.de	Tourism
2. Focus-Reisen (ADAC Reisen)	focus.msn.de/reisen	Tourism
3. AGFA	www.agfa.com/germany	Analog and digital imaging & IT
4. Bach & Partner	www.bach-partner.com	Media
5. BASF	corporate.basf.com/de	Chemistry
6. Bayer	www.bayer.de	Multi-branch
7. BMW	www.bmw.de	Car manufacturer
8. Braun	www.braun.de	Small electric appliances
9. cbus	www.cbus.de	Media (advertising & design)
10. CNT	www.cnt.net	Telecommunications
11. CORNET	www.cornet.de	Technology & network management solutions
12. Cyperfection	www.cyperfection.de	Media
13. DaimlerChrysler (Daimler-Benz)	www.daimlerchrysler.com	Car manufacturer
14. Deutsche Telekom	www.telekom.de	Telecommunications
15. Interoute Deutschland GmbH (DPN, Deutsches Provider Network)	www.vianetworks.de	Telecommunications
16. Dr. Neuhaus	www.neuhaus.de	Telecommunications
17. ExpertTeach GmbH	www.experteach.de	Telecommunications
18. i:FAO (FAO Travel GmbH)	www.ifao.net	IT (Technology for the booking and management of business travel)
19. GOT Intermedia Agency	www.got.de	Media
20. Hapimag	www.hapimag.de	Tourism
21. Henkel	www.henkel.de	Chemistry
22. Karstadt Reisen (Karstadt Reisebüro)	www.karstadt.de	Tourism
23. KOMSA	www.komsa.de	Telecommunications
24. Lufthansa	www.lufthansa.de	Transportation
25. Smart e*liance (Medialab)	www.smart-elliance.de	IT
26. Raiffeisen Reisen	www.raiffeisen-reisen.de	Tourism
27. Reisebüro FTS	www.fts.de	Tourism
28. Siemens	www.siemens.de	Electrical engineering and electronics
29. Studiosus Reisen	www.studiosus.de	Tourism
30. Telemedia	www.telemedia.de	Media
31. TELES AG	www.teles.de	Telecommunications
32. VirtualArt	www.virtualart.de	IT
33. Volkswagen	www.volkswagen.de	Car manufacturer

Appendix 2. List of Finnish websites analysed in 2006

Name	Address	Branch (specific area)
1. Absolutions	www.absolutions.fi	Media
2. Ahlström	www.ahlstrom.fi	Metal
3. Asplan Oy	www.asplan.fi	Building technology (renovation)
4. Oy Atricon Ab	www.atricon.fi	Media
5. Benefon	www.benefon.fi	Telematics
6. Carectum Oy	www.carectum.com	Road maintenance service and machines
7. Creacut	www.creacut.fi	Media

8. dm multimedia	www.dmm.fi	Media
9. E. Helaakoski Oy	www.helaakoski.fi	Services (crane leasing)
10. Elbit	www.elbit.fi	IT (software solutions)
11. Fazergroup (Fazer)	www.fazergroup.com	Food industry
12. Finnish Tourist Board	www.mek.fi	Tourism
13. Finnair	www.finnair.fi	Transportation
14. Finnsov Tours	www.finnsov.fi	Tourism
15. Grafiscreen Oy	www.grafiscreen.fi	Media
16. Helin Matkat	www.helinmatkat.fi	Tourism
17. Helprint Oy	www.heltel.fi	Telecommunications
18. Hypermedia Oy	www.hypermedia.fi	Media
19. Elisa (Kestel)	www.elisa.fi	Telecommunications
20. Translatum (Käännöspalvelut Kuosmanen)	www.translatum.fi	Services
LappPine > 21. Haavikko 22.Ikihirsi	www.lapp-pine.com www.haavikko.com www.ikihirsi.fi	Building trade (wooden houses)
23. Larox	www.larox.fi > www.larox.com/aboutus/index.php?&lang=fi (in Finnish)	Metal
24. MatkaKaleva	www.matkakaleva.fi	Tourism
25. Nokia	www.nokia.fi	Electronics
26. Open Forms Oy	www.forms.fi	IT
27. Perbi	www.perbi.fi	Services
28. Kymp, Kymen puhelin Oy (Planet Media Oy)	www.kymp.net	Telecommunications
29. Polar Electro Oy	www.polar.fi > www.polar.fi/polar/channels/fin/index.html (local FI site)	Electronics (sports instruments and heart rate monitoring)
30. Prihateam Networks	www.prihateam.fi	IT
31. Private Eye	www.private-eye.fi > www.privatenotes.fi (in Finnish)	IT (web design)
32. H. Roselli Ky	www.roselli.fi	Finnish Knives
33. Silja Line	www.silja.fi	Transportation
34. Suomen Matkatoimisto	www.smt.fi	Tourism
35. Oy Personal United Brains Ltd (Takapiru)	www.takapiru.fi	ICT
36. TeliaSonera (Telia)	www.teliasonera.fi	Telecommunications
37. TJGROUP (Tieto-konserni)	www.tjgroup.fi	IT
38. Valio	www.valio.fi	Food industry
39. Metsopaper (Valmet)	www.metsopaper.com > www.metso.com/corporation/home_fin.nsf/fr?readform (in Finnish)	Paper industry
40. Webway Finland	www.webway.fi	Media
41. Visiolink Oy	www.visiolink.fi	ICT
42. Woodworld MCC	www.woodworld.fi	Housing