

# THE VALUE OF COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY

from an SME perspective

Commercial Diplomacy, Export Promotion, Export Facilitation,  
Government Support, Commercial Diplomacy Value,  
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# Summary

This research examines the value-added nature of commercial diplomacy (CD) from a small-medium-enterprise (SME) perspective. Commercial diplomacy is “the activity conducted by state representatives with a diplomatic status in view of business promotion between the host and home country” (Naray, 2008). Commercial diplomacy is an increasingly more important and powerful governmental measure to support SMEs in their internationalization endeavor, by addressing information asymmetries and other market failures in today’s interconnected competitive market environment; yet little is known about the value SMEs attach to CD services. Our research addresses this gap in existing literature by identifying to what extent, where to whom and under which quality conditions SMEs perceive CD as a valuable instrument. The subsequent central research question that will be elucidated on is:

*To what extent is CD perceived valuable, which factors determine the value of commercial diplomacy and which improvement points can increase the value of commercial diplomacy from an SME perspective?*

This research demonstrates that merely a third of the SMEs use and value commercial diplomacy services in view of the internationalization of their organization. Most SMEs do not use commercial diplomacy services because they find their own way abroad (67%) and/or are unaware of the existence of commercial diplomacy (40%). Interestingly, we found that 43% of the SMEs unaware of CD still believed that CD would have *potential* value for their firm. Thus a large percentage of SMEs do not make use of CD services although they recognize the potential value.

Moreover, the majority of SMEs who use CD, also believe CD is a valuable instrument which makes exporting/operating abroad easier, quicker and more effective in terms of export increase and results. SMEs use the lack of financial resources, the lack of reliable information and no existing business network as motives for valuing CD. Furthermore, SMEs most often use CD services for market information, trade-cultural information and information about rules and regulation (intelligence services). Far less SMEs use CD for the assistance at trade disputes, assistance at fairs and trade missions or, the presence of a diplomat at meetings and negotiations (relationship-based services). Additionally, we found that SMEs with almost no foreign public customers/partners attach less value to relationship-based services in comparison with intelligence services. Interestingly, however, relationships-based services are equally valued by SMEs with many foreign public customers/partners.

In this research three determinants are hypothesized to be associated with the value of CD:

1. The service quality
2. The institutional country profile
3. The client firm characteristics

## 1. The service quality

We demonstrated that the service quality, constituting of five quality dimensions, is positively associated with the value SMEs attach to CD. More specifically, this research signaled that the quality dimensions representing the knowledge and courtesy of commercial diplomats (assurance), in addition to the ability of the commercial diplomat to understand the needs of the firms and deliver individualized attention (empathy), are the most important value-adding dimensions. Furthermore, we demonstrate qualitatively, that the variance in quality between foreign posts is dependent on the business experience, the available employees and the available business network of the foreign posts

## 2. The institutional country profile

This research does not provide significant evidence that SMEs doing business in host countries with undeveloped institutions attach more value to CD than those doing business in countries with more developed institutions. We do, however, demonstrate that the group of SMEs using CD in developing countries with undeveloped institutions (70%) is larger than the group of SMEs who use CD services within developed countries with more favourable institutions (30%). Additionally, motives for the more frequent use in developing countries are (apart from a lack experience) related to unfavourable trade institutions, implying that market failures might be more of a problem in developing countries, thus increasing the rationale for SMEs to use CD in these countries.

## 3. The client firm characteristics

The third and final determinants are related to the client firm characteristics. We found that SMEs with more international experience attach less value to CD than those that have little international experience. More specifically we found that SMEs with more international experience attach less value to the assistance with trade disputes. Moreover, we found that SMEs with many foreign public partners/customers attach more value to CD than those that have no foreign public customers/ partners. SMEs with many foreign public partners/customers specifically attach more value to relationship -based services, demonstrating the importance of government to government contacts. Furthermore, the business network of an SME is not associated with the overall value of CD. We did however find that SMEs with an undeveloped business network in the host country attaches more value to partner search services than those with a developed network.

Finally, our study identified potential improvement points which increase the value of CD for SMEs. The improvement points submitted by SMEs were related to the creation of awareness of CD services, more professionalism within the foreign posts (business experience), more sector specific information and better collaboration with trade associations.

Most of the findings reinforce existing literature. However, this research did not find evidence that CD is less valued in more developed institutional environment as was expected (Busentiz, 2000, Kostecky & Naray, 2007). Nor did we find evidence that the size of the firm is associated with the overall value of CD (Hogan et al., 1991). We do, however, expand existing research by (1) identifying the types of CD services mostly used, (2) signaling the two most important service quality dimensions, and (3) by identifying several client firm characteristics which influence the value of CD (services). Nevertheless, this research suffers from low statistical power and caution is therefore necessary in making any inferences. The observed findings are therefore to be seen as an indication that requires future research.

The posed findings also have managerial implications and the 5 most important ones are summarized below:

1. Step 1 in supporting SMEs in accessing international markets is to raise awareness of CD services among SMEs.
2. From all five service quality dimensions which can contribute to an increase the value CD, the following two seem to be the most important; (1) improving the business knowledge and courtesy of commercial diplomats (assurance) and (2) improving the empathic capacity of a commercial diplomat.
3. The demand for CD in developing countries is larger than the demand for CD in developed countries. CD in developed countries is however equally valued. The allocation of CD resources to developed countries, in relation to developing countries, can therefore be less profound, but should not disappear.
4. There is no 'one size fits all' strategy on the provision of CD services. Foreign posts that are very frequently addressed by SMEs who deal with foreign public customers/partners should, in addition to offering the intelligence services, also put emphasis on delivering relationship-based services. Conversely, foreign

posts that are frequently addressed by SMEs who only deal with private parties should put more emphasis on the intelligence service of CD.

5. Increasing the value of CD by providing more sector-specific information is warranted but should be demand-driven. Important players in providing sector-specific information are trade associations. We therefore suggest that foreign posts should focus on effective private-public structures and/or the policies to increase the value of CD.

# Samenvatting

Deze studie onderzoekt in hoeverre Commerciële Diplomatie (hierna aangeduid met “CD”) van toegevoegde waarde is voor het Midden- en Kleinbedrijf (MKB). Onder Commerciële Diplomatie verstaat Naray (2008): “de activiteit uitgevoerd door staatsvertegenwoordigers met een diplomatieke status, met het oog op de bevordering van de handelsbetrekkingen tussen thuis- en gastland”. Wij zijn uitgegaan van deze definitie. CD is voor het internationaliseringstreven van het MKB –segment een in toenemende mate belangrijk regeringsinstrument omdat zij het hoofd biedt aan de problematiek rond informatieasymmetrie en andere soorten verstoring van de zich ontwikkelende, internationaal verbonden - en concurrerende marktomgeving.

Er is weinig bekend over de waarde die het MKB zelf toekent aan CD. Deze studie onderzoekt deze leemte in reeds bestaande literatuur en stelt zich de vraag in hoeverre -, waar -, voor wie -, en onder welke omstandigheden CD als waardevol wordt beschouwd. De hieruit voortvloeiende hoofdvraag (die nader zal worden toegelicht) is daarom:

*In hoeverre wordt Commerciële Democratie als waardevol beschouwd -, welke factoren bepalen de waarde van Commerciële Diplomatie - en welke verbeterpunten kunnen de waarde van Commerciële Diplomatie verhogen vanuit een MKB -perspectief?*

Dit onderzoek toont aan dat slechts één -derde van het MKB gebruik maakt van -, en waarde hecht aan CD, vanuit een export -bevorderend oogpunt. De meeste MKB 'ers maken geen gebruik van CD omdat ze zelf de weg kunnen vinden (60%) en/of onbekend (40%) zijn met het bestaan van een dergelijke dienstverlening. Het is overigens interessant dat 43% van de MKB 'ers, die onbekend zijn met het bestaan van CD –dienstverlening, wel gelooft dat CD potentiële waarde kan hebben voor de organisatie. Concluderend: een groot aantal MKB 'ers maakt geen gebruik van CD terwijl zij het wel als een potentieel waardevolle dienstverlening beschouwen.

Daarnaast hecht de meerderheid van de MKB 'ers die wél gebruik heeft gemaakt van CD ook waarde aan de dienstverlening en gelooft dat het de export cq het zaken doen in het buitenland vergemakkelijkt, versnelt en meer effectief maakt op het gebied van exportbevordering en resultaatverbetering. Beperkte financiële middelen en - informatie en het niet hebben van een zaken –netwerk vormden voor MKB 'ers een motief om gebruik te maken van CD. Verder maken de meeste MKB 'ers gebruik van marktinformatie (handels-) en culturele informatie en informatie over wet en regelgeving (informatiegebaseerde dienstverlening) in het gastland. Veel minder MKB 'ers gebruiken CD voor assistentie bij handelsbelemmeringen, assistentie bij beurzen en handelsmissies en de inzet van een diplomaat bij vergaderingen en onderhandelingen (relatiegebaseerde dienstverlening). Ondanks het minder frequente gebruik van relatiegebaseerde dienstverlening waarderen MKB 'ers die veel overheidsklanten/-partners hebben deze evenzeer als informatiegebaseerde dienstverlening. De MKB 'ers met weinig overheidsklanten/-partners daarentegen, waarderen de relatiegebaseerde dienstverlening in mindere mate.

De drie determinanten waarvan wij hebben aangenomen dat ze gerelateerd zijn aan de waarde van de CD, zijn achtereenvolgens:

1. De kwaliteit van de dienstverlening
2. De institutionele omgeving van het gastland
3. De eigenschappen van het betreffende bedrijf.

### 1. De kwaliteit van de dienstverlening

Dit onderzoek laat zien dat de kwaliteit van de verleende dienst aan een bedrijf invloed heeft op de waardering voor CD in het algemeen. Om specifieker te zijn, dit onderzoek toont aan dat de kennis en de goede omgangsvormen van de (commerciële) diplomaat samen met het vermogen van de betreffende diplomaat om de behoefte van het bedrijf te voorzien en daarmee een op maat gesneden dienstverlening te leveren, de belangrijkste determinanten vormen van de waardering voor deze CD. Daarnaast tonen wij door middel van kwalitatief onderzoek aan dat de variabiliteit in de kwaliteit tussen buitenlandse posten afhankelijk is van de zakelijke ervaring, het beschikbare personeel en het beschikbare zakennetwerk van de buitenlandse post.

### 2. De institutionele omgeving van het gastland

Dit onderzoek verschaft geen bewijs dat MKB 'ers die zaken doen in gastlanden met onderontwikkelde instituties meer waarde hechten aan CD dan diegenen die zaken doet in gastlanden met ontwikkelde instituties. Wat we wel aantonen is dat de groep MKB 'ers die gebruikt maakt van CD in ontwikkelingslanden met onderontwikkelde instituties (70%) vele malen groter is dan de groep MKB 'ers die gebruik maakt van CD in ontwikkelde landen met de desbetreffende ontwikkelde instituties (30%). Motieven voor het frequentere gebruik van CD in onderontwikkelde landen waren (naast het gebrek aan ervaring) gerelateerd aan de onderontwikkelde instituties in het gastland. Dit impliceert dat marktfalen een groter probleem is in ontwikkelingslanden, derhalve verhoogt het de noodzaak om gebruik te maken van CD.

### 3. De eigenschappen van het betreffende bedrijf

Ten eerste valt op dat MKB 'ers met meer internationale ervaring, minder waarde hechten aan CD. Ten tweede zien we dat MKB 'ers met veel buitenlandse overheidsklanten/partners juist méér waarde hechten aan CD. Naast de algemene waarde van CD is ook gekeken naar de waarde van specifieke vormen van dienstverlening. Ons onderzoek toont aan dat MKB'ers met meer internationale ervaring minder waarde hechten aan assistentie bij handelsbelemmeringen. MKB 'ers met veel buitenlandse overheidsklanten/partners hechten meer waarde aan de op de relatiegebaseerde CD -dienstverlening, wat een goed inzicht geeft in het gewicht van "government to government" contacten. Daarnaast toont dit onderzoek aan dat bedrijven met een onderontwikkeld zakennetwerk meer waarde hechten aan de 'partnersearch' -activiteiten van CD.

De meeste onderzoeksresultaten bevestigen de bestaande literatuur. Echter, dit onderzoek heeft geen bewijs gevonden dat MKB 'ers in gastlanden met ontwikkelde instituties minder waarde hechten aan CD, zoals wij hadden verwacht (Busentiz, 2000, Kostecki & Naray, 2007). Evenmin hebben wij een relatie gevonden tussen de waarde van CD en de grootte van het MKB bedrijf (Hogan et al., 1991). Verder breiden wij de bestaande onderzoeksliteratuur uit door (1) de meest frequent gebruikte CD dienstverlening te benoemen, (2) de twee meest belangrijke kwaliteitsdimensies te identificeren, (3) de identificatie van verschillende bedrijfseigenschappen die samenhangen met de waarde van CD. Nochtans bestaat dit onderzoek uit een beperkt aantal respondenten. Daarom moet men voorzichtig zijn in het trekken van conclusies en de bevindingen interpreteren als een indicatie die verder onderzoek vergt.

Ten slotte heeft ons onderzoek verbeterpunten opgeleverd ter verhoging van de waarde van CD voor het MKB. De door MKB 'ers ingediende verbeterpunten zijn gerelateerd aan het genereren van meer bekendheid van het bestaan van CD, de professionalisering van personeel (zakelijke ervaring), meer sector -specifieke informatie en betere samenwerking binnen de ministeries en met branche -organisaties.

De gestelde bevindingen hebben ook implicaties voor de praktijk. De vijf meest belangrijke implicaties zijn hieronder samengevat:

1. Het ondersteunen van MKB 'ers begint bij het genereren van bekendheid van CD dienstverlening.
2. Van alle vijf kwaliteitsdimensies die kunnen bijdragen aan het optimaliseren van de kwaliteit van de dienstverlening lijken de volgende twee het meest doeltreffend: (1) het verbeteren van de zakelijke kennis en goede omgangsvormen van commerciële diplomaten en (2) het verbeteren van het empathisch vermogen van de commerciële diplomaat.
3. De vraag van het MKB naar CD in onderontwikkelde landen is groter dan de vraag in de ontwikkelde landen. De kleinere vraag naar CD in ontwikkelde landen wordt desalniettemin gelijkwaardig beoordeeld. De toewijzing van middelen aan ontwikkelde landen, in relatie tot onderontwikkelde landen kan daarom minder, maar mag niet verdwijnen.
4. Er bestaat geen "one size fits all" -strategie voor de CD dienstverlening. We raden buitenlandse posten, die veelal in contact staan met MKB 'ers die alleen maar private relaties hebben in het gastland, aan om zich meer te focussen op de informatiegebaseerde dienstverlening. Daarentegen, buitenlandse posten, die veelal MKB 'ers ondersteunen met vele buitenlandse publieke partners/klanten, doen er goed aan om zich zowel te focussen op de relatiegebaseerde dienstverlening als op de informatiegebaseerde dienstverlening.
5. Het verhogen van de waarde van CD dienstverlening door meer sector -specifieke dienstverlening te bieden is gerechtvaardigd maar moet altijd vraag -gestuurd zijn. Belangrijke spelers in het verschaffen van sector -specifieke informatie zijn de brancheorganisaties. Dit onderzoek toont aan dat buitenlandse posten hun focus moeten richten op een effectieve private - publieke structuur en dito beleid.

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# Table of Contents

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Summary .....</b>  | <b>I</b>   |
| <b>Acknowledgement .....</b>  | <b>VII</b> |
| <b>List of Figures and Tables.....</b>                                      | <b>X</b>   |
| <b>1 Introduction .....</b>   | <b>1</b>   |
| 1.1 Background.....   | 1          |
| 1.2 Objective and research question.....                                    | 2          |
| 1.3 Research Strategy.....  | 3          |
| <b>2 Literature review .....</b>  | <b>4</b>   |
| 2.1Introduction.....  | 4          |
| 2.2 Commercial diplomacy.....   | 4          |
| 2.3 Customer value in the field of CD.....                                  | 7          |
| 2.4 Determinants of customer value.....                                     | 8          |
| 2.5 Research model.....   | 12         |
| <b>3 Methodology.....</b>   | <b>14</b>  |
| 3.1 Introduction.....   | 14         |
| 3.2 Data collection.....  | 14         |
| 3.3 Sample techniques and response.....                                     | 16         |
| 3.4 Measures .....  | 17         |
| 3.5 Quality of the data.....  | 21         |
| 3.6 Analysis.....   | 22         |
| <b>4 Findings.....</b>  | <b>24</b>  |
| 4.1 Introduction.....   | 24         |
| 4.2 Descriptive.....  | 24         |
| 4.3 The rationale and determinants for using or not using CD services ..... | 24         |
| 4.4 The Value of Commercial diplomacy (services) .....                      | 29         |
| 4.5 Determinants of Customer Value.....                                     | 32         |
| 4.6 Testing the research model.....   | 39         |
| 4.7 Value adding improvement points.....                                    | 40         |
| 4.8 Summary of findings.....  | 43         |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>5 Conclusion &amp; Discussion .....</b> | <b>45</b> |
| 5.1 Introduction.....                      | 45        |
| 5.2 Conclusions.....                       | 45        |
| 5.3 Discussion and implications .....      | 49        |
| 5.4 Limitations .....                      | 54        |
| 5.5 Future Research .....                  | 54        |
| <b>References .....</b>                    | <b>57</b> |
| <b>Appendices .....</b>                    | <b>1</b>  |

# List of Figures and Tables

## Figures & Tables in this study

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure 1 Research model .....   | 12 |
| Figure 2 Overall Service quality rating .....   | 33 |
| Table 1 Hypotheses .....  | 13 |
| Table 2 Sample 'Total sample and User only sample' .....  | 17 |
| Table 3 Performance indicators definitions .....  | 19 |
| Table 4 Type of service used .....  | 25 |
| Table 5 Reason for not using CD services.....   | 25 |
| Table 6 Use of foreign posts versus client firm characteristics .....                                     | 28 |
| Table 7 Extent of value attached to the five value statements .....                                       | 29 |
| Table 8 Value of CD services.....   | 31 |
| Table 9 Potential value of CD services for previously unaware SMEs .....                                  | 32 |
| Table 10 Pearson's Correlation coefficients - Service quality on overall CD value .....                   | 34 |
| Table 11 Pearson's Correlation coefficients - Institutional country profile on the overall CD value ..... | 35 |
| Table 12 Pearson's Correlation coefficients - Client firm characteristics on the overall CD value .....   | 37 |
| Table 13 Multiple regression model for the overall CD value.....  | 40 |

## Figures & Tables in Appendices

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 3 Overall CD Value of respondents who used CD within the last two years .....                     | 31 |
| Figure 4 Overall CD Value of respondents who did not use CD within the last two years .....              | 31 |
| Figure 5 Overall CD Value of users and non users .....   | 31 |
| Table 14 Pearson's correlation coefficients of all independent and dependent variables of CD value ..... | 27 |
| Table 15 Independent sample t-test for Developed versus Developing countries on Institutions .....       | 28 |
| Table 16 Independent sample t-test for Developed versus Developing countries on CD Value .....           | 28 |
| Table 17 Independent sample t-test for International experience on CD Value .....                        | 28 |
| Table 18 Independent sample t-test for foreign public customers/partners on CD Value.....                | 29 |
| Table 19 Independent sample t-test for Number of employees on CD Value.....                              | 29 |
| Table 20 Independent sample t-test for no network versus developed network on CD Value.....              | 30 |
| Table 21 Paired t-test.Type of service vs No/Few foreign public customers/partners.....                  | 30 |
| Table 22 Paired t-test.Type of service vs Several/Many foreign public customers/partner .....            | 30 |
| Table 23 Qualitative data: Reason for not using foreign posts .....                                      | 32 |
| Table 24 Qualitative data: Reason for using a foreign post .....   | 34 |
| Table 25 Qualitative data: Service quality of the foreign post.....                                      | 35 |

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

We live in an ever more interconnected competitive market environment where new players enter the European and world market creating a highly competitive global environment. International business is for many countries the most important factor for a healthy economy. The Netherlands, used as the focus country of this research, is one of those countries which can actually identify its economic strength through export-performance. Similarly, a 4% increase in world trade is related to a 1% increase in economic growth of the Netherlands, indicating a very strong dependence on foreign markets (Modernisering Nederlandse Diplomatie, 2010). The Netherlands being highly dependent on foreign markets for economic prosperity and stability, creates a high rationale for the government to promote international business.

The increase in globalization also creates more attention towards the internationalization of the small-medium-enterprise (SME) with a noticeable increase in SMEs active in foreign markets as a result. In 2002 the number of Dutch SMEs active in foreign markets was 20% whereas 2010 is characterized by approximately 30% of the Dutch SMEs active in foreign markets (EIM, 2010). The SME market, also known as the 'engine of the economy', does not owe its name solely to its economic activities within the Netherlands. On the contrary, a recent study shows that SMEs stand for almost 30% to 40% percent of the export of the Netherlands. Including indirect exports, a stunning 60% of the total export in the Netherlands comes from SMEs (EIMA, 2010).

While largely responsible for the economic growth of the Netherlands, SMEs experience a higher exposure to barriers compared to the larger organizations in their internationalization endeavor, due to information and financial limitations (Spence, 2003). Similarly a research from EIMb (2010) identifies the lack of capital and adequate information as an important trade barrier but also recognizes a lack of adequate public support as one of the most important trade barriers. From a private support perspective, the experience and knowledge of firms operating in foreign markets are important for the internationalization of other SMEs due to the transmission of knowledge to other firms (Hessels, 2008). This so called 'knowledge spillover' is, however, limited due to the self interest and the rationale of gaining competitive advantage as a private firm over others. As Lederman (2009) mentioned, private firms alone will not provide e.g. foreign market information. Therefore, to address information asymmetries and other market failures, governments have the important task to support companies to internationalize, thereby, creating a stronger and more competitive economy.

One powerful public support instrument to support the economic interests abroad is via commercial diplomacy (CD). CD is defined as "the activities conducted by state representatives with diplomatic status in view of business promotion between a home and a host country" (Naray, 2008). CD is practice gaining more importance in today's economy, but is poorly addressed in research. Bergeijk and Melissen (2010) identified three main factors increasing the importance of CD. Firstly new players in the world economy ask for more economic diplomacy. The 'big four' or BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) require more governmental involvement due to cultural and institutional factors. BRIC countries hold many state-owned companies and private parties are not taken seriously requiring more commercial diplomatic involvement to support businesses. Secondly, the European integration plays an important role in the extent of economic diplomacy. Whereas trade diplomacy (trade policy making) is no longer a national matter and rather lies at the responsibility of the European commission, CD (business support activities) remains a national matter. As an English proverb goes 'Charity begins at home', or in other words, one's

own country comes before any other responsibility. This shows how CD will remain its importance disregarding a further integration of the EU. As a third factor, the Dutch unique selling points (USP) play an important role in the importance of economic diplomacy. USPs as energy, water and road construction happen to be governmental customers which make bilateral governmental relationships imperative.

Although, increasing in importance, commercial diplomacy has had an invisible status within diplomatic studies (Lee and Hudson, 2004). Only recent research has started to explore the field of CD (Kostecki & Naray, 2007). One important focus within the existing literature in the field of CD is the effectiveness of CD and the environment in which, and the instrument with which CD is effective in terms of export increase (e.g. Rose, 2007; Lederman et al., 2009; Yakop & Bergeijk, 2009). These studies measured the effectiveness of CD on a macro-economic level and recognize that CD has a positive effect on international trade. Although these results are very essential, the results lack detail on the beneficiary perspective and the value-added function of CD, let alone specific to SMEs. Neither did existing literature nuance the determinants of CD value. This study contributes to the field of CD by identifying to what extent, where, to whom and under which quality conditions CD is perceived as valuable from an SME (beneficiary) perspective. The scientific relevance is to better understand the field of CD by proposing a framework which identifies the determinants of customer value of CD. The practical contribution is related to the allocation of resources and focus of CD. This research attempts to give better insight for whom and where CD is most valuable and also gives insight into which improvement points addressed by SMEs could increase the perceived value of CD activities.

## **1.2 Objective and research question**

We can conclude from the aforementioned that internationalized SMEs are vital in a national economy, have higher exposure to trade barriers and require public support abroad more often due to financial and information limitations. A lack of public support measures are at the same time seen as one of the most important trade barriers. One increasingly important and powerful public instrument to support internationalization are CD activities. Yet very little is known about the value SMEs attach to different CD services and even less is known about the determinants which influence the value SMEs attach to CD services. Moreover, existing literature did not pick up on possible value adding improvement points addressed by SMEs which could ultimately lead to the better provision of services. It is these gaps in the current literature which this research tries to fill. The objective of this research is therefore fourfold:

1. Analyzing the rationale for using or not using CD. Existing literature lacks knowledge about the type of services used by SMEs and the rationale for using or not using CD.
2. Identifying the extent to which SMEs perceive the CD services as valuable. Existing literature recognize the importance of CD for SMEs, but has not been able to measure the extent to which SMEs value CD as an overall instrument, nor has it been able to identify the extent by which the CD services are valued individually.
3. Identifying the factors which determine the value of CD. The determinants are limited to three areas. The client firm (the beneficiary/user of CD services, the foreign posts (the provider of CD services such as an embassy or consulate) and the host country (the country in which the client firm intends to do business and in which the foreign posts are located).
4. Gaining insight into which improvement points increase the value of CD services.

Integrating the aforementioned aims in one concise research question results in:

*To what extent is CD perceived valuable, which factors determine the CD value and which improvement points can increase the value of CD from an SME perspective?*

Several sub-questions can be derived from the main question in order to answer the central research question in a structured format.

1. What types of CD services can be distinguished in the field of CD?
2. What is the customer value of CD and how can we measure customer value?
3. What is the rationale for using and not using CD services?
4. What is the percentile of SMEs using CD services and how many value these services?
5. Which foreign post, host country and client firm characteristics might influence the perceived value of CD and how can we measure these?
6. How do the foreign posts, host country and client firm characteristics affect the value attached to CD?
7. Which improvement points are believed to add value to the provision of CD service to SMEs?

### **1.3 Research Strategy**

This research adopts a deductive approach. We start with a systematic literature review in which the field of CD, its value-added nature, and the possible determinants of the value attached to CD are elucidated. In the systematic literature review we defined CD and its services. We subsequently assessed what is already known in the limited existing literature on the use and value-added nature of CD.

A large section of the systematic literature review is devoted to the identification of the possible factors determining the value of CD. We assessed whether the three areas (foreign post, host country, client firm characteristics) in which we seek the value adding determinants, can be linked to the service quality of foreign posts, the institutional country profile in the host country and the available resources within the client firm. Thus we seek to link customer value to the service quality theory, the institutional theory and the resource based view, from which we deduct hypotheses and form a research model with which we attempt to explain the customer value of CD. This literature review is concluded with a research model which visualizes the causal relationships between the customer value and the pre-defined determinants which will be empirically tested.

We continued the conceptualization of our research by selecting the research method(s) which would allow us to obtain the data needed to answer the central research question. We decided to use a mixed-method research strategy to create a more powerful and complete understanding on the value of CD. Thus we collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data allowed us to make statistical significant inferences while the qualitative data aided interpretation and complemented the quantitative findings. The quantitative data was obtained via an online-questionnaire. Moreover, we collected qualitative data from the online-questionnaire by means of an open forum. In addition to the online-questionnaire we also obtained qualitative data from a telephone questionnaire. The data from the telephone and online-questionnaire was collected from exporting SMEs. In addition to the data collection from SMEs we also conducted a semi-structured interview with an expert in the field of International, economical and social policy of SMEs to generate triangulation, thus, creating a more reliable and comprehensive answer/discussion on the central research question.

In line with the aforementioned, this research will start with a systematic literature review in chapter 2 and is followed by an elaboration on the methodological aspects of this research in chapter 3. Thereafter we will analyze the findings according to their objectives in chapter 4. In chapter 5 we will conclude and discuss the most important findings and we will clarify the limitations of this study and propose topics for future research.

# 2 Literature review

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to integrate and summarize what is known about the concepts related to the central research question. This literature review increases the breadth of knowledge to the subject of CD and will subsequently identify the gaps in existing literature. This chapter will start by elucidating on the concept of commercial diplomacy (CD) and its specific services in 2.2. Thereafter, in 2.3 we expand our current knowledge on the existing literature on the value of commercial diplomacy which is central in our research. After a systematic review on the value of CD, this research will enlarge the scope by integrating widely accepted theories to identify the potential determinants of CD in 2.4. Theories which were found to potentially influence the value of CD are found in the field of institutional theory, service quality and the resource based view, and are connected to the actors involved in commercial diplomacy and the context in which it is prevails (i.e. the foreign post, the client firm, and the host country). This chapter is concluded with a research model in 2.5. The research model is a visualization of the potential relationships between the determinants and the value of CD, and defines the scope of the central research question.

## 2.2 Commercial diplomacy

Naray (2008) defines CD as “an activity conducted by state representatives with diplomatic status in view of business promotion between a home and a host country”. CD aims at encouraging business development through a series of business promotion and facilitation activities. This definition focuses on public actors who perform business promotion and facilitation activities. Kostecki and Naray (2007) nuance this in earlier work by stating that the services of CD are commonly employed by members of diplomatic missions, the staff and related agencies. Related agencies, in the case of the Netherlands, are e.g. the national business support agencies (NBSO) and the Netherlands foreign investment agencies (NFIA). These agencies do not have a diplomatic status but are, however, public services to promote trade and are thus seen as part of the CD construct. We therefore adjust the definition of Naray (2008) and use the nuance made by Kostecki and Naray (2007) in earlier work and see CD, in this research, as an activity conducted by state representatives abroad (with diplomatic status) in view of business promotion between a home and a host country.

### 2.2.1 Economic diplomacy – Commercial diplomacy

As Mercier (2007) notes, CD is often confused with economic diplomacy. This necessitates an elaboration on the concept of economic diplomacy in relation to CD. Okano-Heijmans (2010) explicated on the concept of economic diplomacy which gives a clear perspective on the strands of economic diplomacy and provides more clarity into the concept. Okano-Heijmans identifies CD as a strand of economic diplomacy. Economic diplomacy is defined as “the political means as leverage in international negotiations with the aim of enhancing national economic prosperity, and the use of economic leverage to increase the political stability of the nation” (Okano-Heijmans, 2010). The concept of economic diplomacy is based the countries desire to have economic security, which has two dimensions: the business-end (prosperity), and the power play-end (stability). By excluding militarily actions, many economic diplomacy strands fall between the prosperity and stability end. The strands identified by Okano-Heijmans are respectively: CD, trade diplomacy, financial diplomacy, inducements and negative sanctions. CD is positioned at the business-end and is defined in this research as an activity conducted by state representatives abroad (with diplomatic status) in view of business promotion between a home and a host country. The actors involved in CD range from high policy level to lower level specialized diplomatic envoys. It is important to understand that the other strands of economic activities and commercial activities are not to be seen as separate

activities. As Potter (2004) argued, economic diplomacy and CD are irrevocably intertwined since CD aims at exploiting the opportunities which are more or less created via the other strands of economic diplomacy.

### **2.2.2 Rationale and justification of Commercial diplomacy**

There are a variety of reasons why governments consistently use CD. Naray (2008) posed six rationales for CD which provides a comprehensive picture. First the need of firms to have access to reliable and neutral business information is important. Naray (2008) also mentioned that CD is important for the support for newcomers with regards to their credibility and image in foreign markets. Additionally partners search, conflict handling, support of home country delegations, and strategic concerns such as the improved access to energy supplies, are important rationales for governments to use CD.

Since CD is publicly funded, the justification needs to be based on an assessment of the social costs and benefits associated with the CD services. Lederman et al. (2009) poses that the social benefits would be bigger if large positive externalities are associated with higher national exports within an exporting country. The assessment of the CD on economic welfare grounds is, however, difficult, if not impossible. Existing research has therefore focused on assessing whether CD increases export and found that CD increases national exports which leads to the main objectives of the government to increase tax revenue and the creation of jobs (Rose, 2007; Lederman et al., 2009). The justification of CD as a trade-off between social benefits and social costs is not the only debate. A divergent yet interrelated topic concerns the perspective of a capitalistic economy system where classical liberals hold the ideal of no governmental interference, i.e. *laissez-faire*. However realists pose that governmental intervention such as CD is a 'necessary evil' for the economic system. The justification of this necessary evil is based on the theory of asymmetric information and other market failures. As Lederman (2009) mentioned, private firms alone will not provide e.g. foreign market information. The rationale for a private firm to gain competitive advantage over others limits knowledge spillovers and thus the ability for other firms to collect the knowledge to internationalize. These market-failures lead to the task of the government to provide support services to address information asymmetry, imperfect networks and informal institutions, such as culture and language barriers. The extent to which the government is involved in the market can best be described as a facilitating role where CD opens doors but the actual business is conducted by the companies.

### **2.2.3 The rationale and justification of commercial diplomacy for SMEs.**

Governmental business support services, such as CD, are generally focused on SMEs (Kostecki & Naray, 2007; Mercier 2007; Seringerhaus & Rosson 1989). The topic and focus of the internationalization support for SMEs is of considerable relevance for two reasons. First the observed growth effects of internationalized SMEs and the capacity of SMEs to drive the economic development of a nation makes SMEs gives weight to this group of firms (OECD, 2009). The capacity of SMEs to drive economic development is also shown in the case of the Netherlands, where a recent study shows that SMEs stand for almost 30% to 40% percent of the export of the Netherlands. Including indirect exports, a stunning 60% of the total export in the Netherlands comes from SMEs (EIM, 2010).

Second, although of considerable relevance for the economic development of a nation, SMEs have a higher exposure to trade barriers, compared to the larger organizations, in their internationalization endeavor. The main barriers are as Spence (2003) denotes the information and financial limitations. More specifically, a research of the OECD (2009) demonstrates the top ranked internationalization barriers of SMEs are: (1) the shortage of working capital to finance exports, (2) limited information to locate/analyze markets, (3) the inability to contact potential overseas customers and at last (4) the lack of managerial time, skills and knowledge. The barriers addressed by the OECD (2009) are largely internal and are mainly a reflection of the resources and capabilities of an SME. The EIMb (2010), however, also depicted the external barriers and demonstrates that the lack of public support is one of the most important external barriers in the internationalization of SMEs.



Moreover, the aforementioned rationale for public internationalization support is simultaneously the main rationale for taking an SME perspective in this research, i.e. the high impact of SMEs on the development of the national economy, more prone to trade barriers, and the perceived lack of public support in their internationalization endeavor.

## **2.2.4 Services of CD**

The concept of CD can best be described by its observable business promotion services. CD is, to a large extent, based on the export promotion services. Kotabe and Czintoka (1992) separated export promotion services into the categories of export service programs and market development programs. The former program is more focused on export counseling and export advice questions (making companies export ready) whereas the latter is more focused on identifying opportunities within the host market and preparing market analysis in the host country. The CD services of foreign posts are more focused on market development programs. This is also acknowledged by Potter (2004) who makes the distinction in 'boarder in' and 'boarder out' services. Potter (2004) states that the responsibility in making companies 'export ready' is a 'boarder in' task constituting of domestic agencies and 'boarder out' is focused on market development. The activities of foreign posts are therefore more focused on promoting export by delivering valuable host country market/country information, establishing contacts and by organizations or support in organization trade fairs, seminars and trade missions. This research will thus focus on the 'boarder out' activities.

Lee (2004) gives an overview of the 'boarder out' activities by separating them into three main categories. The first one is gathering and dissemination of host country market information. A second category concerns the development and introduction of host country business and governmental relations to the home country. The third and final category is the promotion of home country services into the host market by means of trade fairs, lobbying and the organization of seminars.

Another perspective comes from Kostecki and Naray (2007). Kostecki and Naray position CD as a value-creating activity and define value by Porter's (2004) definition as the 'combination of benefits delivered to the beneficiaries minus the cost of those benefits to business and government'. In broad terms the areas of CD can be defined according to the area-activity matrix of Naray (2008), comprising of promotion of trade in goods and services, protection of intellectual property rights, co-operations in science and technology, promotion of made-in corporate image and the promotion of foreign direct investment (Appendix A). These activities are identified as the primary activities of CD in the value chain posed by Kostecki and Naray (2007). Activities in these areas can come in forms such as export advice, legal assistance and backstopping if needed. Such kinds of support include helping national firms to enter new markets or old markets with new products and to help foreign companies interested in investing in the home country (Saner and Yiu, 2003). The inputs to support the primary activities are identified as the support activities, constituting of intelligence, networking, contract negotiator implementation and problem solving. The supply of information and dealing with enquiries from home and host country, referred to by Kostecki and Naray (2007) as the support activity 'intelligence', is identified as the main support activity of CD. Following the aforementioned synopsis of CD activities, we propose our own exhaustive groups of service. A systematic overview was made with the most important conceptual clusters of CD services proposed by other authors (Appendix 2). After a thorough analysis we proposed our own comprehensive and non-overlapping cluster of CD services based on the synopsis of previous literature i.e. (1) intelligence, (2) problem solving, (3) partner search, (4) assistance at fairs and trade missions (5) presence of diplomat at fairs, contract signing/ceremonies. Intelligence is subdivided into the areas i.e. cultural information, regulatory information, information on markets and public tenders.

## 2.3 Customer value in the field of CD

By means of the CD services, governments intend to promote and facilitate SMEs to internationalize. The government is ultimately looking for economic stability and security in the home country. CD comprises a range of services which intend to contribute to this objective by boosting import, export and economic growth. Where the previous sections have discussed the definition, the rationale, the specific services and the objective of CD, the prevailing section will assess whether the objective of CD is accomplished by assessing the existing literature on the value adding role of CD.

The value of CD is researched from the perspective of the beneficiary. We are therefore interested in the 'customer value' of CD. A diversity of definitions have been given to customer value, such as: "the customer's overall assessment of the given utility of a product based on perception of what is received and what is given" (Zeithaml, 1988) or "A tradeoff between perceived quality and perceived psychological and monetary sacrifice" (Dodds et al., 1984). However, in this research, customer value will not be defined as a tradeoff between what is given and the monetary costs. Rather this research defines customer value as "the worth in usefulness to the organization". This definition leaves out a tradeoff between monetary costs and what is received, which seems more applicable since no costs are charged for CD services in the Netherlands at this stage.

Several publications have attempted to capture the value of export promotion programs, and more specifically, the value of CD on international trade in terms of increase in export. Gençtürk and Kotabe (2001) tested the US organizational perspective by linking export programs to sales and profitability. Figures of the beneficiary and argues that the usage of export promotion programs increased profitability but not sales. This questions the necessity of export promotion since it implies that the likelihood of export success for a company is just as likely with or without foreign posts support where companies use CD services merely to save costs in export endeavors. Nevertheless, Gençtürk and Kotabe's (2001) study does acknowledge the importance of export promotion for SMEs. Similarly, Spence (2003) noted that SMEs would arguably need these services due to financial and information limitations. Furthermore, Rose (2007) and Yakop and Bergeijk (2009) focused their research specifically on CD and both found quantitative evidence of an export increase rather than mere profit in the field of CD. Both articles used a gravity model to demonstrate the effectiveness of CD. In these gravity models, export figures of a large number of export and import countries are analyzed. Rose identified a significant effect of consulates and embassies on export promotion. Yakop and Bergeijk (2009) replicated the study of Rose but used a more heterogeneous sample constituting of a larger sample of low and medium income countries. Yakop and Bergeijk (2009) conclude, that the impact of CD in developed countries is not significant and is therefore not a relevant factor for trade, rather, it is suggested that the significant impact of CD on exports, is driven by developing countries. This finding is also acknowledged by Lederman et al. (2009).

The aforementioned literature is highly focused, or in some cases solely focused, on an increase in export which would justify the existence of foreign posts in the context of business internationalization. However, this type of research has little focus on the perspective of the beneficiary, other than a general, nevertheless important notion whether it has a significant effect on export figures. Kostecki & Naray (2007) started to address this gap in literature by providing more insight into the perspective of the beneficiary with a useful client-provider gap of CD services, identifying the discrepancy between the offered services and the actual needs of the beneficiary. Similarly to Gençtürk and Kotabe (2001), Kostecki and Naray (2007) made a distinction in the importance of CD between SMEs and multinational-enterprises (MNEs). Where Gençtürk and Kotabe (2001) acknowledge the importance of CD of SMEs, Kostecki and Naray (2007) nuanced this perspective by citing an Anglo-Saxon diplomat who stated that the focus of CD is both on SMEs and MNEs but the interest in specific CD activities differ. SMEs would arguably be

more technical and less relationship-based and MNEs would have more interest in public relationships involving the host country government. This statement, however, lacks generalizability and is based on merely one quote.

As can be concluded from the aforementioned, the importance of CD for SMEs is recognized in existing literature. Nevertheless, the extent to which it is valued by SMEs has not been measured, neither has any research tried to capture the factors determining the value of CD activities or attempted to capture the value adding improvement points posed by SMEs. Secondly, the client provider gap posed by Kostecki & Naray (2008) gave a better overview of the needs of the beneficiary, yet lacks nuances specified to SMEs. Additionally, in existing literature, indications are given that the interest in specific CD services differs between SMEs and MNEs. These statements however lack generalizability and merely portrays an indication of a difference in value between SMEs and MNEs (cross-case analysis) but do not display heterogeneity in the perceived value within the case of SMEs (within case analysis).

It is this gap which we try to fill in literature by measuring the value of CD within the case of SMEs. Having conceptualized the value of CD and identified the gaps in current literature in relation to the customer value of CD, the following section will elucidate the potential determinants of the value of CD in the field of service quality, institutional theory and the resource-based theory.

## **2.4 Determinants of customer value**

This section will give an overview of the potential determinants of customer value derived from an extensive literature study, arguing that service quality, the institutional country profile and the client firm characteristics are the most important determinants of the perceived value of specific CD activities.

In the existing literature Kostecki and Naray (2007) pose 16 propositions which might impact the activity profile, the business orientation and the performance of CD services. Performance is recognized to be an important factor of the perceived value (Zeithaml, 1988; Bolton & Drew, 1991; H.Oh, 1999). The outset of this framework therefore functions as a meaningful starting point for our framework to determine the factors influencing the customer value. The 16 propositions posed by Kostecki and Naray (2007) are categorized into five categories i.e. client characteristics, home and host country features, the global business environment and the commercial diplomatic arrangements.

Besides the influence of performance on the customer value of CD, Lederman et al. (2006) shows the importance of the client firm which is also acknowledged by Zeithaml (1988) who argues that a customer's assessment of value is dependent on the customer's frame of reference which implies the client firm characteristics.

Additionally, the customer assessment of value is, as Woodruff (1997) described, dependent on the use situation. Woodruff poses that if the use situation changes the actual value changes as well. The use situation of CD is inherently depended upon the host country characteristics. Yakop and Bergeijk (2009) demonstrated this in terms of effectiveness by making a distinction between developed and developing countries arguing that the different institutions and cultural backgrounds have impact on the effectiveness of CD.

From a home country market perspective Kostecki and Naray (2007) argue that every country has its government-business relationships which, logically speaking, also concerns the perception of organizations towards commercial diplomatic activities. They argue that in France, the culture exists to automatically go the embassy once being abroad. Since this research solely focuses on foreign posts of the Netherlands, it will not be viable to determine the intra-country differences. It is, however interesting to take this determinant in account as an underlying reason for not going to an embassy, which might be due to managerial expectations, perception of the role of the state or cultural considerations (Kostecki and Naray, 2007).

As can be concluded from the aforementioned, there are numerous potential determinants which can affect the value customer value of CD. According to the aforementioned literature and feasibility considerations, the most important potential determinants of CD value seem to be the service quality of the foreign posts, the institutions within the host country, and the client firm characteristics. In the following sections an elaboration is given on these potential determinants.

### **2.4.1 Service Quality**

Service quality is recognized to be an important factor of the customer value (Zeithaml, 1988; Bolton & Drew, 1991; H. Oh, 1999). Kostecki and Naray (2007) acknowledge this but recognize that the performance of CD is hard to evaluate. They do, however, propose that one way of evaluating the CD service performance is by organizational feedback. One way of measuring the performance of a foreign post is in terms of service quality. Service quality can be defined as "the discrepancy between the customer's perceptions of services offered by a particular firm and their expectations about the firms offerings of such service" (Parasuraman et. al, 1988). The service quality in the field of CD is yet another poorly researched area and there are no generally accepted explanations on how service quality factors affect the value of CD. The research of Kostecki and Naray (2007) does, however, provide rich qualitative data in the field of CD service quality. Potential shortcomings of the service quality of CD have been addressed by Kostecki & Naray (2007) and are mainly due to the generalist and civil servant type of diplomats active at foreign posts. Critics include "exporters do not use the same language as diplomats", "Diplomats do not understand business concerns", "diplomats are overloaded with issues other than trade and investment" and "commercial attaches are bureaucratic and ineffective". Kostecki and Naray (2007) give a good indication of critics and possible determinant of service quality in relation to the style of the diplomat. We try to expand the current quality factors by quantifying the service quality of CD by means of an extensive service quality model developed by Parasuraman et al. al, (1988) measuring the service quality along five performance dimensions; i.e. (1) reliability, (2) responsiveness, (3) assurance, (4) empathy, and (5) tangibles. We are interested in how the knowledge and courtesy of employees, the willingness to help and provide prompt service, the ability to perform the promised services dependably and accurately, the physical representation of the service, and finally the caring individualized attention provided to SMEs influence the customer value of CD. Previous research in the field of CD has not measured the perceived service quality of CD with an extensive list of performance indicators, nor has it attempted to identify the relative impact service quality had on the customer value of CD. Therefore, the aforementioned five dimensions are used to measure the service quality of CD.

### **2.4.2 Institutional country profile**

A basic principle in the international management literature is that firms are entrenched in a country specific institutional environment which reflects the relatively stable rules, social norms and cognitive structures (Scott, 1995). Where Scott (1995) defines the institutional environment as relatively stable rules, social norms and cognitive structures, North (1990) defines institutions as the humanly devised constraints that shape human interactions. Many authors have difficulty in finding a universal definition and there is little consensus in the conceptualization of the institutional environment. Institutions are classified as informal and formal (North, 1990) as tangible and intangible institutions and Scott (1995) introduces the interrelated regulatory, cognitive and normative dimensions. Inspired by Scott's (1995) three interrelated institutional pillars, the regulatory, cognitive and normative dimension, Kostova (1999) introduced a three dimensional country institutional profile constituting of the governmental policies (regulatory), the widely shared social knowledge (cognitive) and the value systems (normative) which affect domestic business activities. The country institutional profile was set up by Kostova (1999) as a way for conceptualizing and measuring relational and regulatory *home* country-level features affecting organizational development. We, however, are interested in *host-country-level* features, affecting the internationalization development of an SME. We suggest that the value SMEs attach to CD, at least partly relies on

the institutional country profile's ((1) regulatory, (2) cognitive and (3) normative pillars) which constrain and shape the organizational behavior.

### **1 Regulative Pillar**

The regulative pillar consists of, as Scott (1995) states, the "explicit regulative processes: (1) rule setting, (2) monitoring and (3) sanctioning activities". These rules and standards in the regulative pillar comprise the formal institutions and can be found in the legislation system, judicial system, political system and economic system. In this research, the regulative pillar is constricted to the legal system which potentially influences the security of transactions and contracts and the way of conducting business. In the context of CD it argued that a poor functioning of the legal and judicial system positively influences value attached to CD.

Similarly, KostECKI and Naray (2007) argue that an unreliable legal environment, the inability to obtain satisfactory results in court and wide spread corruption affect the importance of CD. Specific CD services assists companies that have been injured contrary to law or due to slow processes of jurisdiction. A commercial diplomat in Helsinki posed that 'most trade disputes originate from property right issues and security of contracts between private actors and between public and private actors'. The extent in which property rights and contracts between private – private are protected, the government's respect for contracts, the effectiveness of commercial courts and the reliability of the legal system, are therefore believed to affect the value of CD since SMEs are not certain if their contractual rights and intellectual property will be secured by governments and courts. A lack of formal institutions which support a market economy and thus allowing SMEs to operate through normal channels will pose a greater task for the commercial diplomat in providing reliable information and, if necessary, exercising diplomatic protection.

### **2 Cognitive Pillar**

The cognitive dimension depicts cognitive structures and social knowledge of the individuals in a country. In turn, this influences the cognitive schemas used by people when processing information (Descotes, 2007). In this research the cognitive dimension is defined as "the knowledge and skills possessed by the individuals in a country" (Busenitz et al., 2000, p.995), pertaining to establishing and developing certain activities. The aim of this study is to determine the effect of host country institutions on the firms need for governmental support. Therefore this research captures the knowledge and skills of the organizations/institutions within the host country by measuring the perceived ease of obtaining host country information. The availability of reliable knowledge and skills in the host country can be used by foreign firms that want to establish business in the host country. For the cognitive dimensions, the items that seem to be important are reliable market information, entry procedures, easiness of locating partners, information on quality of goods and services, and information about firms in the host country. Most of the items seem to deal with the availability of information. In this case, information availability reflects the cognitive dimension of the host country.

### **3 Normative Pillar**

The normative pillar of the institutional environment refers to "social norms, values, beliefs and assumptions that are socially shared and are carried by individuals" (Kostova, 1999). In the specific case of SMEs, and the value attached to CD, the normative dimension captures the degree to which residents in the host country value and admire government involvement in doing business.

KostECKI & Naray (2007) pose that the relative importance of CD is influenced by the host country's business regime which constitutes of the rules and processes which guide the country's business relations. It can be argued that CD value increases when the host country government plays an important role due to, state trading, public ownership and product subsidies. A government can facilitate or prohibit business and high state involvement might inhibit private organizations from getting foothold in the host country due to both regulations restriction

and/ or the value system. In the context of CD, there is more weight on the value system. In some host countries, getting in contact with governmental officials can be troublesome for private SMEs. A foreign post, however, might be able facilitate business by their governmental network. In this perspective it is not a matter of regulation, since there are in many cases no legal obligations against a private companies trying to do business with e.g. a state owned organizations, rather, it is a matter of, as Scott (1995, p. 37) states, the prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory social dimensions making up the 'morally governed' pillar, known as the normative pillar. Foreign posts have better access to the host country governments and home country governmental officials are more valued in countries where state involvement is high due to a divergent business regime. Subsequently we can assert that in a country where the economic system relies on market relations and governmental involvement is low, commercial diplomacy is less valued.

### 2.4.3 Client firm characteristics

The value attached to CD is dependent on the customer's frame of reference (Zeithaml, 1988). A resource based view can give a useful insight into the client firm's characteristics which potentially determine the value attached to CD. The firm's resources can be defined as "all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc; controlled by a firm that enable the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness"(Barney, 1991). However, a distinction is to be made in resources and capabilities, which in the definition of Barney (1991), are seen as one. This paper adopts the view that resources are tradable and non-specific. Capabilities are, however, firm specific and used to engage the resources within the firm (Makadok, 2001). Capabilities can therefore be seen as the capacity to deploy resources. As capabilities are used to deploy resources in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness, a lack of either could inhibit a firm's ability to achieve its goals. Translating this to the perceived value of companies towards CD activities of foreign posts, one can argue that the extent of available resources and capabilities affect a firm's ability to internationalize.

The extent of available resources and capabilities of the organization are determined by, but not limited to, specific host country context as described in sub chapter 2.4.2. This subchapter however focuses on the internal resources and capabilities available and the effect it has on the perceived value of CD services. Wilkinson and Brouthers (2006) and Gençtürk & Kotabe (2001) argue that the foreign posts can complement the internal resources of a firm, thereby making them more successful in the host country. Specific determinants (resources) of the perceived value of CD services are related to SME. Kostecki and Naray (2007) state that most CD services focus on SMEs rather than on multinational-enterprises (MNEs) since the larger companies have no need for commercial diplomatic activities. SMEs would arguably need these services as Spence (2003) noted due to financial and information limitations. The information limitations which are caused by but not limited to financial limitation could therefore affect the necessity of using public services. Information limitations are also potentially caused by an underdeveloped network in the host country which can possibly affect the attached value to CD services. A network has the benefit of resource sharing, allowing firms to combine knowledge, skills and physical assets. Secondly, a network can provide access to knowledge spillovers and serve as information conduits (Ahuja, 2000). Additionally, one main activity of CD services is to 'open doors' by offering partner searches to firms, an activity which can be considered as a network building activity. The available network of a firm therefore has a potential indirect effect on CD value (network → information limitations → value of CD) and a potential direct effect on the value of specific partner search activities (network → partner search). In addition to the extent of available resources, Ionascu et al. (2004) has stressed that organizations may mediate the impact of distance through the accrual of experience which represents the capabilities of a firm. Subsequently, the mitigation of distance might also mitigate the need for CD services as SMEs are more experienced in exporting abroad thus indicating that companies with more international experience would attach less value to CD services. Additionally Czinkota (1982) and Cavusgil (1980) demonstrated that experienced exporters are able to rely more on in-house export experience.

Another client firm arrangement which has potential impact on whether CD activities are perceived as important is brought up by Bergeijk en Melissen (2010). They argue that Dutch unique selling points (USPs) play an important role in the importance of economic diplomacy. The USPs being energy, water and road construction happen to be governmental customers which make bilateral governmental relationships imperative. Subsequently, CD activities might not be immune to foreign governmental customers and partners. It is therefore argued that CD services are potentially perceived as more valuable by firms which to a large extent rely on foreign public customers and partners. The aforementioned review on client firm characteristics uncovered resources and capabilities and client firm arrangements which potentially influence the degree of value. The most important client firm characteristics taken into account in this research are therefore the number of employees, the available business network in the host country, the international experience and the extent of having public customers/partners abroad.

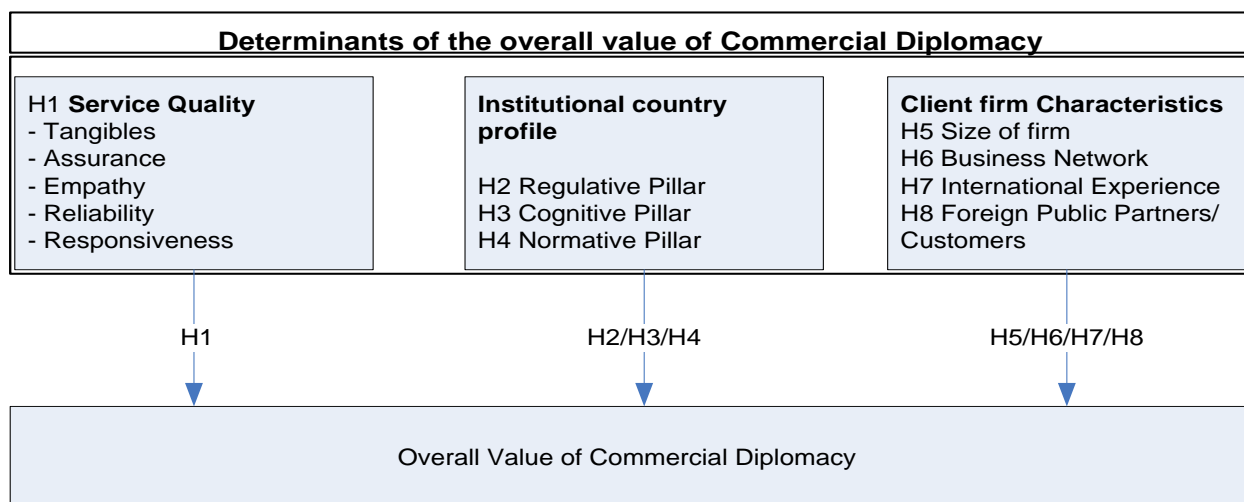
## 2.5 Research model

This literature study is concluded with a research model. The research model displayed in Figure 1 is a visualization of the potential relationships between the determinants and the customer value of CD and defines the scope of the central research question;

*To what extent is CD perceived valuable, which factors determine the CD value and which improvement points can increase the value of CD from an SME perspective?*

The determinants are categorized into three groups: the service quality the institutional country profile and the client firm characteristics which potentially influence the value attached to CD. The hypotheses are formulated after an extensive literature review using a resource based view, institutional theory and service quality theory.

**Figure 1 Research model**



Firstly, we assert that the service quality delivered by foreign posts is positively associated with overall value of CD. We included five dimensions, each measuring a different aspect of the service quality of CD.

Secondly, we propose that a favourable institutional country profile based on regulative, cognitive and normative pillars are negatively associated with the value of CD. Asserting that a reliable legal system, high information availability and an economic system based market relations decreases the necessity (value) for public support i.e. commercial diplomacy.

The third and final group depicts the client firm characteristics which are believed to influence the value of CD. From a resource based view we included the number of employees, the available network and the international business experience the firm has. We assert that the more resources and capabilities an organization possesses, the less value a firm attaches to CD. An additional client firm characteristic which potentially influences the value of CD is the extent to which the firm has foreign public customers/partners and we propose that firms with high public customers/partner involvement attaches more value to CD.

This research will measure the determinants on the overall CD value. After testing the relationships on the overall value, this research will also explicate on the value of specific CD services in association with the client firm characteristics and institutional profile.

The relationships are displayed in Figure1 and the proposed hypothesis are formulated in Table 1.

**Table 1 Hypotheses**

| Area                          | # | Hypothesis   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Service quality               | 1 | Higher perceived service quality is associated with higher value of commercial diplomacy.                                      |
|                               | 2 | Higher security of transactions and contracts is negatively associated with the perceived value of commercial diplomacy.       |
| Institutional country profile | 3 | Higher information availability in the host country is negatively associated with the perceived value of commercial diplomacy. |
|                               | 4 | Higher reliance on market relations in the host country is negatively associated with the value of commercial diplomacy.       |
| Client firm Characteristics   | 5 | Larger SMEs attach less value to commercial diplomacy.   |
|                               | 6 | An increase in international experience is associated with a decrease in the value of commercial diplomacy.                    |
|                               | 7 | An increase in the available business network in the host country decreases the value of commercial diplomacy.                 |
|                               | 8 | An increase in foreign public customers/partners, increases the value SMEs attach to commercial diplomacy.                     |



# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the methods of data collection, the data measures and the data quality are elaborated on. In chapter 3.2 we discuss the data collection methods. In 3.3 we will discuss the methods used to establish the sample and we will subsequently describe the sample response. 3.4 will give an elaboration on the measures used and 3.5 will discuss the quality and fitness of the data used. This methodology chapter is finalized in 3.6 by a description of the analyses and data processing techniques used in this research

## 3.2 Data collection

The objective of this research is to (1) measure the rationale for using or not using CD services, (2) measuring the value attached to CD services, (3) identifying the determinants which affect the value of CD, and (4) the identification of improvement points, which can potentially increase the value of CD. For reaching these objectives a mixed method research is adopted using both quantitative and qualitative data in which the quantitative and qualitative data is analyzed at the same time (parallel). A mixed method research is used because both quantitative and qualitative research have their strengths and weaknesses. One drawback of quantitative data is the limited in depth descriptive power whereas qualitative data has low statistical power. We therefore choose to adopt a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, which allows us to obtain statistically reliable information from numerical measurements, which is, thereafter, complemented with enriched explanations. In addition to aiding interpretation, the mixed method research design allows triangulation in which two or more independent data sources can uphold research findings (Saunders, 2009).

The quantitative data is used to measure the use, the value and the hypothesized relationships of CD in numbers and frequencies, allowing us to statistically analyze the central research question. This analysis is backed up by qualitative data obtained from open questions in the online questionnaire, a telephone questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The multi-method data collection technique consists of a (1) telephone questionnaire, (2) an online questionnaire, and a (3) semi-structured interview. This section will elaborate on the justification and operationalization of the three data collection methods used.

### 3.2.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires include all techniques of data collection in which respondents are asked to respond to a same set of questions in a predetermined order (deVaus, 2002). This research adopted both telephone and online-questionnaire techniques and both techniques will be discussed in this section.

#### Telephone questionnaire

The rationale for choosing the telephone requests is threefold. Initially it served the purpose of profiling the right respondents for the online-questionnaire, in this case the owner, the export manager or the international sales manager who has a general overview of the international business activities within the firm. A large obstacle to overcome in this research was the ability to get contact details from the appropriate respondents within the company. A second challenge was the ability to get a large enough sample size. Approaching respondents via telephone gives the researcher the ability to build rapport and commitment, increasing your likely response rate (Saunders, 2009).

The telephone questionnaires were conducted in a call-center. A big drawback of telephone questionnaires in case of a large sample is the time taken to complete the data collection but the benefits of a larger and reliable sample size outweighed the costs. A telephone script/questionnaire was created in which the purpose of this research was explained (see Appendix C). After the approval of sending an online-questionnaire to their personal email the possibility arose to obtain more qualitative data. This was operationalized by asking the respondents, (1) if they used CD services, (2) what the rationale was for using or (not) using CD service and (3) and how they experienced the service.

### **Online questionnaire**

Within a time span of 4 hours after contacting the respondents via telephone, a structured questionnaire was dispersed per email to the panel of respondents who gave their consent in us sending an online-questionnaire. The use of a survey strategy with a questionnaire gives us the ability to collect quantitative data which can be analyzed quantitatively using both descriptive and inferential statistics (Saunders et al. 2009).

The tool used to electronically disperse the questionnaires was NETQ. This questionnaire application helped to address several challenges to optimize the response and reliability of this research. First, NETQ allowed us to use condition based questioning instead of a static questionnaire where the same questions are posed to all respondents. The set of respondents can be divided into the respondents who used CD services and the respondents who did not. Since respondents who have used CD services are able to answer a divergent set of questions (e.g. service quality) and respondents who did not use CD are e.g. asked to explain the rationale for not using CD, condition based routing is imperative to guarantee a questionnaire which is user friendly and only poses relevant questions to the respondents. Secondly the system gave the ability to use condition based questioning, track response ratings, send request to respondents in a personalized manner and send reminders efficiently. Thus allowing us to obtain and manage a large amount of information in a relatively high economical way.

Although the support system to manage the data collection is imperative, the tasks to produce a questionnaire which collects the data that you require to answer the research question and achieve the objectives is an even bigger challenge. As Oppenheim (2000) argue, it is far harder to produce a good questionnaire than you might think. Additionally (Saunders et al., 2009) pose that is important to precisely define the questions prior to the data collection. Section 3.5 elaborates on the operationalization, in order to put the measures in a questionnaire.

At last the questionnaire used, also contains an open-ended question in which the respondents are asked to give their vision on possible improvements points or expansion of the CD services which would increase the value of CD for their organization. This question contributes to the fourth objective to get a better insight into improvement suggestions to increase the value of CD from an SME perspective. These qualitative suggestions, together with the quantitative findings, are reflected upon in a semi-structured interview, discussed in the following section. The online-questionnaire is enclosed in Appendix D.

### **3.2.2 Semi-structured interview**

The semi-structured face to face interview is conducted to illustrate and provide alternative explanations to the observed quantitative and qualitative data obtained from both the telephone and online questionnaire. This semi-structured interview reflects on the improvement points submitted by SMEs. The interview was arranged in a manner where we discussed the findings and asked questions regarding these findings, which allowed the interviewee to reflect on our findings. With a voice recording device the interview was recorded and thereafter directly transcribed (Appendix E).

### 3.3 Sample techniques and response

This study focuses on exporting SMEs. The sample used in this research was purposively drawn from an export company list from 'company-info' in the Netherlands. The purposive sample was selected on the number of employees between 1-300. A total of 450 export and international managers/owners were contacted by telephone of which 48% (214 out of 450) agreed to fill out a questionnaire or was willing to send it to the designated person.

Apart from getting the approval of sending an online-questionnaire to the potential respondents, this telephone conversation was also held to obtain more qualitative data from the respondents. From the 214 contacts, 48 respondents provided meaningful qualitative information, on the rationale for using or not using CD services via telephone questionnaire. The rather low response rate on the telephone questionnaire (48 out of 214) was due to the fact that the majority of international managers/export managers/owners were not available since they were either on a business trip or had time constraints at that time. The gatekeeper, in many cases the receptionist was however able to give his/her personal email and name which allowed us to proceed and sent the online questionnaire with a personalized email explaining the purpose of this research (Appendix F). A reminder was sent after 1 week and subsequently resend two weeks later in case the online questionnaire was not started or completed (Appendix G).

From the respondents/gatekeepers who gave their approval of us sending the online- questionnaire, 57% (121 out of 214) started the questionnaire of which 85% (103 out of 121) completed the questionnaire. The non-completion rate is for a large extent due to the length of the questionnaire. There is a noticeable pattern where respondents terminate the questionnaire, which is at the start of a rather lengthy question matrix. Nevertheless respondents not completing the questionnaire but having filled out a minimum of 5 questions are included into this questionnaire. A question completion rate of 5 questions has been installed to filter out the respondents who did not terminate the questionnaire due to its length. A total of 5% (6 out of 121) did not meet this threshold and were omitted from the questionnaire. The total sample response was therefore N=115. The four objectives of this research have however different sample requirements which have an effect on the valid N. In order to measure the use and the extent of value attached to CD services (objective1 and 2) and in order to get a better vision on possible improvement points to increase the value of CD services (objective 4), a sample of both *users* and *non-users of CD services* is necessary to get a representative picture of all exporting SMEs in the Netherlands.

The third objective 'measuring the determinants of the value of CD' can, however, only be measured from a *user-perspective* since the proposed independent variables of the value CD, such as the service quality and the host country characteristics necessitates the respondents to have actually used CD services. The sample response of respondents who used CD services in the last two years has an N of 38, which is no more than 33% of the total sample. Therefore, Table 2 gives a distribution of the number of employees, years of international experience and number of foreign public customers/partners from both the total sample and from a sub-sample, excluding the respondents who have not used CD services. In Appendix H the sample distribution on sector can be found. This list has not been included here due to its length. The sample visualized in Table 2 has a fair number of respondents in each group. Only respondents with no international export/export experience is rather low or nonexistent. This is due to the fact that the company- list consisted of existing exporting SMEs.

**Table 2 Sample 'Total sample and User only sample'**

| Variable   | Scale           | Total Count | Table N % | User-only Count | Table N % |
|--|-----------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| Number of Employees                                | 1-9             | 19          | 16%       | 4               | 11%       |
|  | 10-50           | 47          | 41%       | 13              | 34%       |
|  | 51-250          | 40          | 35%       | 15              | 39%       |
|  | > 250           | 9           | 8%        | 6               | 16%       |
|  | Total           | 115         | 100%      | 38              | 100%      |
| Years international/export experience              | 0               | 1           | 1%        | 0               | 0%        |
|  | <1 - 10         | 15          | 13%       | 4               | 11%       |
|  | 11 - 20         | 28          | 24%       | 9               | 24%       |
|  | 21- 30          | 28          | 24%       | 4               | 11%       |
|  | 31 -40          | 18          | 16%       | 10              | 26%       |
|  | > 40            | 25          | 22%       | 11              | 29%       |
|  | Total           | 115         | 100%      | 38              | 100%      |
| Number of foreign public customers/partners abroad | Never           | 60          | 54%       | 14              | 38%       |
|  | Seldom          | 19          | 17%       | 7               | 19%       |
|  | Occasionally    | 15          | 13%       | 6               | 16%       |
|  | Very frequently | 15          | 13%       | 9               | 24%       |
|  | Almost always   | 2           | 3%        | 1               | 3%        |
|  | Total           | 111         | 100%      | 37              | 100%      |

While having discussed the sample response and techniques for both the telephone and online questionnaire, a different sample is used for the qualitative data. This sample consists of one expert in the field of international, economical and social policy of SMEs, who has a clear grasp on the value of CD for SMEs. Although we cannot make any generalizations from this one person sample, its purpose is to reflect on both the qualitative data and quantitative data.

### 3.4 Measures

This section provides the operationalization of all variables used in this research. The operationalization of the concept 'the value of CD' was narrowed down to the variables; rationale for using and not using CD, customer value, service quality, the regulative, normative and cognitive pillar of the institutional country profile and the client firm characteristics; number of employees, international experience, business network and the number of foreign public partners/customers. Customer value is a multifaceted concept which can be operationalized in different ways. It is not our intention to exhaust all the determinants of the customer value of CD. This research will focus on what we believe are the key determinants of the customer value from an extensive literature study. A structured overview of the measures is given in Appendix I.

#### 3.4.1 Rationale for using or not using CD

The starting point of this research is to identify the rationale for using and not using CD services. The variables used within this research can therefore be subdivided in the rationale for using and the rationale for not using CD services. The rationale for using CD services is measured according to the services used. The services measured are (1) market information, (2) information about (trade) cultural information, (3) information about rules and regulations, (4) information about public tenders, (5) problem solving, (6) partner search, (7) assistance at fairs and trade missions (8) presence of diplomat at fairs, contract signing and ceremonies. The 'use' is measured on a binominal scale with the categories yes/no.

The rationale for not using CD was measured on a categorical scale consisting of 6 items. This measure was constructed in collaboration with a trade association. The items used are (1) unaware of CD services, (2) bad

experience, (3) does not fit our needs, (4) foreign posts are hard to reach, (5) we find our own way abroad (6) use of other (commercial) organizations and an item (7) 'other'.

### 3.4.2 Customer Value

The dependent variable 'customer value' (hereafter; value) is measured as the overall perceived value in terms of usefulness. Swanson (1987) conducted a factor analysis and found a close correspondence between 'useful', 'relevant' and 'valuable' on the value dimension. Hence, value parallels perceived usefulness. The original model from Davis (1989) is validated in a context of perceived usefulness of information technology on 10 items. This study draws on the model used by Davis (1989) and modified the model according to the domain of CD. From the original model, 5 items are used, representing the 'value' construct in this research.

#### Items of customer value

1. CD Services offered at foreign posts makes exporting/operations abroad easier.
2. CD Services offered at foreign posts enable me to accomplish my tasks quicker.
3. CD Services offered at foreign posts increase the export effectiveness/results of my organization.
4. The CD services offered at foreign posts are valuable instrument for the internationalization of my organization.
5. The disappearance of CD services would make exporting/operating abroad more difficult.

The value of CD was measured on a 7-point-likert-scale and the categories used to measure the value of CD are; strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), disagree somewhat (3), neither agree nor disagree(4), agree somewhat (5), agree (6), strongly agree (7) and a category unknown (0) for respondents who did not know how to answer the items.

Whereas the aforementioned five items represents the overall value of CD as a whole, an additional measurement is included to measure the customer value per service. Respondents were also asked to rate the perceived value per service. The scale for measuring the value per service was anchored in the categories; very low value (1), low value (2), somewhat low value (3), neither low nor high value (4), somewhat high value (5), high value (6), very high value (7) and unknown (0). The services measured are (1) intelligence, (2) problem solving, (3) partner search, (4) assistance at fairs and trade missions (5) presence of diplomat at fairs, contract signing/ceremonies. Intelligence is subdivided into the areas i.e. market information, (trade) cultural information, regulatory information, information about public tenders.

Finally, it is important to note that this research measures the overall value of CD and the CD per service, from two perspectives. First respondents are asked to indicate, to what extent they value CD (services) in the host country they last used CD. The second perspective is based on the value of CD (services), disregarding the host country in which they last used CD. Measuring the value of CD (services) specifically on the host country in which the respondents last used CD services, serves the purpose of isolating the value of CD to a specific institutional country profile and under specific service quality conditions. By measuring CD (service) value without isolating it to a specific host country, it would not have been viable to measure the hypothesized relationships based on the institutional country profile and service quality. In contrast, measuring CD (service) value in general gives the ability to measure the CD value for both users and non-users, which provides a complete picture of the value SMEs attach to CD (services). It has therefore been decided to measure CD (services) in two perspectives.

The aforementioned leads us to the development of four measurement categories for the value of CD (services):

1. Overall CD value in general
2. Value per CD service in general
3. Overall CD value per host country
4. Value per CD service per host country

The value of CD (services) in general are used for descriptive purposes and it is used to determine to what extent commercial diplomacy is valued from both a user and non user perspective. The hypothesized relationships are however measurement on the value of CD value per country. This allows us to plot all determinants i.e. client firm characteristics, institutional country profile and service quality on one single variable 'Overall CD value per country'. Additionally, the analysis of the specific CD services are also plotted against the institutional country profile and client firm characteristics to depict if certain services are more valuable for SMEs with certain client firm characteristics or in a specific institutional settings. In this instance the institutional settings are plotted against the value SMEs attach to CD services per country. The client firm characteristics are, however, plotted against the value SMEs attach to CD services in general, in order to increase the reliability by controlling for specific host country characteristics.

### 3.4.3 Service quality

The most dominant model in measuring service quality is the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) which makes use of a gap analysis. This study, however, uses the SERVPERF model to measure the perceived service quality. The SERVPERF model is a function of the widely used SERVQUAL model and addresses some of the reliability and validity issues. Many studies provide evidence that a performance only measurement exhibits greater reliability and validity than the different score measures of SERVQUAL based on the gap or difference between expectations of customers and the perceptions about the provided service (Babakus et al 1992; Brady et al., 2002). In later work Parasuraman et al. (1994) also confirms that if maximizing predictive power is the key objective, the perception-only scale outperforms all other measurement options in measuring the service quality. The SERVPERF methods is therefore used instead of the SERVQUAL measurement. Parasuraman et al. (1994) revisited his previous 22 item scale into a 21 items scale covering five dimensions. The 21 items measure five dimensions; (1) tangibles, (2) assurance, (3) responsiveness, (4) reliability and (5) empathy.

**Table 3 Performance indicators definitions from Landrum et al., 2007.**

| Performance indicators | Definition  | Items | Reliability ( <i>a</i> ) |
|------------------------|---|-------|--------------------------|
| <b>Tangibles</b>       | Physical representation of the service  | 4     | .488                     |
| <b>Assurance</b>       | Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence | 2     | .517                     |
| <b>Responsiveness</b>  | Willingness to help client firms and to provide prompt services                       | 3     | .826                     |
| <b>Reliability</b>     | Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately                     | 4     | .953                     |
| <b>Empathy</b>         | Caring individualized attention provided to clients                                   | 3     | .822                     |

Parasuraman et al. (1994) advices to adapt the items to the circumstances of the service provider which in this case are the foreign posts. In the case of CD, 16 items were meaningful and included in to the model of measuring the performance indicators of service quality of CD . The 16 items can be found in Appendix I. The 16 performance items are measured on a 7-point likert scale with the categories; strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), disagree somewhat (3), neither agree nor disagree (4), agree somewhat (5), agree (6), strongly agree (7) and a category

unknown (0) for respondents who did not know how to answer the performance indicators. SERVPERF is a widely used model and the use of published scales is beneficial for the reliability. Nevertheless a reliability analysis is performed to assess the internal consistency of the 5 dimensions. We calculated the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) for all 5 performance indicators to assess the reliability. Responsiveness ( $\alpha = .826$ ), reliability ( $\alpha = .953$ ) and empathy ( $\alpha = .822$ ) performance indicators are highly reliable. The main issue arises with the variables tangibles ( $\alpha = 4.88$ ) and assurance ( $\alpha = .517$ ). The Cronbach's alpha of tangibles was .488. The low Alpha was partially caused by a negative item-total correlation of item 9 with item 7 and 8. Deleting item 9 from the construct increased the alpha to .594. This is still below the acceptable value of .7 (Field, 2009). The Cronbach's alpha of assurance is .517. The construct consisted of two items. Item one is the knowledge of employees and item two measures the courtesy of employees. Since the knowledge of employees and courteousness of employees are interrelated but also divergent, a Cronbach's alpha under the threshold of .7, with merely two items can be expected. Nevertheless the scale of tangibles and assurance still measure what was intended and we therefore still include the 4 items of tangibles and the two items of assurance into the analysis. The aggregate of the five performance indicators form the service quality. The reliability analysis indicated that the service quality construct based on the 5 performance indicators is highly reliable ( $\alpha = .897$ ).

### 3.4.4 Institutional country profile

Inspired by Scott's (1995) three institutional pillars, Kostova (1997) introduced a three dimensional country institutional profile constituting of the governmental policies (1) regulatory), the widely shared social knowledge (2) cognitive) and the value systems (3) normative), which affect domestic business activities. Kostova noted that the institutional profile loses meaning when it is generalized across a broad set of issues. Subsequently other authors operationalize the institutional profile for different domains. Kostova (1997) used this model for quality management, Busenitz et al. (2000) adjusted and tested the model for entrepreneurship and Descotes et al., (2007) described the relevant regulatory, cognitive and normative pillars of the institutional environment for exporting SMEs. This study draws on the application of the institutional profile of Descotes et al. (2007), in order to identify the institutions which affect the value of CD. To increase the construct validity of the institutional construct, this research adopted the view of the institutional profile of the authors; Kostova, (1999) , Busenitz et al. (2007), and Descotes et al., (2007), and divides institutions into the regulative, cognitive and normative dimensions. In order to tailor the institutional country profile to the specific domain of CD, adaptations were made in the original model of Descotes et al., (2007). The institutional country profile was operationalized by measuring (1) the security of transactions and contracts within the host country (regulative), (2) the (reliable) information availability of the country (cognitive) and (3) the value attached to government involvement (normative). To measure the three institutional pillars, a total of 13 items were included on a 7-point-likert scale. The 13 items were measured by asking the respondents their level of agreement statements reflecting the regulative, cognitive and normative pillars within the host country. The 13 items measured can be found in Appendix I. Consistent with the categories used in measuring service quality, the 13 institutional country profile items are measured with the categories, strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), disagree somewhat (3), neither agree nor disagree (4), agree somewhat (5), agree (6), strongly agree (7) and a category unknown (0) for respondents who did not know how to answer the statements.

We assessed the internal consistency of the 4-item regulative, 6-item cognitive and 3-item normative pillar. The Cronbach's alpha was respectively;  $\alpha = .878$ ,  $\alpha = .917$  and  $\alpha = .548$ . The regulative and the cognitive Cronbach's alpha is well above the .7 rule of thumb. The normative dimensions has however a rather low reliability. The low alpha was partially caused by a negative item-total correlation of item 13 with item 11 and 12. Deleting item 13 from the construct increased the reliability to  $\alpha = .808$ . We also assessed the internal consistency of the institutional country profile as a whole. The Cronbach's alpha of the three dimensions together forming the institutional

country profile is highly reliable (3 items;  $\alpha = .810$ ). We therefore also take the institutional country as an aggregate of the three pillars in account. Before computing this variable, we reversed the values of the normative pillar, since they implied a positive outcome although the regulative and cognitive pillar state a negative outcome.

In addition to measuring the institutional country profile this research also makes a distinction between developed and developing countries. It is suggested that the institutional profile in developing countries is more favourable than the institutional profile in a developed market (Djankov et al., 2003; Lederman et al., 2009). We are therefore interested whether commercial diplomacy is more valued in developing countries. The classification of developed/developing countries is classified according to the IMF world economic outlook report (IMF, 2010).

### **3.4.5 Client firm characteristics**

The client firm characteristics is the third section of the research model and reflects the resources and specific characteristics of an SME. We included four characteristics, the international experience, the number of employees, the business network within the host country and the extent to which SMEs have foreign public customers/partners.

Different categories were adopted for the measurement of each variable. International experience was operationalized by measuring the number of years the organization has international experience. The number of years of international experience was measured in terms of export experience on a 6-point-likert scale: no experience, <1–10, 11–20, 21–30, 31–40 and >40 years experience. The number of employees were measured on a 4-points-likert-scale with the categories 1–9, 10–50, 51–250 and 250 > which reflect the micro, small and medium sized firm according to the EU commission. For this research we adopted the same scales as proposed by the European commission but we also added an item >250 to avoid a ceiling effect in our sample since companies were included in the sample up to 300 employees. The business network was measured in terms of development of the network which led us to develop a 3-point-likert-scale with the categories (1) no available network, (2) underdeveloped network and a (3) developed network. The variable 'foreign public customers/partners' are measured by the extent to which SMEs are involved with foreign public partners/customers on a 5-point-likert-scale from (1) Never, (2) Seldom, (3) Occasionally, (4) Very frequently and (5) almost always.

## **3.5 Quality of the data**

This section discusses the quality and fitness of the data used in this research. Structured questionnaires are widely used in data gathering for quantitative research. For the respondents to answer detailed questions, a certain extent of involvement is necessary. The questionnaire was self administered by export managers or the owners of the organization, making it a subjective source since the involvement, expertise, experience or possible ownership of the respondents can create bias. Some negative effects of self administration have been mitigated by a pre-selection of respondents in the telephone request, by only selecting those export managers/ owners who were responsible for the overall sales/export abroad. By doing so, only respondents with involvement and a general oversight within the firm are included making the respondents a more reliable representative of the company.

A second attention point is devoted to the possible overestimation of SMEs participating in this questionnaire since they have been in contact with foreign posts and therefore more willing to fill out the questionnaire. Companies in contact with foreign posts were therefore more willing to fill out the questionnaire. A possible overestimation of respondents who used CD services is therefore likely. Caution is therefore necessary in generalizing the results of this research due to a possible overestimation of companies using CD services.



The tests used in this research are based on pair wise deletion of cases. This choice has been made rather than list-wise deletion since many respondents filled in questions with 'don't know' and a few did not finish the questionnaire at all. Respondents filling in, 'don't know', are seen in this questionnaire as missing data in testing the association between customer value and the predefined independent variables. In order to still be able to analyze the data, pair wise deletion is applied.

The variables in this research have a rather high missing value rate on institutional variables, the overall value, and on the tangibles dimension of service quality. The variable 'overall CD value per country' was based on an average of five items, and 42%, of one of the five items, had missing values, leaving an N of 22. Since the other items still provided data of the perceived value, a threshold of 1 missing item was installed which provided 3 additional valid cases for this study bringing the N to 25 of the dependent variable. For the regulative pillar, the cognitive pillar and the institutional country profile as an aggregate of the three pillars a threshold of minus 1 item was installed since not all respondents knew how to fill out all items. This increased the number of cases from the regulative from 12 to 19, for the cognitive from 13 to 22 and for the institutional country profile as from 13 to 18. No threshold was installed for the normative pillar since this construct only consisted out of two items, after omitting one item due to reliability issues. Moreover a threshold of minus one item is installed for the service quality construct since many missing values were observed in the tangibles which resulted in an N of 13 of the service quality construct. Many SMEs have not been to a foreign post which makes it hard to evaluate the physical representation (tangibles). After allowing for one missing item in the service quality construct the N increased to 28. We checked the robustness of the threshold of minus 1 by first including only the cases with no missing values which was subsequently checked with the cases which had 1 item missing. The analysis did not provide different data which would change the conclusion of this study.

### 3.6 Analysis

The method of data analysis is based on quantitative and qualitative approaches which will be discussed in the following section. The quantitative data from the online-questionnaire is subject to statistical analysis and will be analyzed with SPSS, software for predictive analytics. The data collected within the online-questionnaire were automatically exported from NETQ to the SPSS system, avoiding manual input bias. At first an exploratory analysis took place, creating a Table with the Mean (*M*), Standard deviations (*SD*), the minimum (*Min*) and maximum (*Max*), the scale reliability by measuring the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and the number of items of which the constructs are composed (Appendix J & K)

The significance levels are used as suggested by Coolican (1990);

|                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| "Significant"             | $0.05 > P < 0.01$  |
| "Highly significant"      | $0.01 > P < 0.001$ |
| "Very highly significant" | $0.001 > P$        |

Besides the use of the significance levels according to Coolican (1990), we add an additional level of significance due to our small sample size causing low statistical power and coin it as "Moderately significant"  $0.10 > P < 0.05$ . It is understood that this research has a low generalizability and using mixed/higher probability levels makes the chance of a type 1 error larger. Nevertheless in light of the research context, a field in which very little previous research has been conducted, we decided to be more liberal and relax the significance level to .10. Moreover almost all the reported probabilities are based on a one-tailed-test since all the formulated hypothesis are based on a one-way direction.

The qualitative data obtained from telephone questionnaire, the open-ended question in the questionnaire and are combined and categorized according to the 'rationale for not using CD, 'rationale for using CD and the service quality of CD (Appendix P).

Moreover, the semi-structured interview was analyzed by transcription (Appendix E). The semi-structured interview was promptly transcribed which is in the benefit of more reliable results (Saunders et al., 2009). The purpose of the qualitative data is to complement aid interpretation and triangulate with the quantitative data. In the findings, the most relevant quotes are used to clarify or discuss the quantitative results.

The analysis and structure of the findings (Chapter 4) took place according to the objectives combining both qualitative and quantitative data. By doing so, the static quantitative data is accompanied by qualitative quotes and explanations. After conducting an exploratory analysis, this research starts off by assessing the results of the first objective. Via descriptive statistics and qualitative data the rationale for using or not using CD is assessed and is finalized by conducting a Chi square test to identify whether the use of CD services is associated with the size of the SME, the international experience and the number of foreign public customers/partners the SME has.

The second analysis sheds light on the extent to which CD is valued which is analyzed by means of descriptive statistics and qualitative data. After a clear image on the extent to which CD is valued by SMEs, this research starts analyzing the strength and existence of the hypothesized relationships by means of bivariate correlation analysis. We start off by assessing the relationship between the service quality and the customer value and subsequently describe how the service quality of CD is perceived. The second category of relationships assessed are between the institutional country profile and the customer value. Finally the relationships between the client firm characteristics (number of employees, international experience, business network and foreign public customers/partners) are assessed. After assessing the hypothesized relationships individually, a multiple regression analysis is performed in order to test whether the results hold when including the variables into one regression model. This analysis is finalized by elucidating on the value improvement points brought up by SMEs and will subsequently be reflected upon by an expert in the field of international, economical and social policy of SMEs.

# 4 Findings

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the data derived from the telephone questionnaire, online-questionnaires and semi-structured interview. The qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed parallel and categorized per objective. This chapter starts with the descriptive statistics of the variables used in 4.2. Section 4.3 presents the data regarding the rationale for using or not using CD services. Section 4.4 will present the results of the extent of value attached to CD services. Section 4.5 and 4.6 are concerned with presenting the data of the determinants of CD value. Finally, section 4.7 will present the improvement points submitted by SMEs and the reflection upon these improvements points by an expert in the field. Together, these results attempt to answer the central research question.

*“To what extent is CD perceived valuable, which factors determine the CD value and which improvement points can increase the value of CD from an SME perspective?”*

## 4.2 Descriptive

The sample of this research consist of SMEs who have been in contact with foreign posts within the last two years and a large group of SMEs who have not been in contact with foreign posts. In section 4.3, 4.4 and 4.7 representing respectively objective 1, 2 and 4, both users and non-users of commercial diplomacy are taken into account. However the explanatory part of this research, representing the third objective, ‘measuring the determinants of the value of CD services’ in 4.5 and 4.6 can, however, only be measured from a user-perspective since proposed independents variables of CD as service quality and host country characteristics necessitates the respondents to have actually used CD services. This research therefore splits the descriptive statistics in two groups. Within Appendix J we visualized the descriptive statistics of the construct which have been filled out by both users and non users of commercial diplomacy. Within Appendix K we visualized the constructs which have solely been filled out by the SMEs who used CD services. Both descriptive Tables give simple summary statistics of the key construct and summarize the reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of constructs consisting of more than 1 item.

## 4.3 The rationale and determinants for using or not using CD

Before analyzing to what extent CD is valued, the *use* of CD services is analyzed. The use of CD services and the value attached are interrelated yet distinct from one another. The use of CD services depicts the frequency of using or not using CD services, but the value depicts the ‘*worth in usefulness*’.

### 4.3.1 Rationale of using foreign posts

In the questionnaire, merely 33% (38 out of 115) of the SMEs used CD services within the last two years. Of the ‘user’ group 37 respondents indicated which services they used. As shown in Table 4 a large 54% of the SMEs used the foreign posed for market information purposes, 32% for (trade) cultural information, 30% for information about rules and regulations and 24% for partners search activities. Foreign posts were less used for assistance at trade disputes, information about public tenders, assistance at fairs and trade missions and the presence of diplomat at meetings and negotiations. Interestingly grouping the services most frequently used (apart from the information about public tenders), it is evident that the so called ‘intelligence’ related services (i.e. cultural information, regulatory information, information on markets) are more frequently used than the relationship-based service such as the presence of a diplomat at meetings, assistance with trade disputes, assistance at fairs and missions). The intelligence services represent 61% (47 out of 77) of the services used by foreign posts.

Furthermore it is interesting to note that the services; presence of diplomat (Backing of diplomat) and the information about public tenders were only used by SMEs with several/many foreign public customers/partners.

**Table 4 Type of service used (N=37)**

| Type of service                            | Counts | %   |
|--|--------|-----|
| Market information                         | 20     | 54% |
| (Trade) Cultural information               | 12     | 32% |
| Information about rules and regulations    | 11     | 30% |
| Partner-search                             | 9      | 24% |
| Presence of diplomat (Backing of diplomat) | 6      | 16% |
| Information about public tenders           | 4      | 11% |
| Assistance with trade disputes             | 4      | 11% |
| Assistance with fairs and missions         | 4      | 11% |
| Other                                      | 7      | 19% |

### 4.3.2 Where are foreign posts used

The SMEs using CD services within the last two years were asked in which country they last used CD services. A striking 86% (32 out of 37) of the foreign posts addressed for CD services were located in Non-European countries. Additionally the foreign posts addressed were in many cases located in developing countries according to the emerging/developing country list of the IMF where 70% (26 out of the 37) foreign posts addressed were located in a developing country. This data gives an indication that exporting SMEs address foreign posts mostly in Non-European and developing countries.

### 4.3.3 Rationale for not using the foreign posts

Respondents who did not use CD were asked for their reason for not using CD services. The following section will elaborate on the reasons and responses for not using CD in both a numerical and qualitative manner.

**Table 5 Reason for not using CD services (N=75)**

| Reason for not using CD services        | Counts | %   |
|---|--------|-----|
| Finding our own way abroad              | 50     | 67% |
| Unaware of CD services                  | 30     | 40% |
| Use of other (commercial) organizations | 10     | 13% |
| Foreign posts are hard to reach         | 7      | 9%  |
| Does not fit our needs                  | 6      | 8%  |
| Bad experience                          | 4      | 5%  |
| Other                                   | 6      | 8%  |

#### Finding our own way abroad

From the respondents not using CD, 67% (50 out of 75 -users) found their own way abroad. The reason why SMEs found their own way abroad is elucidated by the qualitative data. Most respondents reasoned they were finding their own way abroad because they were exporting within Europe. SMEs claimed that the European market is a familiar market in which they had experience. An owner in the packing industry stated “we feel at home and have experience in the European market and we therefore do not need support from foreign posts”. Besides the familiarity and experience many SMEs have in European markets, respondents also claimed that the European export environment does not necessitate governmental involvement. As one international sales manager of electronic equipment manufacturer stated: “the free trade zone established in the EU does not necessitate

embassy support since trade barriers and bureaucratic procedures are eliminated". In addition to the familiarity with the host country or a favourable export environment, the industry in which SMEs operated was also used as an argument for finding their own way abroad instead of using foreign post services. Respondents argued that the industry they were in was too complex for using CD services. An export manager of a pioneering business in bio degradable packing material stated; "our industry is very knowledge intensive. Finding e.g. partners is an activity which cannot be done by foreign posts due to the complexity of the product due to very specific requirements attached to our suppliers and customers". Another industry related reason for not using foreign posts was because respondents believed their industry is very transparent. An export manager of a software supplier in the maritime sector stated "our industry consists out of a few big players. One could say, "like knows like". Therefore our business development goes via references and thus foreign posts are not necessary for us to explore new markets".

As can be concluded from the aforementioned, the existing experience within the host country, an export friendly host country environment, a complex industry/product or very transparent industry seem to be important motives for SMEs to find their own way abroad instead of contacting foreign posts.

### **Unawareness of CD services**

Another essential reason for not using CD is the observed unawareness of the existence of CD services for SMEs. This study shows that striking 40% (Table 5) of the SMEs do not use CD services because they were unaware of its existence. Moreover, diving deeper into the client firm characteristics, we discovered by means of a chi-square test that the unawareness rate of SMEs with  $\leq 20$  years of international experience is significantly higher than for the group who has  $\geq 21$  years of international experience ( $P(\chi^2 > 2,969 < ,085)$ ). The unawareness percentage of SMEs with  $\leq 20$  years of international experience is 51% whereas within the group of SMEs with  $21 \geq$  years of international experience, a significantly smaller, 32% is unaware.

In addition to the clarification on the distribution of unawareness by means of quantitative data, this research obtained qualitative data to aid interpretation and add complementary information on the observed unawareness percentage. In the following three statements, the responses of SMEs are depicted after explaining respondents in the telephone questionnaire, that CD services exists to support SMEs.

1. "We export for 30 years in both European and non European markets but we have never heard of CD services offered for SME. Foreign posts should clearly communicate in which areas they can be useful in order to promote exports" (Internal sales manager in the maritime industry).
2. "I thought foreign posts were mainly focused on MNEs. We were completely unaware that foreign posts offer services to promote internationalization for SMEs" (Owner of a Bed & Mattress wholesaler).
3. "I did not know that a foreign posts could answer export related questions. It is very useful to know since we are increasing our focus on export" (Export manager of sports equipment).

The aforementioned statements nuance the unawareness measurement and brings a distinction in the extent of unawareness to light. Not only is there a group who is unaware of the existence of CD, another group of SMEs is aware of the existence of CD, but believes that CD services are provided to big MNEs instead of SMEs, and is thus unaware of SME's as a target group of CD.

### **Use of other (commercial) organizations**

The third most important reason for not using CD services is the use of other organizations where 13% indicated to use other organizations to find their way abroad. The organizations mentioned were: KVK, FENEDEX and the EVD

### **Foreign posts are hard to reach**

Of the respondents 9% stated that foreign posts were hard to reach. As one exporter stated "at fairs and trade missions I realize I should make more use of CD services but in reality I don't. This is partly because there is no clear overview of employees, where they work and telephone numbers of embassies, they could really improve this" (Export manager of a fruits and vegetables supplier).

### **Does not fit our needs**

A rather small 8% feels that the offered CD services of foreign posts does not fit the needs of their organization. Nevertheless one exporter in the flower industry elaborated on the reason why CD serviced did not fit their needs and stated; " I certainly have wishes for public support, but foreign posts are not able to do anything with those wishes. Foreign posts cannot become specialist. This makes it hard for foreign posts to provide meaningful services, besides the general market information or a possible visa application".

### **Bad experience**

Very few respondents (5%) did not use CD services due to bad experiences. One of the respondents who had a bad experience stated; "Foreign posts are too bureaucratic and rigid regarding the invitation of partners from outside the EU" (Export manager of a conveyor belt producer).

The reason for not using CD services depicted in Table 5 area not mutually exclusive, yet gave a good insight together with the qualitative data of the reason for not using foreign post. From the aforementioned it can be concluded that the reasons for not using CD are diverse. The main reason for not using foreign posts is because SMEs find their own way abroad which is largely due to the existing experience within the host country, an export friendly host country environment , a complex industry/product or a transparent industry. Interestingly the second largest reason for not using foreign posts is the fact that a large group of SMEs is unaware of the CD services offered. And finally a significantly smaller, yet important group did not use CD services with reasons related to the content and quality of the services i.e. foreign posts are hard to reach, does not fit our needs, bad experience.

#### 4.3.4 Client firm characteristics and use of foreign posts

In the previous section we discussed which services are most frequently used and gave insight into which countries exporting SMEs mostly use CD. This sub-chapter is finalized by testing whether CD is more frequently used by micro, small or medium or large firms (N=115), whether international experience affects the use of CD (N=115) and whether SMEs with many public customers/partners more often use CD (N=111). In order to test this, a chi-square-test of homogeneity is performed.

**Table 6 Use of foreign posts versus client firm characteristics**

| Use of foreign post | 1-50 Employees<br>Micro/<br>Small | 51-300 Employees<br>Medium/<br>Large | 0 - 30 years<br>International<br>experience | 31 ≥ years<br>International<br>experience | No Foreign public<br>customers/partners | Foreign public<br>customers/partners |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>          | 26%                               | 42%                                  | 25%   | 51%                                       | 23%                                     | 45%                                  |
| <b>No</b>           | 74%                               | 58%                                  | 75%   | 49%                                       | 77%                                     | 55%                                  |

Our data indicates that foreign posts are significantly  $P(\chi^2 > 6.808 < .078)$  less used by micro/small firms (1-50 employees) and more often by medium/large firms (51-300 employees). Within the group of micro/small firms, 26% used CD services whereas the percentage of use of CD services within the group of medium/large firms is 42%.

Apart from the size of the organization, also the years of international experience shows a significant trend. SMEs with more international experience are more likely to use foreign posts  $P(\chi^2 > 10.411 < .034)$ . The trend is especially visible between the SMEs with 31 ≥ years of international experience and the SMEs with ≤ 30 years of international experience. Within the group of SMEs with ≤ 30 years of international experience, 25% used CD services whereas a significantly larger 51% used CD services within the group of SMEs with 31 ≥ years of international experience.

Several reasons for the observed increase in use for larger and more experienced firms can be posed; such as the likelihood that larger and more experienced firms are more active abroad, or the use of CD services is more integrated in their international strategy due to more international experience. These explanations can however not be verified as they are not in the scope of this research. We can however measure one potential reason as to why less experienced and smaller SMEs use CD less often. The assumption asserts that smaller and/or less experienced SMEs are less aware of the existence of CD. We examined this assumption by means of a chi-square test. We found no significant difference in the number of employees and the unawareness rate. We did however find a significant difference ( $P < .10$ ) in the unawareness rates in relation to the years of international experience. Interestingly, the group of SMEs with ≤ 20 years of international experience had a 51% unawareness percentage in relation to a 32 % unawareness rate within the group of SMEs with 21 ≥ years of international experience. Unawareness of CD can therefore form a partial explanation in the observed lower use of SMEs with ≤ 20 years of international experience.

The third and final client firm characteristic examined the extent by which SMEs have foreign public customers/partners in relation to the use of CD services. Our data supports the line of thought that CD is more often used by SMEs with foreign public customers/partners abroad  $P(\chi^2 > 8.076 < .044)$ . Within the group of SMEs with foreign public customers/partners, 45% used CD services while only 23% of the group of SMEs without foreign public customers/partners used CD services. This shows that especially SMEs doing business in foreign public spheres use CD.

The observed data gives evidence that CD is more often used by the larger and more internationally experienced SMEs with many foreign public customers abroad. Moreover, one potential determinant for the lower use of CD services in relation to the international experience is the higher unawareness rate observed by SMEs with  $\leq 20$  years of international experience.

## 4.4 The Value of Commercial diplomacy (services)

This subchapter presents the findings of the second objective of this research; 'to what extent is CD perceived valuable by SMEs'. We start this sub-chapter with an analysis of the overall value of CD and examine the 5 value statements posed to both users and non users of CD. Moreover an analysis is performed on the respondents unaware of CD services to examine if this group potentially values CD. After analyzing *if* commercial diplomacy is valued, we analyze *what* is valued by means of gaining more insight into which specific services are valued by SMEs.

### 4.4.1 Value of Commercial Diplomacy

We divided the total sample in respondents who used CD within the last two years, respondents who did not use CD services within the last two years and the aggregate of both, which constitutes the total sample of respondents aware of CD. Respondents who used CD services within the last two years attached somewhat high value to CD ( $M = 4.99$ , on a 1-7 likert scale). Respondents not using CD services attached significantly less value to CD ( $M = 3.35$ , on a 1-7 likert scale) which can be described as somewhat low value. The aggregate of both users and non users depicts the overall value of CD and can be best described as moderately valuable ( $M = 4.26$ , on a 1-7 likert scale).

The aforementioned mean scores demonstrate the central tendency of the value construct of CD. The mean score of the value construct does however not portray the distribution of value among the respondents nor is it able to identify value differences between the five items measuring the value construct. To address this gap we enclosed the distribution of the value construct in Appendix O, and we subsequently examined the distribution of the five items individually in the following section. The five items were measured by posing five value statements towards respondents on a 7-points-likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Table 7 demonstrates the percentage of respondents agreeing<sup>1</sup> on the five value statements thereby providing a better overview of the extent by which CD is valued by SMEs. A total of 65% (74 out of 115) of the respondents were included<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 7 Extent of value attached to the five value statements**

| Agreement percentage/ Mean score                              | Users<br>(N=32) | Non-user<br>(N=42) | Total<br>(N=74) |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Makes exporting/operating abroad easier                       | 75%             | 27%                | 42%             |
| Valuable instrument for export promotion/operating abroad     | 69%             | 21%                | 42%             |
| Disappearance makes exporting/operating abroad more difficult | 69%             | 12%                | 37%             |
| Perform Tasks quicker   | 56%             | 14%                | 32%             |
| Increases exports/ results                                    | 56%             | 12%                | 31%             |

<sup>1</sup> Agree is a combination of the categories 'Agree somewhat', 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree' and are re-coded in Agree.

<sup>2</sup> Approximately 10% (11 out of 115) of the respondents did not finish the questionnaire up to this point and are handled as 'missing data'. An additional 26% (30 out of 115) respondents were unaware of CD services and therefore excluded from rating value of CD services in an evaluative context. SMEs unaware of CD services were not taken into account in this Table since they were instructed to give a rating on the potential value rather than the evaluative value.



### **Users-Non users of CD**

Both users and non users responded on the five statements depicted in Table 7. A large discrepancy is visible in the agreement percentage of both groups on the 5 posed value statements. Table 7 demonstrates that most respondents who value CD also actually used it within the last two years. In contrast most respondents who did not use CD within the last two years, also did not value CD.

Table 7 displays that on all counts the majority of respondents who used CD also see it as a valuable instrument (69%) which makes exporting/operating abroad easier (75%), quicker (56%) and more effective in terms of export increase and results (56%). The respondents within the non-user group who share a similar opinion as the majority of the users do( i.e. CD as a valuable instrument), is significantly smaller. Merely 21% of the respondents who did not use CD within the last two years see CD as a valuable instrument, 27% believes it makes exporting/operating abroad easier, 14% believes it helps them to perform tasks quicker and merely 12% believes CD is an effective instrument in terms of export increase and results.

Where the agreement percentage differ between users and non-users of CD, the distribution of the agreement percentages of the 5 statements are similar between both groups. Highest agreements rates were given on the statement "CD makes exporting/operating abroad easier" and for both groups the fewest respondents acknowledged that CD increases their exports/results. Although fewest respondents acknowledged that CD increases exports/results, it is still the majority of the respondents who used CD who acknowledge an increase in exports/results from CD (56%; 18 out of 32).

### **Total Sample**

The overall image which can be withdrawn from the total sample (users & non users) is that a rather small 42% (31 out of 74) sees CD as a valuable instrument for exporting/operating abroad and an equally large 42% believes it makes exporting/operating abroad easier for their organization. Less SMEs however (37%; 27 out 74) believe that the disappearance of CD would make it more difficult for their organization to operate/export abroad and the smallest number of SMEs believed that CD allowed them to perform tasks quicker (32%; 24 out of 74) or leads to an increase in exporting/results abroad (31%; 23 out of 74).

It is also important to note that the percentage of respondents disagreeing on the five statements is rather low. The largest number of respondents disagreed on the statement "disappearance of foreign posts would make it harder for their organization to export or operate abroad" (31%; 23 out 74). Instead of agreeing or disagreeing on the statements, many respondents neither agreed nor disagreed or did not know how to answer the statements. This is especially apparent where respondents were asked whether they believed that CD services allowed them to perform tasks quicker and if CD is responsible for an increase in export/results for their firm.

From the total sample it can be concluded that rather small group of SMEs agree that CD is a valuable instrument which makes exporting/operating abroad easier, quicker and more effective in terms of export increase and results. Nevertheless we can conclude that the majority of SMEs who used CD services within the last two years also value the service.

To aid interpretation to Table 7, respondents also commented in the telephone questionnaire why they valued CD. Respondents showed varied answers which illustrate that CD indeed make exporting/operating abroad easier, quicker and more effective in terms of export increase and results.

“Foreign posts are the organ of touch for the Dutch trade and industry. They are physically there and the local knowledge, experience and relations they possess have immense value” (Export manager of a packing material producer).

“ For an SME like us, public services abroad are crucial. We cannot easily address a local agent since we do not have the financial resources” (Export manager of rubber products).

“ Finding a reliable partners is very difficult in some countries and embassies sometimes have a better vision on the reputation of potential partners” (Export managers in the agricultural sector).

“We regularly use Embassies and Consulates to explore new markets. We are currently exploring new markets in Eastern Europe where Embassies play a pivotal role introducing us to important contacts” (Export manager machinery production).

“The embassy brought us very quickly in contact with several potential partners which would either not be possible without the help of the diplomat or it would have taken us a very long time” (International sales manager in the automotive industry).

From these quotes it is observable that financial limitations, the lack of (reliable) information and no existing network play an important role in the value of CD.

#### 4.4.2 Value per type of service from a user perspective

Where Table 7 gives a good indications *if* CD is valued and by how many, Table 8 will elaborate on *what* is valued by examining the value of specific CD services offered. Respondents were asked to rate the value per service on a 7-point-likert scale from ‘1-Very low value’ to ‘7-Very high value’ to a list of the 8 most common CD services.

**Table 8 Value of CD services**

|   | N  | Mode | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|----|------|------|----------------|
| <b>Information about rules and regulations</b>    | 27 | 6    | 5.41 | 1.19           |
| <b>(Trade) Cultural information</b>               | 27 | 6    | 5.22 | 1.05           |
| <b>Information about public tenders</b>           | 21 | 6    | 5.14 | 1.68           |
| <b>Market information</b>                         | 29 | 6    | 5.03 | 1.43           |
| <b>Presence of diplomat (Backing of diplomat)</b> | 26 | 6    | 5.00 | 1.36           |
| <b>Assistance with trade disputes</b>             | 23 | 6    | 4.83 | 1.61           |
| <b>Assistance with fairs and missions</b>         | 23 | 6    | 4.83 | 1.37           |
| <b>Partner-search</b>                             | 26 | 6    | 4.69 | 1.72           |

The mean value scores given to the 8 CD services displayed in Table 8 do not deviate very much from each other. Nonetheless, Table 8 does show that the value attached to intelligence services (i.e. market information, information about rules and regulations, (trade) cultural information and information about public tenders) have a higher mean score than the relationship-based services (i.e. partners-search, assistance at trade disputes, fairs and trade mission, and the presence of a diplomat at negotiations and meetings). To examine whether any of these mean scores of CD services are significantly different from each other, we conducted a paired-samples-t-test. The results showed that none of the differences were significantly different from each other which means that the small observed mean value difference is very likely due to randomness. Additionally most SMEs rated all CD services as a high value service (Mode = 6, ‘High value’, scale of 1 -7). Interestingly, the frequency in use of CD services depicted in Table 4 compared to the value attached to CD services are disproportionate where the

intelligence services are a lot more frequently used (apart from information about public tenders) although not less valued. This signals that *the frequency of use* of CD services is divergent from *the worth in usefulness* (value).

#### 4.4.3 Unaware respondents: Potential value of CD services

To examine whether SMEs unaware with CD services are unaware due to a lack of interest or inapplicability of the CD services, they were asked whether they believe CD services have potential value for their organization after a brief explanation and overview of the CD services. Table 9 presents the results of the potential value attached to CD service from the respondents unaware of CD services.

**Table 9 Potential value of CD services for previously unaware SMEs (N=30)**

| Potentially valuable instrument for exporting/operating abroad | Counts | %   |
|--|--------|-----|
| Agree  | 13     | 43% |
| Disagree   | 6      | 20% |
| Neither agree nor disagree                                     | 7      | 23% |
| Don't know   | 4      | 14% |

Of the respondents unaware of CD services, 43% (13 out of 30) believe that CD services have potential value for their organization and merely 20% (6 out of 30) does not believe that CD services have potential value for their organization. Interestingly a large percentage of the previously unaware SMEs believed that CD services are a potentially valuable instrument which increases the importance of addressing the unawareness rates of SMEs.

### 4.5 Determinants of Customer Value

In the next subchapter we examine the hypothesized relationships. We separately tested the hypotheses by means of bivariate correlation coefficients. We examine the hypothesized relationships separately and divide this subchapter in the sections, service quality, institutional country profile and the client firm characteristics. Each section includes the examination of the relationships and is complemented by qualitative data to aid interpretation to the construct and the hypothesized relationships.

#### 4.5.1 Parametric testing

The analysis of the determinants of the customer value is based on a rather small sample size (N=25) for the dependent variable 'Overall CD value per country' and the lowest independent variable 'institutional regulations' is based on N=19. It is suggested that the researcher should at least check that the distribution is mound shaped in order to check the normal distribution assumption. The histograms of all variables have been analyzed and the data is approximately normally distributed. The histogram of the dependent variable is depicted in Appendix O, Figure 3. Furthermore scatter plots have been produced to check for any outliers and to verify a linear relationship. The normal distribution, linearity and possible outliers have been checked for and these assumptions were not violated. Finally to make sure the use of parametric tests would not present different results, variables were both analyzed by means of more robust non parametric tests and by means of parametric tests which presented similar results.

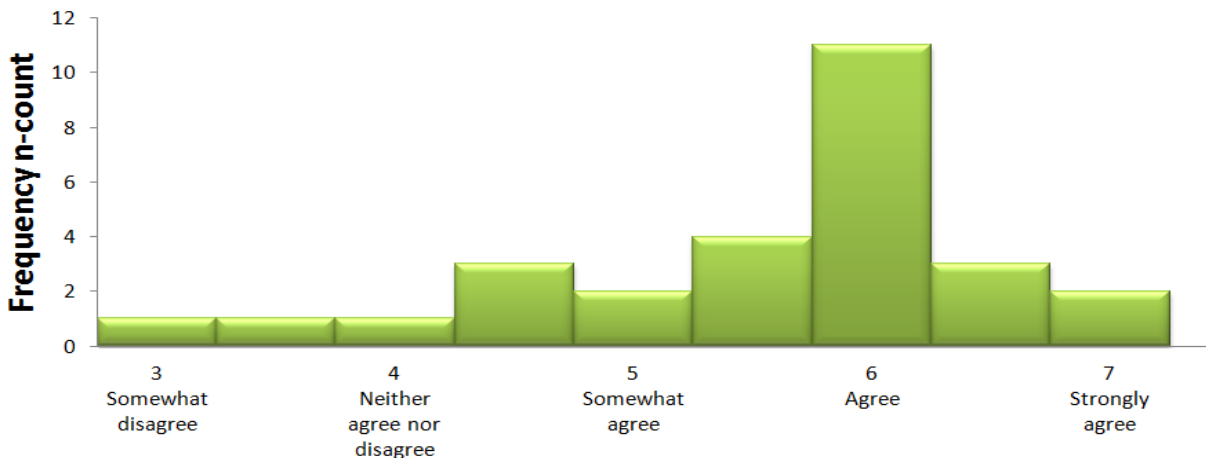
#### 4.5.2 Service Quality

For measuring the service quality, the aggregate of the 5 performance dimensions: tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, reliability and empathy are used. We will start by describing the perceived service quality and will subsequently analyze the relation between the service quality and the value of CD.

The mean score of service quality can be interpreted as somewhat high quality ( $M = 5.38$ , on a 1-7 likert scale). The lowest score given by SMEs was a  $M = 2.69$  and the highest score given was a  $M = 6.94$ . Figure 2 visualizes the distribution of the service quality outcomes. Little deviation was observed while examining the 5 performance dimensions individually, compared to the overall service quality. Tangibles has the highest quality score  $M = 5.67$  and empathy has the lowest quality score  $M = 5.10$ .

The majority (57%, 16 out of 28) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed on all quality statement and a smaller number of respondents somewhat agreed (21%, 6 out of 28). This demonstrates that most users agree or even strongly agree that; (1) the physical representation of the foreign posts is in a good shape, (2) the commercial diplomats are knowledgeable and courteous, (3) the commercial diplomats are willing to help and deliver prompt service (4) the commercial diplomat is able to perform CD services dependably and accurately and at a last that the (5) the commercial diplomat understands the needs of SMEs and is able to provide individualized attention.

**Figure 2 Overall Service quality rating (N=28)**



Interestingly no respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed on the quality statements suggesting that no respondents believed the service quality was low to very low. Additionally merely 7% (2 out of the 28) of the respondents perceived the service quality as somewhat low by disagreeing somewhat on the quality statement and 14% (4 out of 28) neither agreed nor disagreed.

From the aforementioned it can be concluded that a large majority of the SMEs either somewhat agrees, agrees or even strongly agrees that foreign post deliver a quality service on all five performance dimensions. Moreover, there are no SMEs who disagree or strongly disagree on the quality statements and a small minority actually somewhat disagrees and, therefore, do not see CD as a quality service. The service quality outcomes are therefore very positive. There is, however, a large variance in quality per post. In addition to asking the respondents to rate several quality statements on the foreign post last contacted, we also asked respondents to rate the overall quality in general (Appendix M). We found that 37% of the respondents perceived a high variance in the quality per post. Several statements were posed to aid interpretation as to why SMEs perceive this variability in quality. One export manager in the animal nutrition industry stated; "Recently I have requested terms & conditions of payments in both India en Pakistan. The Netherlands Embassy in India provided excellent service whereas the embassy in Pakistan provided the opposite". Other respondents also gave a reason why they thought the variability existed and subscribed it to the business background and degree of business focus of the ambassador and the available employees and their background at the foreign posts; "We experience a big difference in quality between embassies but also per ambassador. In my opinion the difference in quality can be subscribed to the way of

working and the business background of the ambassador. Especially the available network which we can use varies a lot between embassies” (Export managers, food sector). Similarly an export manager in the agricultural sector stated; “For trade mission we are often in contact with embassies but the quality and use of these services very dependable on the available employees and the background of the employees. The ambassador plays an important role in this and it is very perceptible how useful a trade mission is in relation to the main focus of an ambassador, based on business or politics”(Anonymous).

To conclude the aforementioned, SMEs are in general satisfied with the service quality delivered by foreign posts. Nevertheless there is a large group of SMEs who believe that the quality varies strongly per foreign posts and subscribe this quality difference to the availability of employee, the available business network and the business background and business experience of commercial diplomats. Now that we have explicated on how the service quality is perceived, we will continue by examining the relation between the service quality SMEs perceived and the perceived value of CD.

**Table 10 Pearson's Correlation coefficients - Service quality on overall CD value**

| Variable         | Correlation Coefficient | P-Value | N  |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------|----|
| Service quality  | .477**                  | .012    | 22 |
| - Tangibles      | .466*                   | .054    | 12 |
| - Assurance      | .613***                 | .001    | 22 |
| - Responsiveness | .298*                   | .084    | 23 |
| - Reliability    | .329*                   | .067    | 22 |
| - Empathy        | .530***                 | .006    | 22 |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.1level (1tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1tailed).

\*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

We hypothesize that the service quality of foreign posts leads to an increase in the overall value of CD. We therefore computed a Pearson correlation coefficient for examining the relationship between the service quality and the perceived value per country. Table 10 displays the correlation coefficients between the CD value per country and the overall service quality and performance dimensions. The overall service quality ( $r=.477$ ) positively correlates with the value of CD per country and is significant. These results support hypothesis 1 which hypothesized a positive relation between the service quality and the value attached to CD. Replicating the analysis on the individual performance dimensions, Assurance ( $r=.613$ ) and Empathy ( $r=.530$ ) are highly significantly correlated with the value of CD. The Tangibles ( $r=.466$ ), Responsiveness ( $r=.289$ ) and Reliability ( $r=.329$ ) are moderately significant. The observed data therefore suggest that all five performance dimensions are positively associated with higher customer value. Moreover, the knowledge and courtesy of commercial diplomats (Assurance) and the ability of commercial diplomats to understand the needs of firms and provide individualized attention (Empathy) shows the highest and most significant association with the value attached to commercial diplomacy.

### 4.5.3 Institutional Country Profile

In this section the relation between the institutional country profile and the overall value of CD is examined. We hypothesized a negative relationship between the host countries regulative, cognitive and normative pillar. The institutional country profile is also measured as an aggregate of the regulative, cognitive and normative pillar. We hypothesize a negative relation between the overall institutional country profile and the customer value of CD.

We examined the relationships by calculating a Pearson's correlation coefficient. Table 11 displays the correlation coefficients. The overall institutional country profile ( $r=-.128$ ), the regulative pillar ( $r=.084$ ), the cognitive pillar ( $r=-.150$ ) and the normative pillar ( $r=-.221$ ) do not significantly correlate with the overall value of CD. The quantitative data in this research therefore indicates that the institutional environment does not relate to the overall value SMEs attach to CD.

**Table 11 Pearson's Correlation coefficients - Institutional country profile on the overall CD value**

| Variables                     | Correlation coefficient | P - value | N  |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|----|
| Overall Institutional profile | -.128                   | .319      | 16 |
| Regulative pillar             | .084                    | .374      | 17 |
| Cognitive pillar              | -.150                   | .277      | 18 |
| Normative pillar              | -.221                   | .214      | 15 |

Additionally, we examined whether the value of specific CD services are related to the overall institutional country profile and the regulative, cognitive and normative pillar. The value of two types of services are significant and relate to the institutions. The partner search activities are negatively correlated and moderately significant with the cognitive pillar ( $r = -.319, p<.10$ ) and the normative pillar ( $r=-.373, p<.10$ ). This suggests that more value is attached to partners search activities in host countries with poor information availability and high governmental involvement. Moreover a negative association is found between the normative pillar and the value attached to the intelligence services ( $r=-.482, p<.05$ ) which suggest that intelligence services are more valued in host countries with high governmental involvement..

Furthermore, we examined whether CD is more valued in developing countries. As mentioned before a striking 86% (32 out of 37) of the foreign posts addressed for CD services were located in Non-European countries and 70% (26 out of the 37) of the foreign posts addressed were located in a developing country. To see whether the potential increase in use of CD could be due to a less favourable institutional country profile we first performed a t-test and verified whether developing countries were indeed categorized by a less favourable institutional environment. Table 15 in Appendix N shows the results. The t-test shows that that there is a significant difference between the institutional country profile  $t(17)=4.156, p<.001$  in developed countries ( $M=5.23$ ) and the developing countries ( $M=3.32$ ) indicating that the institutional country profile in developing countries is less favourable than the institutional country profile in developed countries. We therefore argue that CD services within developing countries are more valued by the respondents than CD services within developed countries. We examined this by performing a t-test to analyze whether the value attached to the overall value of CD and the value of specific CD services differed between developed and developing countries. (Table 16 Appendix N shows the results). No significant differences were observed between the value attached to CD (services) in developed countries and developing countries. This indicates that the smaller group of SMEs using commercial diplomacy in developed countries do not value CD (services) less than the larger group of SMEs using CD (services) within developing countries. Moreover, qualitative data aided interpretation about the reason why CD was valued in developed countries, although the institutional country profile appeared to be more favourable in these countries.

"I can really imagine that markets like Germany and France can really be valuable for starting exporters. A lack of experience in the host country is the most important determinants for using CD service" (Exporter in the agricultural sector)

"Although Europe is a familiar market with similar regulations, we can really use assistance because we are just starting to export and we do not have the financial resources to hire a consultant" (Anonymous)

There were however also SMEs who claimed that although the institutions in developed neighboring were more favourable, CD still added value with reasons related to institutions.

“We are currently exploring new markets in both European and more distant countries. I find the value of CD in distant countries higher. Nevertheless, CD services in the EU are still interesting. EU regulations might have eased international business within the EU, the interpretation of rules and regulations are very different in each country”(Export manager, Fruit & Vegetable wholesaler).

Another exporter who contacted the consulate in Germany noted: “The Dutch consulate in Germany does good work and I experience a positive influence on the trade between Germany and the Netherlands. Although it is a familiar market, we experience that the German chamber of commerce is a somewhat bureaucratic organization and the Dutch consulate addresses this problem”(Anonymous).

The statement demonstrate the reason for using CD in developed countries are related to a lack of experience and financial limitations. Additionally, some SMEs believed that foreign posts still add value with arguments related to the institutional country profile.

Although CD services are not less valued by SMEs using CD services in developed countries, most SMEs used CD (services) in developing countries with less favourable institutional profiles. The qualitative data obtained from the telephone questionnaire aids interpretation as to why a larger group of SMEs values CD services within developing countries instead of developed countries. Respondents were asked in which scenario they would use foreign posts. Respondents argued that CD services would become more valuable when their company would start operating in Non-European countries or more specifically, in developing countries with reasons relating to the institutional country profile.

“ We know our European market very well and we do not necessitate governmental involvement in these markets. In case of expansion it might be interesting, especially in developing countries where the export infrastructure is limited”(anonymous)

“ We are not operational in developing countries but if this would be the case than an embassy would certainly be more valuable since there are simply more trade barriers” (Export manager, Water sport equipment exporter).

“We only import and export in Western European countries and we do not need foreign posts in this process. Foreign posts could become more useful when we would operate in Sudan or other countries with an underdeveloped legal system” (International manager, Exporter of building equipment).

The aforementioned statements give evidence that existing exporters, not using CD services, see CD as more valuable in the event of starting operations in Non-European/developing countries because of a lack of experience, but more importantly for this section, due to a poor export infrastructure, a poor legal system and an increase in trade barriers, reasons which are heavily intertwined with the institutional country profile. It therefore appears that the rationale for using CD services, is indeed influenced by the institutional country profile. Thus exporting SMEs appear to use CD more frequently in developing countries with less favourable institutional environment. Nevertheless the smaller group of SMEs using commercial diplomacy in developed countries do not value CD less than the larger group of SMEs using CD within developing countries. Similarly, this research indicates that the regulative, cognitive, normative and overall institutional country profile, does not relate to the overall value SMEs attach to CD, disregarding whether or not it is a developing/developed country. The quantitative data of this

research does however support the thought that a more favourable cognitive and normative pillar in the host country has a negative effect on the value attached to partner search activities and a more favourable normative pillar is associated with less value towards intelligence services of foreign posts.

#### 4.5.4 Client firm Characteristics

In this section the hypothesized relationships between the client firm characteristics and the overall value of CD is examined. Moreover this section will also assess the value of the specific CD services in relation to the client firm characteristics. The relationships are assessed by means of a Pearson correlation test. Table 12 depicts the correlation coefficients and its significance levels of the hypothesized relationships between the client firm and the *overall* CD value. Two client characteristics are significantly correlated with the perceived value of commercial diplomacy. First, the international experience in number of years is negatively correlated with the CD value ( $r = -.330$ ,  $p < .10$ ) and is moderately significant. The negative association is conform our line of thought where we hypothesized that more international experience would be negatively associated with the value SMEs attach to commercial diplomacy.

Referring back to the frequency of use, we previously demonstrated that SMEs with more international experience are more likely to use CD services which was partly explained by the variance in unawareness. Interestingly however, within the group of users of CD, international experience is negatively associated with the value attached to commercial diplomacy. This indicates that from the total sample, SMEs with less international experience use CD less frequently compared to SMEs with more international experience, but when used, SMEs with less international experience value CD more.

The second client firm characteristic significantly related to the CD value is the extent to which SMEs have foreign public customers/partners abroad ( $r = .445$ ,  $P < .05$ ). The observed positive relation supports hypothesis 7 which poses that the extent of having foreign public customers/partners abroad is positively associated to the CD value. The number of employees ( $r = .228$ ) and the available business network ( $r = .191$ ) within the host country did not appear to be significantly correlated with the CD value. From the aforementioned we can conclude that SMEs with more international experience appear to attach less value to CD and SMEs with many foreign public customers/partners seem to attach more value to CD.

**Table 12 Pearson's Correlation coefficients - Client firm characteristics on the overall CD value**

| Variables                 | Correlation coefficient | P - value | N  |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|----|
| Number of employees       | .228                    | .136      | 25 |
| International Experience  | -.330*                  | .053      | 25 |
| Public customers/partners | .445**                  | .013      | 25 |
| Business network          | .191                    | .180      | 25 |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.1 level (1tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)

The *overall* CD value gave us a good indication of which client firm characteristics are associated with more CD value. These results do however not tell us which specific CD services are more or less valued in association with which client firm characteristics. The following section will elaborate on the value of specific CD services in relation to the client firm characteristics i.e. (1)number of employees, (2)international experience, (3)foreign public customers/partners and the (4)available business network.



From the four client firm characteristics three variables are significantly associated with the value attached to specific CD services. (1) international Experience, (2) foreign public customers/partners and (3) the business network.

### **1 International experience**

To analyze whether international experience is related to specific CD services, we performed an independent t-test on the 8 predefined CD services (Table 17 in Appendix N). The 6 point measurement scale of international experiences was dichotomized into two groups of SMEs. The groups were dichotomized because the sample size was not sufficient for comparing means for all 6 scales. The first group consisted of SMEs with 0-20 years international experience and the second group consisted of SMEs with 21-40+ years of international experience. Interestingly, the only service with a mean score significantly different between both groups is the assistance with trade disputes  $t(21)=2.64, p < 0.01$  with SMEs with 0-20 years of international experience attaching on average high value to assistance at trade disputes ( $M=5.71$ ) and SMEs with 21-40+ years of international experience attaching moderate value to CD services ( $M=4.44$ ) which indicates that SMEs with more international experience attach less value to the assistance with trade disputes.

### **2 Foreign public Customers/partners**

To examine which CD services are more/less valued, an independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the perceived value between SMEs with no or very few foreign public customers/partners and SMEs with several or many foreign public customers/partners (Appendix N, Table 18). CD services were valued significantly different between SMEs with several or many foreign public customers/partners and SMEs with no/few foreign public customers/partners. Our results suggest that SMEs with more foreign public customers/partners attach more value to 6 specific CD services;

1. (trade) cultural information  $t(25)= 1.457, p < .10$
2. Information about public tenders  $t(19)= 2.829, p < 0.01$
3. Partners search  $t(24)= 2.432, p < 0.05$
4. Assistance at trade disputes,  $t(21)= 3.221, p < 0.01$
5. Assistance at fairs and missions  $t(21)= 3.350, p < 0.01$
6. Presence of a diplomat at ceremonies  $t(24)= 3.488, p < 0.01$

Interestingly, 4 out of 6 CD services that are more valued by SMEs with several/many foreign public customers/partners are relationship-based CD services (i.e. services which involve the commercial diplomat to use his or her network in the host country). This data supports our line of thought that relationship-based services are particularly perceived valuable in a government to government context (G2G). The increased value of relationship-based service for SMEs with several/many foreign public customers/partners was also seen in the frequency of use for the service 'presence of a diplomat at meetings/negotiations' where this service was only used by SMEs with several/many public customers.

In addition, a statement from a sales manager of a manufacturer of high quality blast cleaning abrasives aids interpretation to the positive association between value of relationship-based services and SMEs with several/many public customers.

"Our goods were blocked at customs in Romania although all our paperwork was correct. We contacted the embassy and it did not take long before we were able to export the goods to the country. Embassies are particularly helpful in trade disputes where governments are involved. In the B2B market they are of less use since we than use our lawyer more often instead of embassies"(international manager, transport industry).

The observed data presents a good indications of the importance of government to government relations where especially SMEs who deal with several/many public customers and partners attach higher value to the relationship-based services than SMEs who have no or very few public customers/partners abroad.

It is also interesting to note that for the total sample we concluded that all CD services are equally valued. Interestingly, when we control for the number of foreign public customers/partners an SME has abroad we have to nuance our conclusion. Within the subsample of SMEs with few or no foreign public customers/partners, relationship-based services ( $M=4.03$ ), (i.e. partner-search, assistance at trade disputes, assistance at fair and trade missions, presence of a diplomat at meetings) are significantly less valued  $t(11)= -3.01$ ,  $p<0.01$  than the intelligence services ( $M=4.92$ ), (i.e. market information, cultural information, information about rules and regulation). The diminished value for relationship-based services is however not observed within the sub-sample of SMEs with several/many foreign public customers/partners. On the contrary the value score of relationship-based services was higher,  $M=5.63$ , although not significantly higher, than the intelligence services  $M=5.49$  (Appendix N, Table 21 and 22).

### **3 Business network**

We also conducted an independent-sample t-test to examine whether SMEs with an undeveloped network attach more value to specific CD services than those with a developed business network. The results showed a significant difference  $t(24)=-1.607$ ,  $p<0.10$  in the mean value of partner-search activities between SMEs with no/underdeveloped network within the host country, and those who had a developed business network in the host country (Appendix N, Table 20). More specifically, respondents with a developed business network ( $M=4.09$ ) attached less value to partners search services than those with no/undeveloped business network ( $M=4.93$ ).

## **4.6 Testing the research model**

The aforementioned sections, examined the hypothesized relationships separately. Testing the bivariate relationships is interesting, yet does not examine whether the relationships hold when included with other potential determinants. We are therefore interested in decomposing the unique contribution of each variable as a predictor of the overall value of CD. This section therefore aims to combine the determinants into one regression model. This regression model is based on a stepwise-regression method in order to find the most parsimonious set of variables to explain the model. Moreover, pair-wise deletion of cases is used due to the limited number of respondents. Appendix L, examines the assumptions that need to be verified before proceeding with more advances statistical techniques such as the multiple regression model. Table 13 presents the regression model. The model examines the impact of the client firm characteristics, the service quality and the institutional country profile. The model is subdivided into two regression models two understand the relative impact of the two independent variables found significant in this multiple regression analyses.

### **Model 1**

The first model examines the impact of the service quality. Due to multicollinearity reasons, the five performance indicators could not be included in this regression model. Instead we measured the overall service quality as an aggregate of the 5 dimensions. The service quality is with a standardized coefficient of .477,  $t(20)= 2.429$ ,  $P< 0.05$ ) positively related to CD value. The model is statistically significant ( $f(20)= 5.898$   $p <0.05$ ) and has an explained variance ( $R^2=.228$ ) of 22.8%.

### **Model 2**

The second model includes model 1 in concert with the impact of the client firm characteristics (Number of employees, International experience, business network, Public foreign customers/partners) on the CD value. After

controlling for the included client firm characteristic and the service quality, the variable foreign public customers/partners and service quality appear to be the most parsimonious set of variables explaining the CD value. The service quality is in model 2 significant with a standardized coefficient of .453,  $t(19) = 2.552$ ,  $P < 0.01$ . The variable foreign public customers/partners is added to this model and helps explaining the observed variance in CD value ( $B = .419$ ,  $t(19) = 2.358$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). By including the variable 'foreign public customers/partners' the model seems to improve the explained variance with  $R^2 = .175$ . In addition model 2 is statistically significant ( $f(19) = 6.401$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and has an explained variance ( $R^2 = .403$ ) of 40.3%. In the previous bivariate analysis, 'international experience' was negatively associated with the CD value. However, in this regression model, international experience does not add anything to CD value after allowing for the other independent variables. This does however not mean that the initial relationship does not exist. In a third attempt to improve the model we included the regulative, normative and cognitive pillars of the institutional host country profile. Including this variables did not increase the explained variance in this model and were therefore excluded in the stepwise-regression method.

**Table 13 Multiple regression model for the overall CD value**

| Dependent variable          | CD Value (1)   |       |         | CD Value (2) |       |         |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|--------------|-------|---------|
|                             | B <sup>3</sup> | SE    | t-value | B            | SE    | t-value |
| Constant                    | 1.890          | 1.182 | 1.599   | 1.258        | 1.100 | 1.143   |
| Service Quality             | .477           | .195  | 2.429*  | .453         | .195  | 2.552** |
| F.Public partners/customers |                |       |         | .419         | .171  | 2.358*  |
| N                           | 21             |       |         | 21           |       |         |
| R <sup>2</sup>              | .228           |       |         | .403         |       |         |
| s                           | 1.02063        |       |         | .92103       |       |         |
| F                           | 5.89*          |       |         | 6.401**      |       |         |
| R <sup>2</sup> Change       |                |       |         | .175         |       |         |

\* Coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level (1tailed).

\*\* Coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level (1tailed).

The final results of this model indicate that the service quality and the extent of having foreign public partners/customers are important determinants of the CD value. Other variables (number of employees, business network, institutional pillars) did not appear to be significant in this model nor did they appear to be significant (apart from international experience) in the bivariate correlation testing. Thus, service quality and the extent of having foreign public partners/customer partially explain the variability of CD value. Additionally, international experience is related to the CD value in a one-to-one relations but does not add additional information to the explained variance of CD value after allowing for the other independent variables.

## 4.7 Value adding improvement points

This chapter is finalized by presenting the results of the fourth and final objective, 'which improvement points would increase the value of CD'. Respondents submitted potential value adding improvements via an open forum and within the telephone questionnaire. By means of statements of SMEs and the reflection on these statement by an expert (EXP) in the field of international, economical and social policy of SMEs, the data is analyzed to give suggestions for more value creation for SMEs. Within the improvement points a distinction is made between respondents *unaware* with commercial diplomacy services for SMEs and respondents *aware* of CD services for

<sup>3</sup> We used the standardized regression coefficient

SMEs. This section will elaborate on the improvements points of both groups. This section starts with the improvement points given by the group of SMEs unaware of CD services .

#### **4.7.1 Improvement points of SMEs unaware of CD services**

Earlier in this chapter it was determined that awareness is a major factor for not using CD services (40%), although 43% of the unaware SMEs believed that CD could be a valuable instrument for exporting/operating abroad. The fact that a large group of unaware respondents see it as a potentially valuable service was also seen in the appeal by several respondents for awareness creation. The unaware respondents can be subdivided into respondents unaware of CD services for SMEs and respondents unaware of CD services as a whole. The main difference in these groups is that the first group has an image of CD services but does not know that SMEs are the target group whereas the latter is entirely unaware of the existence of CD services. This section will elaborate on the improvement points suggested by both groups separately.

##### **Unaware of CD services**

Many respondents (N=10) respondents acknowledged the problem of unawareness and provided information and improvement points related to the creation of awareness: "foreign posts should promote CD services more actively", "It is imperative that foreign posts start communicating their services", "It would be a wise idea to make firms aware!". Other respondents also gave specific improvement points as to how foreign posts should communicate CD services: "foreign posts should become more visible at exporting events and meetings with starting export/import organizations". Another respondent notes "the ministry of foreign affairs should make more use of the internet and magazines or even make a documentary about the export promoting activities of an embassy". EXP recognizes the problem of unaware SMEs and believes that continuous and collective communication of the CD instruments is an important task of both foreign affairs and all other stakeholders. A large pool of means are available to communicate CD services to SME. Means suggested by the SMEs were more visibility for foreign posts at events and meetings and the communication via mass media instruments such as the internet, TV and magazines. EXP recognizes the need for effective communications but does note that the "creation of awareness via TV is not necessary. Trade and industry can be reached via targeted business newspapers and new media but the best way of reaching companies is by inviting companies at the posts or by joining network events to create more visibility as a post". As unawareness remains a large concern, the external communications of the foreign posts seems to lack effectiveness. As EXP mentioned: "There are excellent ambassadors and local employees who are very visible at economic events in their country but there are also still those who try to avoid these events and are mainly busy with politics and development cooperation. We recognize that some embassies are more visible than others on economics events and we of course plea for more investment in this area".

##### **Unaware of CD services for SMEs**

Several respondents (N=5) were aware of CD services but were unaware that SMEs belonged to the target group of CD services. The respondents had the image of foreign posts as an entity making efforts for MNEs and not for SMEs: "Embassies are busy with the big boys and the big money", " we are too small to contact foreign posts", foreign posts advocate large MNEs as Shell, not an SME like us'. An image can be both imaginary (prejudicial) and based on actual perceived facts (experience). In this instance respondents had never used CD services. It therefore seems that the perceived image of foreign posts not providing CD services to SMEs is not based on past experiences, but most likely based on a lack of external communication on behalf of foreign posts and 'hear say'. Improving the image that foreign posts offer CD services for SMEs is addressed by one flower exporter, simply stating; "Stronger communication is necessary towards SMEs about the fact that embassies are also there for SMEs". Furthermore, merely one exporter claimed to have an experienced-based image that efforts are made for

MNEs instead of SMEs. EXP reflected on this single case and stated: "Stakes are obviously a lot larger if Shell is operating in a country where the government plays an important role. A lot of resources and indirect employment is related to these big companies so a foreign post will naturally run faster for MNEs. I do however speak with many SMEs who experience that embassies really take time for them". The latter is also supported in our quantitative findings where most respondents who used CD services stated that commercial diplomats at foreign posts are willing and ready to help SMEs (23 out of 28).

#### **4.7.2 Improvement points of SMEs aware of CD services**

Most improvement points N=8 were related to the business orientation of commercial diplomats, the provision of sector-specific information and more collaboration to achieve sector specialism. Respondents stated: The recruitment of people with a trade and industry background is imperative", "Practical employees in the economic department is a big advantage, especially when they also have business experience'. In addition to seeing employees with business experience as more beneficial, respondents also mentioned that they were interested in receiving more sector specific services of foreign posts: "We would like to see more Industry specialism at Embassies", "Hiring of more industry specific employees at foreign posts ". EXP reflected on the suggested value improvements and stated: "It has always been that an embassy in Kazakhstan has more sector-specific information in oil than in the creative industry. The most important thing is that the sector focus of posts is demand driven . If a subsector arises who has interest in a certain country than the government has to be able to support this sector in achieving their goal".

To achieve sector specialism respondents mentioned that posts need to collaborate: "If the economic department really wants to add something to the internationalization process, collaboration with people who have the know-how in a specific market/industry is needed". More specifically one respondent noted " Embassies should be more active in collaboration with trade associations". EXP stated: "Trade associations can precisely help on the points where foreign post would like to add more value and focus in specific sectors. The ministry of trade and foreign posts do not have to work in isolation of other actors. A lot more focus can be put on which tasks trade association can fulfill and where, and where not, a foreign posts can be addressed". Additionally, collaboration also becomes more important in times where a limited amount of funds are available and subsidies disappear. Foreign posts need to collaborate more with trade associations, not only to increase sector specificity but also to reduce costs. Conversely, trade associations need to collaborate with foreign posts to deliver better quality for services which are no longer subsidized. EXP explains this with an example; "One subsidy which disappears, stimulates sectors to visit and participate in fairs and trade mission. Subsequently, companies will have to pay a few hundred euro's extra. This will require trade associations to think harder on how to organize a trade mission of quality which requires stronger collaboration with foreign posts who can add value in arranging quality missions in the host countries, as companies will be more critical by asking, "what's in it for me".

The aforementioned statements give a non exhaustive list of potential improvements points for CD services in the case of the Netherlands. SMEs provided improvements points towards more employees with a business experience, more sector focus and better collaboration of foreign posts within the ministry and with trade associations. EXP reflected on these statements and acknowledges the importance of commercial diplomats with business focus, argues that sector focus should be present where the demand of subsectors arise and acknowledges the room for improvement and benefits of collaboration with other actors such as trade associations.

## 4.8 Summary of findings

In this section the most important findings are presented. The findings are structured per objective.

### 4.8.1 Objective 1: Rationale for using and not using CD services

| Rationale for using CD services  | Rationale for not using CD services   |
|--|---|
| Respondents mostly used market information, information about rules and regulations and (trade cultural information). Foreign posts were less used for assistance at trade disputes, information about public tenders, assistance at fairs and trade missions and the presence of diplomat at meetings and negotiations. | The main reason for not using foreign posts was because SMEs find their own way abroad (67%) which is largely due to the existing experience within the host country, an export friendly host country environment , a complex industry/product or a transparent industry.   |
| A striking 86% (32 out of 37) of the foreign posts addressed for CD services were located in Non-European countries and 70% (26 out of the 37) foreign posts addressed were located in a developing country.   | The second largest group of SMEs (40%) was not using CD services because respondents were unaware of the existence CD services for SMEs. Unawareness was most prevalent at respondents with $\leq 20$ years of international experience. This group had a 51% unawareness percentage in relation to a 32 % unawareness rate within the group of SMEs with $21 \geq$ years of international experience |
| Larger SMEs, More international experienced SMEs, SMEs with many foreign public partners/customers were more likely to use CD services.  | A significantly smaller group did not use CD services with reasons related to the content and quality of the services (22%) i.e. foreign posts are hard to reach, does not fit our needs, bad experience.   |

### 4.8.2 Objective 2: The extent of value attached to CD services

| Users & Non users of CD services  | Users of CD services   |
|---|--|
| A third of the respondent see CD services as a valuable instrument for exporting/operating abroad           | A large majority see CD services as a valuable instrument for exporting/operating abroad.  |
| Of the respondents unaware of CD, 43% believe that CD services have potential value for their organization. | In the total sample intelligence services are more frequently used but not valued more.<br><br>SMEs within the subsample of no or few public customers attach less value to the relationship-based services. The subsample of SMEs with several/many foreign public customers do not show a difference in value. |

#### 4.8.3 Objective 3: The determinants of the overall value of CD

| Area                          | # | Hypothesis   | Evidence      |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---------------|
| Service quality               | 1 | Higher perceived service quality is associated with higher value of commercial diplomacy.                                      | Supported     |
| Institutional country profile | 2 | Higher security of transactions and contracts is negatively associated with the perceived value of commercial diplomacy.       | Not supported |
|                               | 3 | Higher information availability in the host country is negatively associated with the perceived value of commercial diplomacy. | Not supported |
|                               | 4 | Higher reliance on market relations in the host country is negatively associated with the value of commercial diplomacy.       | Not supported |
| Client firm Characteristics   | 5 | Larger SMEs attach less value to commercial diplomacy.   | Not supported |
|                               | 6 | An increase in international experience is associated with a decrease in the value of commercial diplomacy.                    | Supported     |
|                               | 7 | An increase in the available business network in the host country decreases the value of commercial diplomacy.                 | Not supported |
|                               | 8 | An increase in foreign public customers/partners , increases the value SMEs attach to commercial diplomacy.                    | Supported     |

#### 4.8.4 Objective 4:Value improvement points

|                     | Aware of CD services   | Unaware of CD services for SMEs |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Target group        | Users and Non users of CD services   | Non-users of CD services        |
| Area of improvement | Professionalism<br>Provision of sector-specific information<br>Collaboration | Awareness creation              |

# 5 Conclusion & Discussion

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the quantitative and qualitative findings are summarized and the conclusions are presented, answering the main research question of this study. Moreover, this chapter discusses the theoretical implications and practical implications of this study and will pose future research areas to overcome the limitations of this study and increase the breadth of knowledge of CD.

## 5.2 Conclusions

In the preceding chapters we have built a theoretical framework around the main research question, we posed a research model and carefully considered our research strategy and methods used to obtain the desired data that would best answer the research question. We defined the value of CD as the 'the worth in usefulness' and measured the overall value of commercial diplomacy and the value per service. The preferred data to answer the main research questions was both quantitative and qualitative and was collected by telephone questionnaires, online questionnaires and a face to face semi structured interview. The obtained data was analyzed in chapter 4 and the following sub-chapters will draw conclusions on the findings thereby answering the main research question. The conclusion is structured according to the four objectives of this research (i.e. (1); analyzing the rationale for using or not using SMEs, (2); the extent of value attached to CD, (3); identifying the determinants of the value of CD,(4); improvement points to increase the value of CD). Thus each sub-chapter will separately answer the main research question. These objectives were synthesized in one main research questions:

*To what extent is CD perceived valuable, which factors determine the CD value and which improvement points can increase the value of CD from an SME perspective?*

### 5.2.1 Rationale for using commercial diplomacy

Merely a third of the exporting SMEs have been in contact with foreign posts within the last two years. The SMEs who did use CD within the last two years mostly used foreign posts for market information purposes, (trade) cultural information, information about rules and regulations and for partners searches. Far less SMEs used foreign posts for assistance at trade disputes, assistance at fairs and trade missions and the presence of diplomat at meetings and negotiations. From this we can conclude that SMEs most frequently use CD services for intelligence purposes rather than for relationship/network based services. Additionally we can conclude that SMEs use CD services most often within developing and non-European countries. The qualitative data signaled that commercial diplomacy is more often used in developing countries and non-European countries because more SMEs lack experience in these host countries and are exposed to more barriers, a poor export infrastructure and a poor legal system.

This research found that larger SMEs, with more international experience and/or foreign public customers/partners more often use CD services. Interestingly, the type of CD service used also differed within the group of SMEs with several/many foreign public partners/customers. We found that only SMEs with several/many foreign public customers used the foreign posts for information about 'public tenders' and 'the presence of a diplomat at meetings and negotiations'. This demonstrates that these services are very likely most appreciated in public spheres rather than in a private context.



### 5.2.2 Rationale for not using commercial diplomacy

The aforementioned shows that a rather small percentage of the SMEs use CD services. This raises the questions, why SMEs do not use CD services. A majority of 67% of the SMEs have not been in contact with foreign posts within the last two years. The most prevalent reason for not using CD services is because SMEs find their own way in foreign markets. Many SMEs argued that they found their own way abroad because the existing experience within the host country and/or the favourable trade-industry institutions within the host country did not necessitate governmental involvement. Moreover, SMEs explained they were operating in a very specific industry with highly specialized products in which foreign posts could not offer help by finding e.g. partners because the specifications for partners are too complex. Another industry related argument was the transparency of the industry where SMEs believed they could find their own way abroad because business development activities were easily navigable within the industry. Interestingly the last two arguments made by several SMEs did not take the host country into consideration but rather looked at the ease of conducting business within an industry. This demonstrates that the reason for SMEs to find their own way abroad is not only bound to the host country context but is also bound to the industry in which the client firm is operational, where transparent industries and industries with complex products appear to be a reason for not using CD.

Moreover, SMEs believed that the services did not fit their needs or were hard to reach. Additionally, SMEs also used other organizations to provide them with internationalization services instead of using foreign posts. Interestingly, a rather small percentage of SMEs did not use CD because of a bad past experience.

The aforementioned gives a clear overview of the motives used by SMEs aware of CD, concerning the rationale for not using CD. The second most often mentioned reason for not using CD is unawareness with the existence of such service. In addition it was also evident that especially SMEs with less international experience were more frequently unaware of the existence of CD than those with more international experience.

### 5.2.3 The value of CD

Overall, only a third of the internationally active SMEs value CD. Additionally, most respondents who recognized the value of CD, also addressed a foreign posts within the last two years. In addition, the majority of SMEs that used CD services, perceived it as a valuable instrument which makes exporting/operating abroad easier, quicker, and more effective in terms of export increase and results. Although most SMEs using CD believed that it is a valuable instrument which makes exporting easier, fewer, nevertheless the majority, believed it also increases their exports and results abroad.

Additionally, qualitative data aided interpretation as to why CD is valued. The qualitative data demonstrated that SMEs valued CD because it gave them access to reliable information and an extensive network which they could not have accessed by themselves due to information asymmetries and financial limitations. Foreign posts that provide CD services can therefore be seen as the organ of touch for the Dutch trade and industry. They are physically there and have the local knowledge, experience and relations to 'open doors'.

Moreover, we examined the *potential* value of CD in the sub-sample of SMEs, previously unaware of CD. Our research demonstrated that a total of 43% see CD services as a potentially valuable instrument for exporting/operating abroad after introducing them to the CD services. The fact that the SMEs are not unaware due to a lack of interest or inapplicability of the service creates a high rationale to address the lack of awareness.

Apart from *if* CD is valued, we also examined *what* is valued by means of examining the specific CD services. Interestingly the SMEs who used CD services did not value one service over another. Most SMEs rated all CD

services as a high value service although SMEs use the intelligence services more frequently than the equally valued relationship-based services. This signals that although relationship-based services are a lot less frequently used, SMEs do not value relationship-based services less. *The frequency of use* of CD is therefore not related to *the worth in usefulness* (value).

#### **5.2.4 Service quality and its effect on the value of CD**

Most SMEs are satisfied or very satisfied with the knowledge of commercial diplomats, the willingness and readiness of them to help, the ability to understand the needs of SMEs, the accuracy and reliability with which the service was provided and the physical representation of the delivered service. There is, however, a substantial group of SMEs who believe that the quality varies strongly per foreign post. The qualitative data demonstrated that SMEs subscribe this quality difference to the availability of employees, the available business network and the business experience of commercial diplomats.

Moreover, we found evidence that the overall service quality delivered influences the overall value of CD. More specifically, we demonstrated that the service quality seems to account for 22,8% of the variation in value SMEs attach to CD. Moreover, we were also interested in the relative importance of the 5 performance dimensions. By means of a bivariate correlation, we found evidence that all performance indicators individually i.e. assurance, empathy, tangibles, responsiveness and reliability are positively associated with the perceived value of CD. Additionally, we found evidence that the knowledge and courtesy of commercial diplomats (assurance), and the ability of commercial diplomats to understand the needs of firms and provide individual attention (empathy), demonstrate the highest and most significant positive association with the value attached to CD.

#### **5.2.5 The institutional country profile and its effect on the value of CD**

We hypothesized that a more developed institutional environment, is negatively associated with the overall value of CD. In the regulative pillar, defined as the “explicit regulative processes: (1)rule setting, (2)monitoring and (3) sanctioning activities” (Scott, 1995), we asserted that SMEs attach less value to CD in host countries with transparent rule setting, reliable monitoring and sanction activities, and a reliable legal environment. For the cognitive pillar, defined as “the knowledge and skills possessed by the individuals in a country” (Busenitz et al., 2000), we hypothesized that SMEs attach less value to CD in host countries with a developed information infrastructure. For the third and final normative pillar, defined as the ‘social norms, values, beliefs and assumptions that are socially shared and are carried by individuals’ (Kostova, 1999), we asserted that SMEs attach less value to CD in host countries with a high reliance on market relations. We examined all institutional pillars in relation to overall CD value. However, this research does not provide significant evidence in support of a negative relation between the institutional country profile(i.e. regulative, cognitive and normative pillar) and the overall value SMEs attach to CD.

Additionally, we examined whether CD is more valued in developing countries. Respondents asserted that they used CD in developing countries (apart from a lack of experience) due to a poor export infrastructure, a poor legal system and an increase in trade barriers, reasons which are heavily intertwined with the institutional country profile. Therefore, we firstly examined if the institutional country profile was less favourable in developing countries and subsequently checked whether SMEs valued CD more in developing countries. Our research demonstrated that SMEs indeed perceived the institutional country profile less favourable in developing countries. Nevertheless, SMEs did not attach more value to CD in developing countries. It therefore appears that the rationale for using CD services, is indeed influenced by the institutional country profile, yet the value attached to CD is not. Thus we can conclude that exporting SMEs appear to use CD more frequently in developing countries with a less

favourable institutional environment. Nevertheless, there is no difference in value attached to CD, between SMEs doing business in developing countries and those doing business in developed countries.

Finally, our research demonstrated that CD services in developed countries are valuable for two reasons. First, although institutions are developed, qualitative data indicated that foreign posts still have a positive effect on the institutions in developed countries as these can be bureaucratic and less effective than the information provision of foreign posts. Second, CD provision is claimed to be important in neighboring(developed) countries. SMEs who are starting to internationalize, and most often do so in developed neighboring countries, lack experience and need support in their first international endeavor, but do not have the financial resources to address a private business support supplier.

### **5.2.6 The client firm characteristics and its effect on the value of CD**

We did not find evidence that larger SMEs with a more developed business network abroad attach less value to CD. We did however find a evidence that SMEs with more international experience, attach less value to CD, and SMEs with many foreign public customers/partners attached more value to CD. Furthermore we demonstrated that the extent of having foreign public partners/customers seems to account for 17,5% of the variation in value SMEs attach to CD.

In addition to the overall value, we examined the value of specific CD services in association with the client firm characteristics. We found that SMEs with more international experience attached less value to assistance with trade disputes. Moreover respondents with a developed business network attached less value to partners search services but did not attach less value to other CD services. We additionally found evidence that SMEs with several/many foreign public customers/partners attach more value to relationship-based CD services (i.e. services which involve the commercial diplomat to use his or her network in the host country) than SMEs with no or few foreign public customers/partners. This data supports our line of thought that CD is particularly perceived valuable in a government to government context (G2G). This line of thought was also acknowledged in the qualitative data where SMEs and an expert suggested that foreign posts are particularly helpful in governmental spheres. The increased value of relationship-based service for SMEs with several/many foreign public customers/partners was also visible in the frequency of use of the service 'presence of a diplomat at meetings/negotiations' where this service was only used by SMEs with several/many public customers.

Moreover, for the total sample used in this research we concluded that SMEs do not value relationship-based services less than intelligences services although the latter is more frequently used. Interestingly when we controlled for the number of foreign public customers/partners an SME has abroad we have to nuance our conclusion. Within the subsample of SMEs with no/few foreign public customers/partners relationship-based services are significantly less valued than intelligence services. The diminished value for relationship-based services is however not observed within the sub-sample of SMEs with several/many foreign public customers/partners. On the contrary the value score of relationship-based services was higher, (although not significantly higher) than the intelligence services.

### **5.2.7 Value adding improvement points**

SMEs gave a non-exhaustive list of potential improvements points for CD services in the case of the Netherlands. The most prevalent improvement point was related to the creation of awareness which can be seen as a prerequisite for valuing CD. It can be concluded that the governmental body seems to lack effectiveness in communicating the existence of CD and the subsequent target groups it serves. Respondents suggested that trade and industry can best be reached via targeted business newspapers, new media and network events and should be

done collectively and continuously to create more awareness. Additionally, other stakeholders such as trade associations are also essential in creating awareness by actively informing their members on the available public and private instrumentation in support of internationalization. Besides the collaboration in creating awareness of the instrumentation in support of internationalization, it is also suggested to be important to collaborate in the provision of the support services between trade associations and the foreign post to achieve sector specialism. Qualitative data suggests, that trade associations can add more focus in specific sectors and foreign posts have a valuable network and the local knowledge within the host country. Finally, SMEs recommended hiring more business oriented people with business experience. Qualitative data suggests that commercial diplomats with business experience deliver a better quality service and are therefore more valued.

## 5.3 Discussion and implications

In this section we will discuss the aforementioned findings. We will start by discussing the theoretical and practical implications by reflecting existing literature on the findings and by explicating which findings are reinforced and which contradict with existing literature.

### 5.3.1 Rationale for not using commercial diplomacy

Several authors acknowledge that CD is generally focused on supporting SMEs (Seringerhaus & Rosson 1989, Kostecki & Naray, 2007; Mercier 2007). Nevertheless, our findings demonstrate that merely a third of the internationally active SMEs used CD within the last two years. Our study demonstrated that the biggest reason for not using CD was because SMEs find their own way abroad. This finding is also conform existing literature (FME, 2011). However, our study nuanced this finding and demonstrated that the reason for SMEs to find their own way abroad is due to the existing experience within the host country, favourable trade-institutions, transparent industries and having highly complex products. The second most important reason for this rather low percentage of SMEs using CD is due to the unawareness of CD by SMEs. Governmental bodies can offer the most suitable services for SMEs only to find out that it is of little use for a large group of SMEs who are not aware of the existence of such a service. An earlier study of Kedia and Chokar (1986) acknowledged this and concluded that the little impact export promotion programs have on export Figures is due to the lack of awareness of the programs. Research conducted by Dutch Employer Associations and export promotion organizations also indentified unawareness as one of the reason for not using CD and demonstrated unawareness percentages between 13,3% and 29% (VNO-NCW/Fenedex, 2010; FME, 2011). This research however demonstrates a 40% unawareness rate for exporting SMEs in 2011 and provides evidence that unawareness is a larger concern than reflected in earlier research. Step 1 in supporting SMEs in accessing international markets is therefore to raise awareness of CD services among SMEs.

### 5.3.2 The value and use of commercial diplomacy

Merely a third of the internationally active SMEs value CD. The reason for valuing CD were related to the access to reliable information and an extensive network which they could not have accessed by themselves due to information asymmetries and financial limitations. These findings are in line with existing research (Kostecki & Naray, 2007). Additionally, we found that the more frequent use of intelligence services and the less frequent use of relationship-based services by SMEs is also conform earlier research (Kostecki and Naray, 2007). However, our study complements existing research and demonstrates that the specific intelligence services most frequently used are the provision market information, trade cultural information and information about rules and regulations. Additionally, previous research has not measured the value SMEs attached to specific CD services. A logical assumption would be to assume that the more frequently used intelligence services would also be more valued. However, we demonstrated that the *frequency of use* of CD is divergent from *the worth in usefulness* (value) and

provided evidence that SMEs attach equal value to both intelligence and relationship-based CD services with most SMEs attaching 'high value' to all CD services. In addition, this indicates that the current portfolio of CD services are in line with the needs of most SMEs.

### **5.3.3 Service quality**

In this research we demonstrated that the service quality influences the overall value SMEs attach to CD, which is in line with previous work (Zeithaml, 1988; Bolton & Drew, 1991; H. Oh, 1999). Our research expands existing research and signaled that the quality dimensions representing the knowledge and courtesy of commercial diplomats (Assurance) in addition to the ability of the commercial diplomat to understand the needs of the firms and deliver individualized attention (Empathy) are the most important value adding dimensions.

The (increasing) importance of a commercial diplomat to understand the needs of firms and provide individualized attention is also recognized by Naray (2008), who claims that due to the development of the internet, a shift is occurring to more value added and tailor-made services based on personal contact. Furthermore, existing literature displayed that the type of commercial diplomats who demonstrate the best ability to understand the needs of firms and provide individualized attention (empathize) are the business promoters (Zuidema, 2011). Our results, therefore, also offer indirect support that business promoters are the most suitable commercial diplomats to increase the value of CD. This is also conform existing literature where business promoters are claimed to be the most suitable commercial diplomat for CD and are characterized by their proactive behavior, their focus on the client and their practical business skills (Kostecki & Naray, 2007; Visser, 2011).

Moreover, qualitative data of this study demonstrated that the variance in quality between foreign posts is (apart from the available employees and business network) dependent on the business experience of commercial diplomats. Additionally, SMEs submitted improvement points which stressed the importance of more business oriented/experienced commercial diplomats to add more value. These findings are line with Naray (2008), Kostecki & Naray (2007) and Hogan et al. (1991), who claim that business knowledge and business experience are critical for effective commercial diplomacy. However, these findings contradict the findings of Zuidema (2011) who claims that business experience does not lead to an increase in service quality.

Our qualitative data further suggested that the business network and the available employees within the foreign post affected the quality and subsequent value of the CD services. This finding is also acknowledged Zuidema (2011) and other authors who claim that the resources within a foreign posts are crucial for the effective provision of CD services (Kostecki & Naray, 2007; Naray, 2008; Wilkinson & Brouthers, 2006).

The aforementioned also has managerial implications. We pose that practitioners who are increasing the value of commercial diplomacy by optimizing the service quality of CD services, should focus on the business knowledge and courtesy of commercial diplomats in addition to the ability of the commercial diplomat to understand the needs of the firms and deliver individualized attention. Moreover the business experience of a commercial diplomat, the available business network and available employees within a foreign posts are believed to be important aspects in achieving higher service quality.

### **5.3.4 Institutional country profile**

This research does not provide significant evidence in support of a negative relation between the institutional country profile and the value SMEs attach to CD. Similarly, this research dichotomized the countries into developed and developing countries and provided evidence that the institutional country profile is less favourable in developing countries. This finding also conform earlier empirical studies (Djankov et al., 2003; Lederman, 2006).

Nevertheless, there is no difference in the value attached to CD, between SMEs doing business in developing countries and those doing business in developed countries.

However, our research does demonstrate that the justification of governmental intervention in developed countries has a less definite reference to market failures since our research demonstrated that the trade-institutions are more favourable in developed countries. Existing research even questions the effectiveness of CD in developed countries (Lederman, 2006; Yakop & Bergeijk, 2009) with reasons related to more developed institutions which make governmental involvement obsolete. Yakop & Bergeijk (2009) imply that the effect of export facilitation in developed countries is zero and argues that this is due to more developed institutions which are less prone to market failures in comparison to developing countries.

Nevertheless, our research demonstrated that CD services in developed countries are valuable for two reasons. First, although institutions are developed, qualitative data indicated that foreign posts still have a positive effect on the institutions in developed countries as these can be bureaucratic and less effective than the information provision of foreign posts. Second, CD provision is claimed to be important in neighboring (developed) countries. SMEs who are starting to internationalize, and most often do so in developed neighboring countries, lack experience and need support in their first international endeavor, but do not have the financial resources to address a private business support supplier. This last justification is also acknowledged by the European commission (EIM, 2010). Although we cannot debunk the zero effect of export facilitation in developed countries demonstrated by Lederman (2006) and Yakop & Bergeijk (2009), our research does demonstrate that most SMEs value and experience a positive effect of CD in developed countries.

The aforementioned tells us something about the individual value SMEs attach to the use of CD in a specific host country context. However, this does not tell us anything about the scope of SMEs valuing CD services in a specific institutional environment. The frequency of use between developed/developing countries filled this gap and demonstrated that the group of SMEs using CD services in developing countries is far greater than the group who used CD services within developed countries. SMEs also suggest that this is (apart from a lack of experience) due to a poor export infrastructure, a poor legal system and an increase in trade barriers, reasons which are heavily intertwined with the institutional country profile. Indeed, we suggest that a larger group of SMEs use CD services within developing countries due to the institutional country profile. Our findings also conform with earlier empirical studies, claiming that commercial diplomacy is more frequently needed in developing countries (Kostecki & Naray 2007; Yakop & Bergeijk, 2009). The study of Yakop & Bergeijk (2009) suggested that market failures hamper international exchange and are more apparent in developing countries. Moreover, Yakop & Bergeijk (2009) implied that embassies and consulates succeed in reducing or solving some of these market failures. Similarly, our research demonstrated that markets in developing countries have a less favourable institutions and is used more frequently by SMEs with motives related to unfavourable trade-institutions, implying that market failures might be more of a problem in developing countries, thus increasing the rationale for SMEs to use CD in these countries.

The aforementioned also has managerial implications. We demonstrated that a larger group of SMEs use and value CD services within developing countries. Nevertheless, a smaller group of SMEs use, but equally value CD, within developed countries. We believe that it is the task of the government to balance the demand for CD services with the *proportionate* supply of CD services<sup>4</sup>. Ergo; emphasizing CD within developing countries serves the interests of

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<sup>4</sup> This is under the assumption that (1) market failures are present, and/or (2) financial limitations prevent SMEs to address private business support and SMEs have (3) "done their homework" and are "market-ready" (Yakop & Bergeijk (2009) ;Dickson, 2003).

the largest share of SMEs. Nevertheless, the demand for CD in specific developed countries (e.g. developed neighboring countries) should not be ignored. This research suggest that the use of CD in developed countries is important for a smaller group of SMEs, who lack the expertise to e.g. identify business opportunities and lack the financial resources to address a private business support provider. The allocation of CD resources to developed countries, in relation to developing countries, can therefore be less profound, but should not be disappear.

### **5.3.5 The client firm characteristics**

The findings with respect to the client firm characteristics are in line with Zeithaml (1988), claiming that the perceived value is dependent on the customer's frame of reference. We found that the international experience of an SME is associated with the overall value SMEs attach to CD, and the extent of having foreign public customers explains a part of the variability in the overall value attached to CD.

The observed negative association between the international experience of SMEs and the perceived value is in line with existing literature. Wilkinson & Brouthers (2006) and Gençtürk & Kotabe (2001) argue that the foreign posts can complement the internal resources and capabilities of a firm, thereby making them more successful in the host country. Additionally Czinkota (1982) and Cavusgil (1980) demonstrated that experienced exporters are able to rely more on in-house export experience. Similarly Ionascu et al. (2004) stressed that international experience may mediate the impact of 'distance'. In line with this argument, our research indicates that CD is more important for those SMEs with little international experience. We argue that many SMEs who have a lack of international experience, lack the expertise/capabilities to identify e.g. business opportunities abroad, market requirements or potential partners. Subsequently, it is within this group of SMEs that we believe, CD can add most value.

Furthermore, our results have demonstrated that the extent of having foreign public partners/customers influences the value of CD. This finding is conform earlier research of Bergeijk en Melissen (2010), who argue that Dutch unique selling points (USPs) play an important role in the importance of economic diplomacy. The USPs being energy, water and road construction happen to be governmental customers which make bilateral governmental relationships imperative. Our findings support this thought and demonstrate that CD is particularly perceived valuable in a government-to-government context (G2G).

Additionally, we found evidence that SMEs with several/many foreign public customers/partners attach more value to relationship-based CD than SMEs with no or few foreign public customers/partners. More specifically, SMEs with several/many foreign public customers/partners abroad perceive the relation based services as a 'high value' service whereas SMEs with no or few foreign public customers/partners abroad are neutral about the value. This findings contradicts a citation of a Anglo-Saxon diplomat within the research of Kostecki & Naray (2007) who claims that SMEs are less interested relationship based services involving public relationships with the government.

This finding also has managerial implications on the effective and efficient provision of CD services. As we previously discussed, understanding the needs of SMEs is imperative. We therefore stress that commercial diplomats should be aware that many SMEs who deal with public customers/partners appreciate relationship-based services, such as their presence in meetings and negotiations. Conversely, SMEs who deal with private parties, attach less value to the relationship-based services and are more interested in intelligence services. These findings demonstrate that there is no 'one size fits all' strategy on the provision of CD service. We therefore recommend foreign posts that are very frequently addressed by SMEs who deal with foreign public customers/partners should, in addition to offering the intelligence services, also put emphasis on delivering relationship-based services. Conversely, foreign posts that are frequently addressed by SMEs who only deal with private parties should put more emphasis on the intelligence service of CD.

In addition to the international experience and the extent of having foreign public customers/partners we also examined whether the number of employees and the available business network within the host country affected the value of CD. We did not find evidence that SMEs with less employees attach more value to CD services. This does not conform existing literature in which it is suggested that the size of the client firm matters (Hogan et al., 1991).

Also, for the business network we did not find evidence that SMEs with a established business network attach less value to CD. We did however find evidence that SMEs with a established business network attach less value to partner search services. This finding is also partly conform the findings of Ten Haaf (2010) who claims that companies with an established network are able to manage business by themselves. We, however, argue that this only holds for partner search activities. It seems that a developed network only has a negative effect on the value of partner search activities, i.e. the development of a network. Nevertheless a developed network does not seem to provide the access to knowledge spillovers and serve as information conduits as Ahuja (2000) describes, which would make e.g. market intelligence or information about trade and cultural less valuable for SMEs.

### **5.3.6 Value adding improvement points**

In addition to the previously discussed improvement points ‘the creation of awareness’ and ‘more business experienced commercial diplomats’, several respondents would like to receive more sector-specific information. The need for more sector-specific information is also conform existing literature (FME, 2011). Additionally, the wish for more sector-specific information also seems in line with the changing role of CD due to the internet. As Naray (2008) states, the internet causes a shift from generic information to more tailor-made services based on personal contact which also requires more knowledge about a specific client, ergo industry. The interviewed expert, however, mentioned that sector-specific information should be demand driven. After all, a foreign post does not have the resources to specialize in every industry nor is it sensible to use shrinking budget(in the case of the Netherlands) on markets with little potential. Demand-driven sector focus therefore seems to be the most appropriate way of adding value to the largest group of SMEs. These findings are line with Lederman (2009) who suggests that export promotion agencies should focus on nontraditional exports or have some broad sector orientation, rather than the attempt to promote overall export.

Furthermore, qualitative data suggested that foreign posts and private actors do not have to work in isolation from one another. Existing literature recognizes that public-private structures are an important trend with non-state actors playing a significant role in CD (Saner & Yiu, 2003; Lee & Hudson, 2004; Mercier, 2007; Lederman et al. 2009). SMEs mentioned that foreign posts need to (better) collaborate with trade associations to achieve more sector specialism. Conversely, trade associations need to collaborate with foreign posts to deliver better quality for services which were previously subsidized. This is also conform existing literature, stating that foreign services and the private sector need each other’s expertise to become effective in a global market place (Saner & Yiu, 2003). Our qualitative data suggests that trade associations can add more focus in specific sectors and foreign posts have a valuable network and local knowledge within the host country. In other words, the transfer of knowhow from the respective domains is beneficial for the value of the support services of CD. Moreover, Lederman (2009) suggests that the combination of public and private actors have a stronger impact on national exports. Our findings are therefore conform existing research and provides additional evidence of the value added character of collaboration between non-state actors and the public sector from an SME perspective.



## 5.4 Limitations

This study has several limitations which future research should overcome. The most important limitations are discussed in the following section.

First, the low statistical power of this research calls for caution in making any inferences. In addition, an insufficiently powered research lowers the ability to reject the null hypothesis when it is false (Shadish et al., 2002). The institutional country profile and two client firm characteristics which we hypothesized to be associated were not statistically significant. These outcomes should be interpreted with caution as the chance of a type 2 errors are more profound. Additionally, the five performance indicators were multicollinear on the value of CD. Multicollinearity can be reduced by increasing the sample size thereby allowing to understand the unique contribution of the five performance indicators on the value of CD. This study should therefore be replicated with a larger sample size.

Secondly, our research is based on a single country analysis 'the Netherlands'. The extent to which CD services are valued are also subject to the home country characteristics because every country has its own government-business relationships (Kostecki & Naray, 2007). The extent to which CD is valued by SMEs is therefore hard to generalize over other countries. Future research should address this limitation and preferably conduct a cross-country analysis, thereby, identifying the home country characteristics influencing the value of CD.

Thirdly, this research used several existing instruments (i.e. Customer value, SERVPERF, Institutional country profile) and adapted the instruments according to the domain of CD. As Straub (1989) points out, the more the original instrument is changed, the greater the chance that the instrument will lack the qualities of the original instrument, thereby affecting the reliability and validity of the instruments.

Fourthly, we assessed the internal consistency by calculating the Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha of the performance indicators, assurance and tangibles, were below the threshold of .7. The poor internal consistency necessitates caution in the interpretation of these constructs. The poor reliability is likely induced by the small sample size and by the translation and adaption of original models (Lumpkin & Dess (2001).

At last our sample was consistent of users and non users of CD. There is a possibility that this research overestimated the 'users' of CD, as they seemed more prone in collaborating with this research. This would affect the overall value ratings of SMEs and inflate the percentage of SMEs using CD services. Moreover, our unit of analysis was the export manager/international manager of an SME, yet, our unit of observation was the SME itself. This might have induced a single informant bias'. As a result we could not check the reliability among other respondents within the firm.

## 5.5 Future Research

This research attempted, and partly succeeded, in answering the central research question. Yet, every answer poses new questions and every unanswered question remains to be solved. This section will therefore elucidate on both and suggest future research topics.

First we urge future research to include a number of variables which have not been included within this research due to time constraints. We propose to include the following potential determinants of CD value: The home country characteristics, the industry in which an SME is operational, the host country experience of an SME, the number of countries exported to, and the financial resources. Additionally we suggest future research to include the export manager/international manager as a unit of observation by researching its business experience, country experience and experience within the firm.

Existing research indicates that the home country characteristics might affect the value of CD. This study focused on the case of 'the Netherlands', therefore, it was not viable to determine the intra-country differences. Kostecki and Naray (2007) argue that the managerial expectations, perception of the role of the state and other cultural considerations might influence the government-business relationship in the home country. Therefore, we suggest future research to replicate this study in other countries or conduct a cross-country analysis to identify possible home country characteristics. Additionally, a transparent industry was a reason for not using CD, and might, therefore, also effect the value of CD and its specific services. In addition to comparing the value of CD between industries, future research should focus on within case analysis for specific industries, to get an in-depth view on the business support needs of SMEs in specific industries. Moreover, our research did not find an association between the size of an SME and the value attached to CD which does not stroke with the thought and existing research, that a lack of internal resources would increase the value of CD (Hogan et al., 1991). This research measured the size of an SME by measuring the number of employees. We urge future research in adding e.g. level of sales turnover to improve the determination of the size of an SME. Furthermore, this research measured the international experience of firms according to their number of years of export experience. However, our qualitative data gave strong indications that the experience within the specific host country are an important factor for not using CD. Therefore future research should (in addition to the overall export experience) include the experience within the host country as a potential determinants of the value of CD. Additionally we pose that the number of countries in which the SME has experience, might influence the value of CD.

Second, our research provided answers on the central research question, which brought up new domains of future research. This research identified unawareness as a major concern for the effectiveness of CD. Additionally, we posed that awareness campaigns are pivotal, and SMEs submitted suggestions about which medium to use since the current external communications systems lacks effectiveness. Nevertheless, this was not the main focus of this study. We identified the problem and it is now key to conduct thorough research in effective communication tools and messages to reach SMEs.

Third, qualitative data in support of existing literature (Lederman, 2009), demonstrated that private-public structures for the provision of CD services are deemed valuable, nevertheless, limited research is available on effective private-public structures and/or the policies, countries use to regulate the relationship between public and private provision of services. Gaining more insight in this area is key for effective provision of CD services. We therefore urge for further research on this topic.

Fourth, our research provided evidence that the value of specific CD services differ within the group of SMEs. Future research is however necessary in the differing needs of services for different types of SMEs in different host country contexts. Our research demonstrates that the international experience, the extent of having foreign public customers and the available business network of an SME are associated with the value SMEs attach to specific CD services. This outcome is satisfactory for this research but should be seen as a starting for the segmentation of SME target groups. In addition, existing literature addressed other forms of target group segmentation, in which services are coordinate across programs to address the firms different requirements, depending on their export process (Seringhaus & Botschen, 1991; Mercier, 2007). This target group segmentation is based on the different stages of internationalization development such as 'start ups' and 'established and growing firms' (European Commission, 2001). We however pose that it is important to not only look at the development stage, but also at the specific client firm characteristics, industry and host country context in determining the most appropriate services across different programs. The identification of such determinants is however limited and should be expanded in future research.

At last, our research demonstrates that the justification of governmental intervention in developed countries has a less definite reference to market failures since our research demonstrated that the trade-institutions are more favourable in developed countries, which also conforms existing literature (Lederman, 2006; Yakop & Bergeijk, 2009). The role of CD in developed countries is therefore questioned. Nevertheless, our research quantitatively demonstrates that SMEs equally value CD in developed countries. Yet, our study does not take a potential dead-weight loss in account. Future research should therefore examine whether CD results in more international activities or if it merely facilitates operations without necessarily resulting in more international activity.

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# Appendices

Appendix A: Activity and area matrix (Naray, 2008)

Appendix B: Activity classification overview

Appendix C: Call script: Request for participation and telephone questionnaire

Appendix D: Online- Questionnaire

Appendix E: Semi-structured interview

Appendix F: Invitation online questionnaire

Appendix G: Reminder online questionnaire

Appendix H: Sample sector distribution

Appendix I: Operationalization of all variables in this study

Appendix J: Descriptives Users & Non users of Commercial diplomacy

Appendix K: Descriptives Users of Commercial diplomacy

Appendix L: Regression model validation

Appendix M: Service quality distribution

Appendix N: Spss Output

Appendix O: Distribution of the dependent variable

Appendix P: Qualitative data output



# Appendix A

*Activity and area matrix (Naray, 2008)*

| <b>AREA</b><br><b>ACTIVITY</b> | <b>Promotion of Trade in Goods and Services</b>                 | <b>Protection of Intellectual Property Rights</b>                                   | <b>Co-operation in Science &amp; Technology</b>                             | <b>Promotion of Made-in and Corporate Image</b>                       | <b>Promotion of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs)</b>                            |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Intelligence                   | Gathering export marketing data                                 | Supervision of violations of IPRs   | Monitoring research achievements  | Image studies   | Identifying potential investors  |
| Communication                  | Tourism promotion conference                                    | Presentations during awareness campaigns  | Preparation of press articles on scientific achievements                    | Contribution to made-in promotion events                              | Briefings for potential investors  |
| Referral                       | Introducing potential exporters                                 | Search for reliable IP lawyers  | Facilitation of contacts between H.T. labs                                  | P.R. for large contracts where national image counts                  | Approaching CEOs with investment proposals                                       |
| Advocacy                       | Support of firms in dispute settlement procedures               | Pressures for improved protection of home country's IPRs                            | P.R. in favour of joint scientific projects                                 | Defence of national companies singled out by host country authorities | Protection of home country investors in the host country                         |
| Co-ordination                  | Organization of prospect meetings                               | Co-ordination of legal action   | Introducing parties to initiate R&D joint ventures                          | Co-ordination of made-in campaigns                                    | Organizing minister's participation in private investors' forum                  |
| Logistics                      | Embassy's secretariat is servicing a trade promotion conference | Training material for awareness campaigns is printed and distributed by the Embassy | Ambassador or CD hosts a conference on promotion of scientific co-operation | Translation of the campaigns material is done by the CD unit's staff. | Members of an investment promotion mission use office facilities at the Embassy. |

# Appendix B

## Activity classification overview

| Activity classification overview |               |                                  |                                 |                                    |  |                          |
|----------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Authors                          | Naray (2008)  | Lederman et al. (2009)           | Kostecki and Naray (2007)       | Kostecki and Naray (2007)          | Lee (2004)   | Kotabe & Czinkota (1992) |
| Type of service                  | Intelligence  | Market research and publications | Intelligence                    | Market information search          | Gathering and dissemination of market information    | Export service programs  |
|                                  | Referral      | Country image building           | Problem solving                 | Partner search                     | Development and introduction of government relations | Market development       |
|                                  | Advocacy      | Export support services          | Networking and public relations | Problem solving and trade disputes | Promotion of home country products and services      |                          |
|                                  | Coordination  | Marketing                        |                                 | Trade fairs                        |  |                          |
|                                  | Communication |                                  |                                 | Investment facilitation            |  |                          |
|                                  | Logistics     |                                  |                                 |                                    |  |                          |

# Appendix C

## Call script: Request for participation and telephone questionnaire

Goedemiddag u spreekt met Sander Busschers van de Universiteit Twente.

Is de export eindverantwoordelijke aanwezig of de internationale verkoop manager?

**Mag ik vragen waarvoor u belt?** → Op dit moment is de universiteit Twente bezig met een onderzoek om beter inzicht te krijgen in de behoefte van NL bedrijven die ondernemen in het buitenland. Ik zou daarom graag de international sales manager / export eindverantwoordelijke spreken.

➤ **Niet aanwezig/geen tijd/** → Mag ik Dhr/Mevr. wellicht een email sturen met daarin mijn verzoek?

Ja →

- Email-adres
- Voor/achter naam
- Naam persoon met wie je spreekt

Nee →

- Mag ik op een later tijdstip terugbellen?
- Ja → Contact moment
- Nee → Einde gesprek

➤ **Ik verbind u door**

Goedemiddag u spreekt met Sander Busschers van de Universiteit Twente. U bent verantwoordelijk voor de internationale verkoop? Bel ik overigens gelegen?

Op dit moment is de universiteit Twente bezig met een onderzoek naar het gebruik en waarde van de bedrijfsondersteunende ondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse diplomatieke posten (zoals ambassades) in het buitenland.

Om hier een beter beeld van te krijgen is er een vragenlijst opgesteld die u via het internet kan invullen. Deze enquête kost 10 minuten van uw tijd. Sommige vragen kunnen wat lang lijken maar zijn erg eenvoudig in te vullen met mee eens of oneens. Het zal daarom niet langer dan 15 minuten kosten om deze vragenlijst in te vullen.

Uw mogelijke medewerking draagt bij aan een betere afstemming tussen de vraag van exporterend Nederland en het dienstverleningsaanbod van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten.

Als bedankje kunt u nog lekkere taart winnen die met uw bedrijfslogo (of tekst naar keuze) naar uw vestiging wordt verstuurd.

**Mag ik u een vragenlijst per email toesturen?**

➤ Nee → Reden waarom

➤ Ja →

- Email-adres
- Voor/achter naam
- Functie

Telefonische vervolgvragen: (1) Heeft u de laatste twee jaar contact gehad met een Nederlandse post in het buitenland?

(2) Wat was de reden voor (geen) contact? (3) In welke omstandigheden zou u wel gebruik maken van het Nederlandse posten netwerk?

# Appendix D

## Online questionnaire

### Hoofdsectie

#### Sectie: Uw onderneming en het gebruik van bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten.

1. Heeft uw onderneming in de afgelopen twee jaar een beroep gedaan op een Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post in het buitenland? (ambassade, consulaat, NBSO, TWA)

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Nee

2. Hoeveel medewerkers telt uw organisatie?

- ☐ 1-9
- ☐ 10-50
- ☐ 51-250
- ☐ > 250

3. Hoeveel jaar heeft uw organisatie export ervaring?

- ☐ Geen ervaring
- ☐ 1 - 10
- ☐ 11 - 20
- ☐ 21- 30
- ☐ 31 - 40
- ☐ > 40

4. In welke sector opereert uw organisatie?

5. Heeft uw onderneming buitenlandse publieke (overheid) klanten/partners?

- ☐ Geen
- ☐ Weinig
- ☐ Enkele
- ☐ Veel
- ☐ Meeste
- ☐ Weet niet/wil niet zeggen

---

Als Gebruik gelijk is aan 1 ➡ In welk land heeft u voor het laatst gebruik gemaakt van de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van een Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post?

---

6. Wat is/zijn de reden(en) waarom uw onderneming geen gebruik heeft gemaakt van de dienstverlening van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten?

(meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- ☐ Onbekendheid met dienstverlening door diplomatieke posten aan het bedrijfsleven
- ☐ Geen goede ervaringen met de dienstverlening van diplomatieke posten
- ☐ Aanbod dienstverlening past niet bij onze behoefte
- ☐ Posten zijn moeilijk benaderbaar
- ☐ Wij vinden onze eigen weg op de buitenlandse markten
- ☐ Gebruik van andere (commerciële) organisaties
- ☐ Anders, nl??

---

Als Geen Gebruik(2) gelijk is aan 2

EN Geen Gebruik(3) gelijk is aan 3 ➡ Kunt u toelichten waarom de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten slecht zijn ervaren en niet inspelen op uw behoefte?

Anders als Geen\_Gebruik(2) gelijk is aan 2 ➡ Kunt u toelichten waarom de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten slecht zijn ervaren?

Anders als Geen\_Gebruik(3) gelijk is aan 3 ➡ Kunt u toelichten waarom de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten niet aansluiten op uw behoefte?

Anders als Geen\_Gebruik(1) gelijk is aan 1 ➡ Onbekendheid

Anders ➡ Sectie 3 Algemene Waarde en Imago

---

**7. Kunt u toelichten waarom de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten slecht zijn ervaren en niet inspelen op uw behoefte?**

A large, empty rectangular text box with a vertical scrollbar on the right side, intended for the respondent to provide an explanation for question 7.

---

➡ Sectie 3 Algemene Waarde en Imago

---

**8. Kunt u toelichten waarom de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten slecht zijn ervaren?**

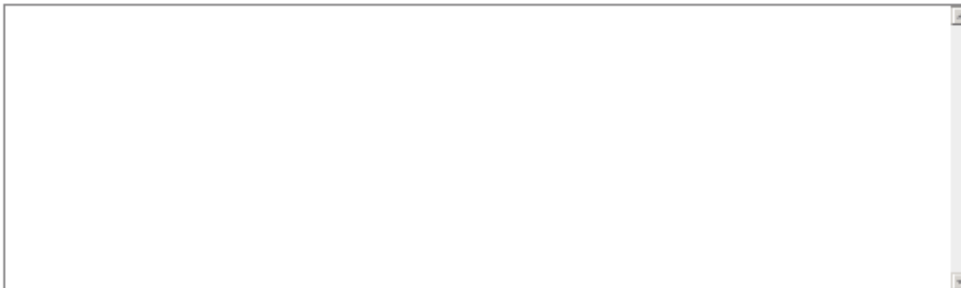
A large, empty rectangular text box with a vertical scrollbar on the right side, intended for the respondent to provide an explanation for question 8.

---

➡ Sectie 3 Algemene Waarde en Imago

---

**9. Kunt u toelichten waarom de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten niet aansluiten op uw behoefte?**

A large, empty rectangular text box with a vertical scrollbar on the right side, intended for the respondent to provide an explanation for question 9.

---

➡ Sectie 3 Algemene Waarde en Imago

---

Om u een indicatie te geven van de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten zijn hieronder de activiteiten vermeld die worden aangeboden om Nederlandse ondernemingen te ondersteunen in het ondernemen in en/of exporteren naar het buitenland

1. Het geven van marktinformatie en advies
2. Informatievoorziening over wet- en regelgeving (importtarieven, douaneprocedures etc.)
3. (Handels) culturele informatie
4. Het geven van informatie over projecten/aanbestedingen
5. Het vinden van partners voor samenwerking, investering of kennisdeling
6. Assistentie bij handelsgeschillen
7. Assistentie bij beurzen en handelsmissies
8. Aanwezigheid van diplomaat bij beurzen, missies, ceremonies en mogelijk onderhandelingen
9. Introductie van uw product bij buitenlandse partners (afzetmarkt)
- Overige

Kunt u in de volgende vraag aangeven hoe **potentieel** waardvol deze service kan zijn voor uw onderneming?

### Sectie 3 Algemene Waarde en Imago

#### 10. In welk land heeft u voor het laatst gebruik gemaakt van de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van een Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post?

▼

Akrotiri  
Albanië  
Algerije  
Amerikaanse Maagdeneilanden  
Amerikaans-Samoa

### Sectie: Economische Diplomatie in [!Land!]

De volgende set met vragen gaan specifiek over de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post in [!Land!]

#### 11. Vult u in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. de aard van de ondersteuning(en) in waar u gebruik van heeft gemaakt in [!Land!].

(Meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- ☐ Het geven van marktinformatie en advies
- ☐ Informatievoorziening over wet- en regelgeving (importtarieven, douaneprocedures etc.)
- ☐ (Handels) culturele informatie
- ☐ Het geven van informatie over projecten/aanbestedingen
- ☐ Het vinden van partners voor samenwerking, investering of kennisdeling
- ☐ Assistentie bij handelsgeschillen
- ☐ Assistentie bij beurzen en handelsmissies
- ☐ Aanwezigheid van diplomaat bij beurzen, missies, ceremonies en mogelijke onderhandelingen
- ☐ Anders, nl,....
- 

#### 12. Geef aan in welke mate u het eens of oneens bent met de volgende uitspraken over de prestatie van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post in [!Land!]. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in.

|  | Geheel<br>mee<br>oneens | Mee<br>oneens         | Enigzins<br>mee<br>oneens | Noch<br>eens/<br>Noch<br>oneens | Enigzins<br>mee<br>eens | Mee<br>eens           | Geheel<br>mee<br>eens | Weet<br>niet          |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Het gebouw van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post ziet er aantrekkelijk uit | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Het personeel ziet er verzorgd en professioneel uit                         | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. On – en Offline documentatie ziet er aantrekkelijk uit                      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Deze Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post heeft                                  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| gepaste openingstijden |  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 5.                     | Deze Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post levert service zoals beloofd      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6.                     | Het personeel levert de juiste service de eerste keer                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7.                     | Het personeel levert de service op de afgesproken tijd                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8.                     | Het personeel houdt mij op de hoogte wanneer de service wordt geleverd | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9.                     | Het personeel levert tijdige service                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10.                    | Het personeel is bereid om bedrijven te helpen                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11.                    | Het personeel is gereed om te reageren op bedrijfsverzoeken            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12.                    | Het personeel is beleefd   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13.                    | Het personeel heeft de kennis om vragen van bedrijven te beantwoorden  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 14.                    | Het personeel besteedt individuele aandacht aan bedrijven              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 15.                    | Het personeel behartigt de belangen van bedrijven                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 16.                    | Het personeel begrijpt de behoefte van bedrijven                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

13. **Beoordeel de algehele kwaliteit van de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteit(en) van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post in [!Land!] op een schaal van Zeer laag tot Zeer hoog.**

☐ 1. Zeer laag  
☐ 2. Laag  
☐ 3. Enigzins Laag  
☐ 4. Niet laag noch hoog  
☐ 5. Enigzins hoog  
☐ 6. Hoog  
☐ 7. Zeer hoog

14. **Los van [!Land!]. Wat is uw oordeel over de kwaliteit van de uitgevoerde dienstverlening van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten over het algemeen?**

☐ Over het algemeen zeer goed  
☐ Over het algemeen goed  
☐ Sterk wisselend tussen posten  
☐ Over het algemeen matig  
☐ Over het algemeen slecht  
☐ Weet niet / Wil niet zeggen

15. **Om een beter beeld te krijgen van de exportomgeving in [!Land!] voor Nederlandse exporteurs, willen we graag uw mening over de volgende uitspraken.**

*Geef aan in welke mate u het eens of oneens bent met de volgende uitspraken. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in.*



|   | Geheel<br>mee<br>oneens | Mee<br>oneens         | Enigzins<br>mee<br>oneens | Eens<br>noch<br>oneens | Enigzins<br>mee<br>eens | Mee<br>eens           | Geheel<br>mee<br>eens | Weet<br>niet          |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Contracten met buitenlandse bedrijven worden gerespecteerd in [!Land!].   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Intellectual property van bedrijven worden gerespecteerd en zijn veilig in [!Land!].  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Een (handels) rechtbank in [!Land!] maakt onafhankelijke en onbevooroordeelde beslissingen omtrent claims voortkomend uit handelstransacties.   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| De Juridische omgeving in [!Land!] is betrouwbaar   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Het is makkelijk om betrouwbare informatie over markten te vinden in [!Land!].  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Potentiële Partners zijn makkelijk te vinden in [!Land!].   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Procedures omtrent export zijn duidelijk en makkelijk te vinden   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| In [!Land!] is duidelijke informatie beschikbaar betreffende procedures over het opstarten/opzetten van een bedrijf   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Informatie over de kwaliteit van goederen en services zijn over het algemeen beschikbaar in [!Land!].   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Betrouwbare informatie over de financiële gezondheid van bedrijven/partners is ruimschoots beschikbaar.   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Vele bedrijven in [!Land!] zijn staatsbedrijven   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| De regering in [!Land!] heeft een grote informele invloed op bedrijven  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| In [!Land!] genieten regeringsfunctionarissen een hoge status in zowel de publieke als private sector.  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| <b>16. Geef in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. aan in hoeverre u het eens/oneens bent met de uitspraken over bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten in [!Land!].</b> |                         |                       |                           |                        |                         |                       |                       |                       |
|   | Geheel<br>mee<br>oneens | Mee<br>oneens         | Enigzins<br>mee<br>oneens | Eens<br>noch<br>oneens | Enigzins<br>mee<br>eens | Mee<br>eens           | Geheel<br>mee<br>eens | Weet<br>niet          |
| Bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de buitenlandse post in [!Land!] vergemakkelijkt het zaken doen in [!Land!] voor mijn bedrijf.  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!] zorgt ervoor dat ik sneller mijn taken kan voldoen.   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ik zie de Nederlandse buitenlandse post in [!Land!] als een waardevol instrument voor   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



|  |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| export bevordering/ondernemen in [!Land!].   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| De Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!] verhoogt mijn export/resultaten in [!Land!].  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Het verdwijnen van bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post zou ondernemen in [!Land!] voor mijn bedrijf bemoeilijken. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**17. Kunt u aangeven in welke mate de hieronder vermelde bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten waarde heeft voor uw onderneming in exporteren/zakendoen in [!Land!]**

*Beoordeel alle 5 services. Ook als u hier geen gebruik van heeft gemaakt.*

|  | Ze<br>er<br>lage<br>waarde | Lage<br>waarde        | Enigzins<br>lage<br>waarde | Lage<br>noch<br>hoge<br>waarde | Enigzins<br>hoge<br>waarde | Hoge<br>waarde        | Ze<br>er<br>hoge<br>waarde | Weet<br>niet          |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Het verschaffen van informatie (markt, handels culturele, project en aanbesteding en wet & regelgeving informatie) | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
| Assistentie en/of oplossen van handelsgeschillen   | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
| Het vinden van (publieke/private partners voor samenwerking, investering of kennisdeling                           | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
| Aanwezigheid van diplomaat bij beurzen, missies, ceremonies en mogelijk onderhandelingen                           | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
| Assistentie bij beurzen en handelsmissies  | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |

**Sectie: De Algemene waarde en Imago van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten**

**18. Geef aan in welke mate de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten waarde heeft voor uw onderneming.**

*Beoordeel ALLE 9 ondersteuning, ook als u hier geen gebruik van heeft gemaakt.*

|  | Ze<br>er<br>lage<br>waarde | Lage<br>waarde        | Enigzins<br>lage<br>waarde | Laag<br>noch<br>hoge<br>waarde | Enigzins<br>hoge<br>waarde | Hoge<br>waarde        | Ze<br>er<br>hoge<br>waarde | Weet<br>niet          |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Het geven van marktinformatie en advies  | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
| Informatievoorziening over wet- en regelgeving (importtarieven, douaneprocedures etc.) | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
| (Handels) culturele informatie   | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
| Het geven van informatie over projecten/aanbestedingen                                 | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
| Het vinden van partners voor samenwerking, investering of kennisdeling                 | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
| Assistentie bij handelsgeschillen in het buitenland                                    | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |
|  | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> |

Assistentie bij beurzen en handelsmissies

Aanwezigheid van diplomaat bij beurzen, missies, ceremonies en mogelijke onderhandelingen

Introductie van uw product bij buitenlandse partners (afzetmarkt)

19. Geef in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. aan in hoeverre u het eens/oneens bent met de uitspraken over de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten.

|  | Geheel<br>mee<br>oneens | Mee<br>oneens         | Enigzins<br>mee<br>oneens | Eens<br>noch<br>oneens | Enigzins<br>mee<br>eens | Mee<br>eens           | Geheel<br>mee<br>eens | Weet<br>niet          |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van buitenlandse posten vergemakkelijken het zaken doen in het buitenland voor mijn bedrijf.                                 | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Posten zorgen ervoor dat ik sneller mijn taken kan voldoen.                                   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ik zie de Nederlandse buitenlandse posten als een waardevol instrument voor export bevordering/ondernemen in het buitenland.                                     | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Posten verhogen mijn export/resultaten in het buitenland.   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Het verdwijnen van bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Posten zou ondernemen in het buitenland voor mijn bedrijf bemoeilijken. | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

20. De volgende vraag betreft de *algemene indruk* die u heeft van de bedrijfsondersteunde activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten. Wilt u aangeven in hoeverre u het met elk van de volgende kenmerken eens of oneens bent?

|                   | Geheel<br>mee<br>oneens | Mee<br>oneens         | Enigzins<br>mee<br>oneens | Eens<br>noch<br>oneens | Enigzins<br>mee<br>eens | Mee<br>eens           | Geheel<br>mee<br>eens | Weet<br>niet          |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Amateuristisch    | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Bureaucratisch    | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Flexibel          | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Gemakzuchtig      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Klantgericht      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Laagdrempelig     | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Staat goed bekend | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Overbodig         | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Snel              | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Toegankelijk      | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

21. De onderstaande ruimte kunt u benutten voor inhoudelijke aanbevelingen ter verbetering en/of uitbreiding van de dienstverlening van het Nederlandse posten netwerk in het buitenland:

---

Als Gebruik gelijk is aan 1 ➡ Hoe ontwikkeld acht u uw zaken – / partner netwerk in [!Land!] op het moment dat u de Nederlandse (diplomatieke post) in [!Land!] benaderde?

---

22. **Wilt u kans maken op een heerlijke taart?**

- ☐ Ja, e-mailadres
- ☐ Nee

---

Als Gebruik gelijk is aan 2 ➡ **Beëindig vragenlijst**

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23. **Hoe ontwikkeld acht u uw zaken – / partner netwerk in [!Land!] op het moment dat u de Nederlandse (diplomatieke post) in [!Land!] benaderde?**

- ☐ Geen zaken – /partner netwerk
- ☐ Onderontwikkeld zaken – /partnernetwerk
- ☐ Ontwikkeld zaken – /partner netwerk

24. **Wilt u kans maken op een heerlijke taart?**

- ☐ Ja, emailadres
- ☐ Nee

---

Als Gebruik gelijk is aan 1 ➡ **Beëindig vragenlijst**

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## Afsluitende pagina

Hartelijk dank voor uw kostbare tijd!

Met vriendelijke groet,

Dr H.J.M. Ruel

MSc J.A. Busschers

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# Appendix E

*Semi-structured interview response: Participants: (1)Expert (EXP) in the field of International, economical and social policy of SMEs. (2) Sander Busschers, (3) dr. H.J.M. Ruel.*

## Imago

*Sander: Sommige MKBers hebben het volgende imago van een ambassade "CD voor de grote jongens en het grote geld"*

EXP: Voor een deel herken ik het. Belangen zijn natuurlijk stukken groter als een Shell in een land waar de overheid een belangrijke rol speelt op afstand en olie op slot kan trekken dan zijn daar zoveel middelen en ook indirect werkgelegenheid gerelateerd dat een post van nature harder rent voor de grote multinationals. Aan de andere kant, ik spreek genoeg MKB 'ers juist wel zeggen ambassades echt de tijd voor ze nemen. Het is een te grillig beeld om daar generieke uitspraken over te doen. De oplossing zit hem in dat MKB 'ers zich sterker weten te clusteren. Dit heeft ook met hoge mate te maken met de capaciteit te maken van ambassades. Heel veel individuele vragen van het MKB in populaire landen zijn moeilijk te verhapstukken in populaire landen bijvoorbeeld, in de golfstaten. Wat wij van onze leden horen, MNE hoor ik er nooit over staft met jou onderzoek maar de reactie van het MKB is erg wisselend.

## Specialisatie en samenwerking met private partijen

*Sander: Het FME stelde: Generieke info dat is de taak van de overheid: 80% kan in Den Haag gebeuren en specifieke informatie moet veelal door private partijen worden geleverd.*

EXP: Dat deel ik volledig en dat is ook wel de beweging die gemaakt wordt. Algemene informatie kun je in hoge mate digitaliseren. Mede gedreven door bezuinigen, beweegt de overheid zich meer naar de publieke rol en het overlaten aan private partijen wat die kunnen doen. Het is ook zo dat op het terrein van informatie voorziening en advisering zoals branche organisaties een breed terrein aan private partijen actief zijn die bedrijven in hun behoefte kunnen voorzien. En dat ondernemers voor moeten betalen is even wennen gezien we voorheen in een goed subsidie bedje lagen maar dit zie ik niet als een kwalijke ontwikkeling. Het overigens wel zo dat in gebieden waar een slechte private infrastructuur aanwezig is, daar moet de overheid wel aanwezig zijn maar dat worden er ook steeds minder in de wereld. Daarnaast moet de overheid met name doen waar zij goed in zijn en dat zijn G2G contacten en met het helpen van bedrijven daarmee, ja dat zie ik wel als een gezonde tendens.

*Sander: Dus meer inzet op generieke informatie en G2G relaties ipv proberen een consultant te worden op specifieke markten.*

EXP: Ja inderdaad omdat ik denk dat private partijen dat heel wel kunnen en ook nu mede door bezuinigingen gedreven dat die taak ook serieuzer wordt opgepakt door de private actoren. Blijft dus over de contacten met de overheid openstellen. Sub varianten, beschikbaarstelling van je netwerk en handelsmissies organiseren. Vooral het bedrijfsleven, bilateraal G2G zal de kerntaak van de posten worden. Ook omdat handelspolitiek steeds meer naar europa verschuiven omdat daar de kracht ligt.

*Sander: Het sector specifieke aspect in modernisering van de Nederlandse Diplomatie: Generalist of Specialist:*

EXP: Heel laf antwoord van beide, het is altijd zo geweest dat Kazachtstan meer weet van olie dan van de creatieve industrie. Belangrijk dat het vraag gestuurd is. Als er een subsector opstaat die weet wat hij wil dan moet er reden zijn van de overheid om daar in mee te gaan. Het moet wel van onderaf komen. Het slechtste wat je kunt hebben is als een ambassade gaat bepalen waar de focus op ligt.

## Europese markten (marktscans)

*Sander: Merken jullie dat bedrijven die beginnen met exporteren vooral buitenlandse posten in de EU benaderen?*

EXP: De Indruk die ik er van heb is dat het heel erg per sector verschilt. Hightech starters die direct global gaan "born globals". Familie ondernemingen die iets meer druk van concurrenten voelen, of innoveren of internationalisering zullen niet per direct ver weg willen maar zullen eerst eens kijken in Duistland. Het is dus echt heel verschillend, traditie, product dat je ontwikkeld. Dr.Ruel voegde hier aan toe: mbt born globals. Bedrijven exporteren eerst dichtbij huis, daarna verder weg.

*Sander: Er is dus nog wel belang bij commerciële diplomatie in bijvoorbeeld Duitsland?*

Zeker, er was op een gegeven moment sprake dat er een consulaat in Hamburg zou worden gesloten en nou van ons regionale vereniging VNO-NCW Noord die daar in het gebied opereren hebben echt wat aan deze ambassade. Daar was duidelijk het signaal, alstublieft open houden omdat het een zeer nuttige informatie bron is.

## Onbekendheid

*Waarom blijft het onbekendheidpercentage van commerciële diplomatie zo hoog?*

EXP: Wij trekken ons dit zelf ook aan gezien wij mee hebben gedaan aan de campagne "loop eens binnen in het buitenland". Was dan wel met beperkte middelen want als je een campagne goed wilt doen dan kun je het professioneler aanpakken dan wat wij doen met ledencommunicatie. Maar ik denk dat hier wel een probleem zit dat minister van BZ Rosenthal ook zelf erkend. We hadden daar onlangs een gesprek met Rosenthal. Die zei, Ik wil graag de kant op van economische diplomatie maar we moeten wel samen de communicatie oppakken. Want er worden gewoon een hele hoop bedrijven niet bereikt.

Kijk wij doen er denk ik best veel aan, in ons blad Forum proberen wij zoveel mogelijk internationale ondernemers aan het woord laten. Daarin laten de redacteur ook altijd vragen stellen of er contact is gezocht met posten en het samen werken met posten. We proberen onze rol wel te vervullen maar ik zal de eerste zijn om te bekennen dat het bekender en grootschaliger kan. Het grote probleem voor ons is dat onze core business is lobbyen en belangenbehartiging. We zijn heel actief geweest om beleidsvragen van de posten. Alleen de operationele handels bevordering en het bekender maken van de service is niet onze kerntaak. Bij andere organisaties zoals brancheorganisaties als FME zouden daar een belangrijker rol kunnen spelen gezien zij op de dienstverleningen tak zitten.

Wat er nu wel gebeurd is dat er een omslag word gemaakt van een postennetwerk dat zicht vroeger vooral op politiek, veiligheid, aantal niet economische taak had, en nu wordt economische diplomatie één van de prioriteiten. Dit is relatief nieuw voor een buitenland klasje dat geleerd is om politieke diplomatie te bedrijven. Er zijn echt uitstekende ambassadeurs en medewerkers van ambassades die zeer zichtbaar zijn bij economische evenementen in het land en er zijn er nog steeds die deze evenementen nog steeds mijden en vooral bezig zijn met politiek en OS en veiligheid discussies en dat soort zaken. Ik denk wel dat het daarom iets van een lange adem is als je meer economische diplomatie als prioriteit wilt van je posten dat je dus je personeel stimuleert daar actief invulling aan te geven. Beste manier om ondernemers te bereiken is ondernemers uit te nodigen op de post en/of zelf actief naar netwerk bijeenkomsten te gaan en jezelf zichtbaarder te maken. Basis voorwaarde is uiteraard dat je website etc maar die klacht hoor ik niet veel. Dat sommige ambassades meer zichtbaar zijn en sommige minder op economische evenementen dat herken ik wel en wij pleiten er natuurlijk voor dat hier meer in geïnvesteerd word. Het werkt twee kanten op: We zijn soms ook bij missies betrokken en je ziet gewoon dat posten die er plezier in hebben, waar de ambassadeurs handel een belangrijke prioriteit vinden kunnen ook prima contacten regelen van belangrijke CEO's en de regering.

## Meer samenwerking met brancheorganisaties en EVD

*Sander: MKB'ers gaven aan dat het verbeteren van de samenwerking tussen branche organisaties en de buitenlandse posten de waarde zou verhogen. Hoe kijkt u hier tegen aan?*

EXP: Branche organisaties kunnen precies helpen op de punten waar buitenlandse posten meer waarde willen toevoegen voor sector specifieke informatie. De buitenlandse posten en het EVD hoeven niet in isolatie te werken. Er kan veel meer nadruk gelegd worden op welke taken branche organisaties kunnen uitvoeren en waar en waar niet buitenlandse posten worden gebruikt.

*Sander: Ervaart u dat er een betere samenwerking kan plaats vinden tussen het EVD en buitenlandse posten?*

EXP: De EVD fungeert als een zender en ontvanger van informatie naar de buitenlandse posten en op het zelfde moment als een ontvanger van informatie die ze weer doorspeelt naar het bedrijfsleven. Ik geloof dat dit beter kan. Buitenlandse posten zouden alerter moeten zijn op mogelijkheden die zich voordoen in het buitenland en het EVD zou deze informatie beter kunnen filteren en doorspelen aan de juiste bedrijven groepen. De EVD doet dit al, maar er zijn landen waar dit beter en sneller gaat.

## Professionalisering van personeel

*MKB'ers gaven aan dat personeel van de buitenlandse posten meer zaken ervaring zouden moeten hebben? Hoe staat u hier tegenover?*

EXP: Er is meer geld beschikbaar om de prioriteit van Economische diplomatie in te vullen door middel van scholing van het ambassade personeel. De basis ligt bij de diplomatieke klas en bij de prioriteit van economische diplomatie in de diplomaten klas. Dit kan ietwat beter. Wat wij belangrijker vinden, om even te spreken van het 'ivoren torentje' te spreken, is dat een ambassade niet op haar kleine eilandje moet blijven zitten, maar in contact moet blijven met het bedrijfsleven. Gelukkig gebeurt dit steeds vaker waar bijvoorbeeld de ambassadeur bedrijven bezoekt bij thuiskomst in Nederland.

# Appendix F

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## *Invitation of the online-questionnaire (Dutch)*

Geachte [!AANHEF!] [!TUSSENVOEGSEL!] [!ACHTERNAAM!],

Allereerst hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking. Het doel van deze vragenlijst is om een beter inzicht te krijgen in uw mening over de toegevoegde waarde van de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten zoals ambassades, consulaten, NBSO's en TWA's.

Deze enquête neemt ongeveer 15 minuten in beslag. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden — het enige waar wij in geïnteresseerd zijn is uw mening en uw waardeoordeel over de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten.

Uw medewerking wordt erg gewaardeerd en draagt bij aan een betere afstemming tussen de vraag van exporterend Nederland en het dienstverleningsaanbod van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten. Vanzelfsprekend blijft de door u verstrekte informatie volledig anoniem.

Door deelname maakt u ook kans op een lekkere taart met een persoonlijke boodschap of bedrijfslogo. U kunt aan het einde van deze enquête uw e-mailadres achterlaten om deel te nemen.

Nogmaals hartelijk dank voor uw deelname.

Door op onderstaande link te klikken opent u de vragenlijst

[!LINK!]

Met vriendelijke groet,

J.A. Busschers

Dr H.J.M. Ruel

Universiteit Twente

Drienerlolaan 5

7522 NB Enschede

# Appendix G

*Reminder of the online-questionnaire (Dutch)*

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Geachte [!AANHEF!] [!TUSSENVOEGSEL!] [!ACHTERNAAM!],

Hierbij verstuur ik u een herinnering voor de deelname of afronding van de economische diplomatie vragenlijst. We hopen dat u de mogelijkheid heeft om de vragenlijst alsnog in te vullen of af te ronden. Uw medewerking wordt erg gewaardeerd en is van groot belang voor een betere afstemming tussen de vraag van internationaal ondernemend Nederland en het dienstverleningsaanbod van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten.

Het doel van deze vragenlijst is om een beter inzicht te krijgen in uw mening over de toegevoegde waarde van de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten zoals ambassades, consulaten, NBSO's en TWA's.

Deze enquête neemt ongeveer 15 minuten in beslag. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden — het enige waar wij in geïnteresseerd zijn is uw mening en uw waardeoordeel over het dienstverleningsaanbod van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten. Vanzelfsprekend blijft de door u verstrekte informatie volledig anoniem.

Door deelname maakt u ook kans op een lekkere taart met een persoonlijke boodschap of bedrijfslogo. U kunt aan het einde van deze enquête uw e-mailadres achterlaten om deel te nemen.

Nogmaals hartelijk dank voor uw deelname.

Door op onderstaande link te klikken opent u de vragenlijst

[!LINK!]

Met vriendelijke groet,

J.A. Busschers  
Dr H.J.M. Ruel

Universiteit Twente  
Drienerlolaan 5  
7522 NB Enschede

# Appendix H

## Sample Sector Distribution

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| Sector                              | N   | %      |
|-------------------------------------|-----|--------|
| Agro                                | 12  | 10,4%  |
| Bosbouw en hout(bewerking)industrie | 1   | ,9%    |
| Bouw en infrastructuur              | 4   | 3,5%   |
| Chemie en kunststoffen              | 2   | 1,7%   |
| Consumentengoederen en detailhandel | 4   | 3,5%   |
| Creative industry                   | 3   | 2,6%   |
| Elektronics industry                | 3   | 2,6%   |
| Energy Sector                       | 1   | ,9%    |
| Grafische- en papierindustrie       | 3   | 2,6%   |
| ICT                                 | 4   | 3,5%   |
| Kleding en textiel                  | 4   | 3,5%   |
| Machine-industrie                   | 8   | 7,0%   |
| Medische sector                     | 1   | ,9%    |
| Metaal(bewerkings)industrie         | 9   | 7,8%   |
| Overheid                            | 1   | ,9%    |
| Transportmiddelenindustrie          | 3   | 2,6%   |
| Verpakkingsindustrie                | 3   | 2,6%   |
| Vervoer en logistiek                | 3   | 2,6%   |
| Voedings- en genotmiddelen          | 17  | 14,8%  |
| Woning- en projectinrichting        | 2   | 1,7%   |
| Overige                             | 27  | 23,5%  |
| Total                               | 115 | 100,0% |



# Appendix I

*Operationalization of all variables in this study*

| Variable/Construct      | Dimension    | Items  | Question  | Measurement scale                              |
|-------------------------|--------------|--|---|--|
| Usage                   | Same as left | Same as left   | Heeft uw onderneming in de afgelopen twee jaar een beroep gedaan op een Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post in het buitenland? (Ambassade, consulaat, NBSO, TWA)? | {1,Ja} {2,Nee}                                 |
| Reason for not using CD | Same as left | {1Onbekendheid<br>{2Geen goede ervaringen<br>{3Past niet bij onze behoefte<br>{4Posten zijn moeilijk benaderbaar<br>{5Wij vinden onze eigen weg<br>{6Gebruik van andere (commerciële)organisaties}<br>{7Anders, nl...  | Wat is/zijn de reden(en) waarom uw onderneming geen gebruik heeft gemaakt van de dienstverlening van diplomatieke posten?                                     | {1,Ja} {2,Nee}                                 |
| Country                 | Same as left | Land van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post   | In welk land heeft u voor het laatst gebruik gemaakt van de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van een Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post?                      | World Country List 2011, 255 countries {1-255} |
| Type of service Used    | Same as left | {1, Het geven van sectorspecifieke marktinformatie en advies}<br>{2,Informatievoorziening over wet- en regelgeving (importtarieven, douaneprocedures etc.)}<br>{3,(Handels) culturele informatie}<br>{4,Het geven van informatie over projecten/aanbestedingen}<br>{5,Het vinden van partners voor samenwerking, investering of kennisdeling}<br>{6,Assistentie bij handelsgeschillen}<br>{7,Assistentie bij beurzen en handelsmissies}<br>{8,Aanwezigheid van diplomaat bij beurzen, missies, ceremonies en mogelijk onderhandelingen}<br>{9,Overige} | Vult u in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. de aard van de ondersteuning(en) waar u gebruik van heeft gemaakt.   | {1,Ja} {2,Nee}                                 |

|  |                                       |  |  |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Customer value "The worth in usefulness" | Value per CD service in general       | 1. Het geven van marktinformatie en advies<br>2. Informatievoorziening over wet- en regelgeving (importtarieven, douaneprocedures etc.)<br>3. (Handels) culturele informatie<br>4. Het geven van informatie over projecten/aanbestedingen<br>5. Het vinden van partners voor samenwerking, investering of kennisdeling<br>6. Assistentie bij handelsgeschillen<br>7. Assistentie bij beurzen en handelsmissies<br>8. Aanwezigheid van diplomaat bij beurzen, missies, ceremonies en mogelijke onderhandelingen   | Geef aan in welke mate de 9 hieronder vermelde bedrijfsondersteunende services waarde heeft voor uw bedrijf om te ondernemen in het buitenland op een schaal van 'Zeet lage waarde' tot ' Zeet hoge waarde'.<br>Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'Weet niet' in.<br>Beoordeel ALLE 9 ondersteuninget, ook als u hier geen gebruik van heeft gemaakt. | {1,Zeer laag}<br>{2,Laag}<br>{3,Enigzins laag}<br>{4,Laag noch hoog}<br>{5,Enigzins hoog}<br>{6,Hoog}<br>{7,Zeer Hoog}<br>{0,Weet niet}                                     |
|  | Overall CD value in general           | 1.Bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van buitenlandse posten vergemakkelijken het zaken doen in het buitenland voor mijn bedrijf.<br>2.Bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Posten zorgen ervoor dat ik sneller mijn taken kan voldoen.<br>3.Ik zie de Nederlandse buitenlandse posten als een waardevol instrument voor export bevordering/ondernemen in het buitenland.<br>4.Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Posten verhogen mijn export/resultaten in het buitenland.<br>5.Het verdwijnen van bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Posten zou ondernemen in het buitenland voor mijn bedrijf bemoeilijken. | Geef in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. aan in hoeverre u het eens/oneens bent met de uitspraken over de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten.  | {1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}<br>{0,Weet niet} |
|  | Value per CD service per host country | 1. Het verschaffen van informatie ( markt, handels culturele, project en aanbesteding en wet & regelgeving informatie)<br>2. Assistentie en/of oplossen van handelsgeschillen<br>3. Het vinden van (publieke/private partners voor samenwerking, investering of kennisdeling<br>4. Aanwezigheid van diplomaat bij beurzen, missies, ceremonies en mogelijke onderhandelingen<br>5. Assistentie bij beurzen en handelsmissies   | Geef aan in welke mate de 9 hieronder vermelde bedrijfsondersteunende services waarde heeft voor uw bedrijf om te ondernemen in het buitenland op een schaal van 'Zeet lage waarde' tot ' Zeet hoge waarde'.<br>Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'Weet niet' in.<br>Beoordeel ALLE 9 ondersteuninget, ook als u hier geen gebruik van heeft gemaakt. | {1,Zeer laag}<br>{2,Laag}<br>{3,Enigzins laag}<br>{4,Laag noch hoog}<br>{5,Enigzins hoog}<br>{6,Hoog}<br>{7,Zeer Hoog}<br>{0,Weet niet}                                     |
|  | Overall CD value per host country     | 1.Bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van buitenlandse posten vergemakkelijken het zaken doen in [!Land!] voor mijn bedrijf.<br>2.Bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Posten zorgen ervoor dat ik sneller mijn taken kan voldoen in [!Land!] .<br>3.Ik zie de Nederlandse buitenlandse posten als een waardevol instrument voor export bevordering/ondernemen in [!Land!].<br>4.Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Posten verhogen mijn export/resultaten in [!Land!]<br>5.Het verdwijnen van bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Posten zou ondernemen in [!Land!] voor mijn bedrijf bemoeilijken.             | Geef in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. aan in hoeverre u het eens/oneens bent met de uitspraken over de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteiten van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) posten in [!Land!].  | {1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}<br>{0,Weet niet} |

|   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Service Quality (1)<br>'the discrepancy between consumer's perceptions of services offered by a particular firm and their expectations about the firms offerings of such service' (Parasurama et. al, 1988) | Reliability of the service: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately (Landrum et al., 2007).                     | 1 Deze Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post levert service zoals beloofd<br>2 Het personeel levert de juiste service de eerste keer<br>3 Het personeel levert de service op de afgesproken tijd<br>4 Het personeel houdt mij op de hoogte wanneer de service wordt geleverd  | We willen graag weten wat uw indruk is van het functioneren van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!]. Geef in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. een beoordeling op de prestatie van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!] door uw score aan te vinken op een schaal van Zeer laag tot Zeer hoog. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in. | 1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}<br>{0,Weet niet} |
|   | Assurance of the employees: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence (Landrum et al., 2007). | 5 Het personeel is beleefd<br>6Het personeel heeft de kennis om vragen van bedrijven te beantwoorden  | We willen graag weten wat uw indruk is van het functioneren van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!]. Geef in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. een beoordeling op de prestatie van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!] door uw score aan te vinken op een schaal van Zeer laag tot Zeer hoog. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in. | 1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}<br>{0,Weet niet} |
|   | Tangibles of the service: Physical representation of the service (Landrum et al., 2007).  | 7 Het gebouw van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post ziet er aantrekkelijk uit<br>8 Het personeel ziet er verzorgd en professioneel uit<br>9 On en Offline documentatie ziet er aantrekkelijk uit<br>10Deze Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post heeft gepaste openingstijden | We willen graag weten wat uw indruk is van het functioneren van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!]. Geef in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. een beoordeling op de prestatie van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!] door uw score aan te vinken op een schaal van Zeer laag tot Zeer hoog. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in. | 1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}<br>{0,Weet niet} |

|   |   |  |   |   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| Service Quality(2) 'the discrepancy between consumer's perceptions of services offered by a particular firm and their expectations about the firms offerings of such service' (Parasurama et. al, 1988) | Empathy of employee: Caring individualized attention provided to clients (Landrum et al., 2007).  | 11 Het personeel besteedt individuele aandacht aan bedrijven<br>12 Het personeel behartigt de belangen van bedrijven<br>13 Het personeel begrijpt de behoefte van bedrijven  | We willen graag weten wat uw indruk is van het functioneren van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!]. Geef in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. een beoordeling op de prestatie van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!] door uw score aan te vinken op een schaal van Zeer laag tot Zeer hoog. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in. | 1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}<br>{0,Weet niet}  |
|   | Responsiveness of employees: Willingness to help client firms and to provide prompt services (Landrum et al., 2007).  | 14 Het personeel levert tijdige service<br>15 Het personeel is bereidt om bedrijven te helpen<br>16 Het personeel is gereed om te reageren op bedrijfsverzoeken  | We willen graag weten wat uw indruk is van het functioneren van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!]. Geef in de onderstaande tabel s.v.p. een beoordeling op de prestatie van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) Post in [!Land!] door uw score aan te vinken op een schaal van Zeer laag tot Zeer hoog. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in. | 1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}<br>{0,Weet niet}  |
|   | Overall assessment of quality.  | Algehele kwaliteit meting van genoten service  | Beoordeel de algehele kwaliteit van de bedrijfsondersteunende activiteit(en) van de Nederlandse (diplomatieke) post in [!Land!] op een schaal van Zeer laag tot Zeer hoog.  | {1,Zeer laag}<br>{2,Laag}<br>{3,Enigzins laag}<br>{4,Niet laag noch hoog}<br>{5,Enigzins hoog}<br>{6,Hoog}<br>{7,Zeer Hoog}<br>{0,Weet niet}                                |
| Institutional profile(1): The humanly devised constraints that shape interaction (North, 1990).   | Regulatory institutions: Existing laws and rules in a particular national environment, which promote certain types of behavior and restrict others (Kostova, 1997). | 1 Contracten met buitenlandse bedrijven worden gerespecteerd in dit land<br>2 Intellectual property van bedrijven worden gerespecteerd en zijn veilig in dit land.<br>3 Een (handels) rechtbank in dit land maakt onafhankelijke en onbevooroordeelde beslissingen omtrent claims voortkomend uit handelstransacties.<br>4 De Juridische omgeving in dit land is betrouwbaar   | Om een beter beeld te krijgen van de exportomgeving in [!Land!] voor Nederlandse exporteurs, willen we graag uw mening over de volgende uitspraken. Geef aan in welke mate u het eens of oneens bent met de volgende uitspraken. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in.   | {1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}<br>{0,Weet niet} |
|   | Cognitive institutions: Knowledge and skills possessed by the people in a country (Busenitz et al., 2001).  | 5 Het is makkelijk om betrouwbare informatie over markten te vinden in dit land<br>6 Procedures omtrent export zijn duidelijk en makkelijk te vinden<br>7 Potentiële Partners zijn makkelijk te vinden in dit land<br>8 I n dit land is duidelijke informatie beschikbaar betreffende procedures over het opstarten/opzetten van een bedrijf<br>9 Informatie over de kwaliteit van goederen en services zijn over het algemeen beschikbaar in dit land | Om een beter beeld te krijgen van de exportomgeving in [!Land!] voor Nederlandse exporteurs, willen we graag uw mening over de volgende uitspraken. Geef aan in welke mate u het eens of oneens bent met de volgende uitspraken. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in.   | {1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}                  |

|  |  |  |  |               |
|--|--|--|--|---------------|
|  |  | 10 Betrouwbare informatie over de financiële gezondheid van bedrijven/partners is ruimschoots beschikbaar. |  | {0,Weet niet} |
|--|--|--|--|---------------|

|   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Institutional profile(2): The humanly devised constraints that shape interaction (North, 1990). | Normative institutions: Social norms, values, and beliefs and assumptions that are socially shared and are carried by individuals (Kostova, 1997). | 11 Vele bedrijven in dit land zijn staatsbedrijven<br>12De regering in dit land heeft een grote informele invloed op bedrijven<br>13 In dit land genieten regeringsfunctionarissen een hoge status in zowel de publieke als private sector, | Om een beter beeld te krijgen van de exportomgeving in [!Land!] voor Nederlandse exporteurs, willen we graag uw mening over de volgende uitspraken. Geef aan in welke mate u het eens of oneens bent met de volgende uitspraken. Als u niet weet hoe u een indicator moet beoordelen, vul dan 'weet niet' in. | {1,Geheel mee oneens}<br>{2,Mee oneens}<br>{3,Enigzins mee oneens}<br>{4,Eens noch oneens}<br>{5,Enigzins mee eens}<br>{6,Mee eens}<br>{7,Geheel mee eens}<br>{0,Weet niet} |
| Client firm Characteristics: Aspects of organizations   | Size   |   | Hoeveel medewerkers telt uw organisatie?  | {1,1-9}<br>{2,10-50}<br>{3,51-250}<br>{4,> 250}   |
|   | International experience   |   | Hoeveel jaar heeft uw organisatie export ervaring?  | {1,Geen ervaring}<br>{2,1 - 10}<br>{3,11 - 20}<br>{4,21- 30}<br>{5,31 -40}<br>{6,> 40}  |
|   | Business network   |   | Hoe groot acht u uw netwerk in [!Land!] op het moment dat u de Nederlandse (Diplomatieke post) in [!Land!] benaderde?   | {1,Geen zaken/partner netwerk}<br>{2,onder ontwikkelend zaken/partnernetwerk}<br>{3,Ontwikkeld zaken/partner netwerk}   |
|   | Foreign Public customers/partners  |   | Heeft uw bedrijf buitenlandse publieke publieke klanten/partners?   | {1,Geen<br>{2,Weinig}<br>{3,Enkele<br>{4,Veel<br>{5,Meeste<br>{6 Weet niet/wil niet zeggen  |

# Appendix J

## *Descriptives Users & Non users of Commercial diplomacy*

|                    |                     | Variable                                 | N   | Mean | STD.Dev | Min | Max | Reliability | Items |
|--------------------|---------------------|--|-----|------|---------|-----|-----|-------------|-------|
| Dependent Variable | CD Value in general | Overall CD Value in general              | 56  | 4,26 | 1,605   | 1   | 7   | ,951        | 5     |
|                    |                     | Value Market information                 | 65  | 4,25 | 1,705   | 1   | 7   |             |       |
|                    |                     | Value information rules and regulations  | 63  | 4,63 | 1,716   | 1   | 7   |             |       |
|                    |                     | Value (Trade) Cultural information       | 63  | 4,22 | 1,689   | 1   | 7   |             |       |
|                    |                     | Value Information about public tenders   | 54  | 3,76 | 2,083   | 1   | 7   |             |       |
|                    |                     | Value Partner-search                     | 60  | 3,78 | 1,905   | 1   | 7   |             |       |
|                    |                     | Value Assistance with trade disputes     | 55  | 4,09 | 1,839   | 1   | 7   |             |       |
|                    |                     | Value Assistance with fairs and missions | 58  | 3,78 | 1,826   | 1   | 7   |             |       |
|                    |                     | Value Presence of diplomat at meetings   | 60  | 3,63 | 1,895   | 1   | 7   |             |       |
|                    |                     | Potential Value (Unaware, respondents)   | 26  | 4,31 | 1,350   | 1   | 7   |             |       |
|                    | Org.Chara           | Number of employees                      | 115 | 2,34 | ,847    | 1   | 4   |             |       |
|                    |                     | International Experience                 | 115 | 4,06 | 1,372   | 1   | 6   |             |       |
|                    |                     | Public customers/partners                | 111 | 1,92 | 1,177   | 1   | 5   |             |       |

# Appendix K

## Decriptives Users of Commercial diplomacy

|                      |                      | Variable                                 | N  | Mean | STD.Dev | Min  | Max  | Reliability | Items |
|----------------------|----------------------|--|----|------|---------|------|------|-------------|-------|
| Dependent Variable   | CD Value in general  | Overall CD Value in general              | 29 | 4,99 | 1,315   | 1,20 | 7    | ,951        | 5     |
|                      |                      | Value Market information                 | 29 | 5,03 | 1,426   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value information rules and regulations  | 27 | 5,41 | 1,185   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value (Trade) Cultural information       | 27 | 5,22 | 1,050   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value Information about public tenders   | 21 | 5,14 | 1,682   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value Partner-search                     | 26 | 4,69 | 1,715   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value Assistance with trade disputes     | 23 | 4,83 | 1,614   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value Assistance with fairs and missions | 23 | 4,83 | 1,370   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value Presence of diplomat at meetings   | 26 | 5,00 | 1,356   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      | CD Value per Country | Overall CD Value per host country        | 25 | 4,71 | 1,334   | 1,4  | 6,4  | ,800        | 5     |
|                      |                      | Value Intelligence services              | 30 | 4,19 | 1,488   | 2    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value Partner-search                     | 26 | 4,58 | 1,362   | 2    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value Assistance with trade disputes     | 25 | 4,76 | 1,832   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value Assistance with fairs and missions | 26 | 4,50 | 1,421   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Value Presence of diplomat at meetings   | 26 | 4,65 | 1,672   | 1    | 7    |             |       |
| Independent variable | Service Quality      | Service quality                          | 28 | 5,38 | 1,032   | 2,69 | 6,94 | ,897        | 5     |
|                      |                      | Tangibles                                | 13 | 5,67 | 0,543   | 4,75 | 6,50 | .488        | 4     |
|                      |                      | Assurance                                | 28 | 5,64 | 0,999   | 3,00 | 7,00 | .517        | 2     |
|                      |                      | Responsiveness                           | 29 | 5,51 | 1,002   | 2,67 | 7,00 | .826        | 3     |
|                      |                      | Reliability                              | 28 | 5,24 | 1,277   | 1,25 | 7,00 | .953        | 4     |
|                      |                      | Empathy                                  | 28 | 5,10 | 1,248   | 2,00 | 7,00 | .822        | 3     |
|                      | Organization         | Number of employees                      | 38 | 2,61 | 0,887   | 1    | 4    |             |       |
|                      |                      | International Experience                 | 38 | 4,40 | 1,405   | 2    | 6    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Public customers/partners                | 37 | 2,35 | 1,300   | 1    | 5    |             |       |
|                      |                      | Business Network                         | 32 | 1,81 | ,998    | 1    | 3    |             |       |
|                      | Institutions         | Institutional country profile            | 18 | 3,96 | 1,031   | 2,69 | 6,94 | ,810        | 3     |
|                      |                      | Regulative pillar                        | 19 | 4,11 | 1,581   | 1,70 | 7    | ,878        | 4     |
|                      |                      | Cognitive pillar                         | 22 | 3,40 | 1,297   | 1,80 | 6,20 | ,917        | 5     |
|                      |                      | Normative pillar                         | 15 | 3,50 | 1,547   | 1,50 | 6,50 | ,808        | 2     |

# Appendix L

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## *Regression model validation*

Firstly, all variables were checked for outlier which could have impacted the results of the linear regression. Outliers did not pose a problem within this research. Secondly multicollinearity can threaten the results of a linear regression model. We first checked the bivariate correlations (Table 14 in Appendix N). Several independent variables were correlated. The highest correlation was observed between the service quality dimension 'responsiveness' and 'reliability' ( $r=.90$ ). Saunders et al. (2009) mentioned a correlation of ( $r=.90$ ) and above between the independent variables gives an indication of multicollinearity. All other correlations, were below this threshold. In addition to the assessment of the bivariate correlations, the independent variables were also checked on the VIF and tolerance statistics. Saunders et al. stated that a lack of multicollinearity is indicated by a VIF of  $< 10$ . It is however also mentioned that in weaker models a VIF of 3 can be a cause of concern. Apart from the 5 performance dimensions, multicollinearity does not appear to be a problem with VIF scores between 1,424 and 1,629. The five performance dimensions do however show VIF scores of concern with an interval of 5,525 and 9,146. Although below the threshold mentioned by Saunders et al. (2009), the performance dimension regression coefficients change dramatically when they are included or excluded. We therefore decided to exclude the five performance dimensions separately and include service quality as one variable. Unfortunately we were therefore not able to understand how the five performance dimensions impacts the customer value and we can therefore only determine the variance of service quality as a whole.

Moreover the regression model is assumed to be linear and therefore the residuals  $R_i$  should be normally distributed and their variance should be constant. The P-P plot showed a normal straight line and therefore there was no transformation of variables necessary. We also checked for heteroscedasticity by using a scatter plot of the regression standardized predicted values against the regression standardized residuals. The spread was fairly constant and randomly distributed around zero.



# Appendix M

## *Service quality distribution*

### **Variety in service quality:**

Respondents were asked to rate the service quality of all foreign posts in relation the CD services delivered . In total 39% (13 out of 30) of the respondents rated the overall CD quality as good. The second largest group consisting of 37% (12 of 30), rated the quality as “varies strongly per foreign post” indicating a rather high variability in the service quality between posts and a very small 9% (2 out of 30) and 3% (1 out of 30) rated the overall service quality of foreign post as “poor” or “very poor”.

### **Overall service quality of foreign posts in general (N=33)**

| <b>Overall quality</b>          | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|
| <b>In general very poor</b>     | 1        | 3%       |
| <b>In general poor</b>          | 2        | 6%       |
| <b>Varies strongly per post</b> | 12       | 37%      |
| <b>In general good</b>          | 13       | 39%      |
| <b>In general very good</b>     | 2        | 6%       |
| <b>Don't know</b>               | 3        | 9%       |

Concerning the variability in service quality per foreign posts, several statements were posed to aid interpretation as to why SMEs perceive this variability in quality. One export manager in the animal nutrition industry stated; “Recently I have requested terms & conditions of payments in both India en Pakistan. The Netherlands Embassy in India provided excellent service whereas the embassy in Pakistan provided the opposite”. Other respondents also gave a reason why they thought the variability existed and subscribed it to the background and degree of business focus of the ambassador and the available employees and their background at the foreign posts; “We experience a big difference in quality between embassies but also per ambassador. In my opinion the difference in quality can be subscribed to the way of working and background of the ambassador. Especially the available network which we can use varies a lot between embassies” (Export managers, food sector). Similarly an export manager in the agricultural sector stated; “For trade mission we are often in contact with embassies but the quality and use of these services very dependable on the available employees and the background of the employees. The ambassador plays an important role in this and it is very perceptible how useful a trade mission is in relation to the main focus of an ambassador ,based on business or politics”

To conclude the aforementioned, the distribution of the perceived service quality indicates that 45% of the respondents perceive the overall quality of CD as good to very good , yet 37% believes it varies strongly per post.

# Appendix N

## Spss Output

**Table 14 Pearson's correlation coefficients of all independent and dependent variables of CD value**

|    |                                       |             | 1                  | 2                  | 3                  | 4                  | 5                  | 6                  | 7                 | 8                  | 9                  | 10     | 11     | 12                 | 13      | 14      | 15     |
|----|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1  | CD Value per country                  | Correlation | 1,000              |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 25,000             |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 2  | Service quality                       | Correlation | ,477 <sup>*</sup>  | 1,000              |                    |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,012               |                    |                    |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 22                 | 28,000             |                    |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 3  | Empathy                               | Correlation | ,530 <sup>**</sup> | ,947 <sup>**</sup> | 1,000              |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,006               | ,000               |                    |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 22                 | 28                 | 28,000             |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 4  | Assurance                             | Correlation | ,613 <sup>**</sup> | ,860 <sup>**</sup> | ,862 <sup>**</sup> | 1,000              |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,001               | ,000               | ,000               |                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 22                 | 28                 | 28                 | 28,000             |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 5  | Reliability                           | Correlation | ,329               | ,937 <sup>**</sup> | ,831 <sup>**</sup> | ,681 <sup>**</sup> | 1,000              |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,067               | ,000               | ,000               | ,000               |                    |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 22                 | 28                 | 28                 | 28                 | 28,000             |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 6  | Responsiveness                        | Correlation | ,298               | ,921 <sup>**</sup> | ,797 <sup>**</sup> | ,683 <sup>**</sup> | ,900 <sup>**</sup> | 1,000              |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,084               | ,000               | ,000               | ,000               | ,000               |                    |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 23                 | 28                 | 28                 | 28                 | 28                 | 29,000             |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 7  | Tangibles                             | Correlation | ,466               | ,718 <sup>**</sup> | ,490 <sup>*</sup>  | ,410               | ,689 <sup>**</sup> | ,612 <sup>*</sup>  | 1,000             |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,054               | ,003               | ,044               | ,082               | ,005               | ,013               |                   |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 13                 | 13                 | 13                 | 13                 | 13                 | 13                 | 13,000            |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 8  | Institutional profile                 | Correlation | -,128              | ,424 <sup>*</sup>  | ,140               | -,025              | ,618 <sup>**</sup> | ,565 <sup>**</sup> | ,587 <sup>*</sup> | 1,000              |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,319               | ,045               | ,296               | ,462               | ,004               | ,009               | ,037              |                    |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 16                 | 17                 | 17                 | 17                 | 17                 | 17                 | 10                | 18,000             |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 9  | Regulative pillar                     | Correlation | ,084               | ,383               | ,168               | ,064               | ,520 <sup>*</sup>  | ,468 <sup>*</sup>  | ,519              | ,905 <sup>**</sup> | 1,000              |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,374               | ,064               | ,259               | ,404               | ,016               | ,029               | ,062              | ,000               |                    |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 17                 | 17                 | 17                 | 17                 | 17                 | 17                 | 10                | 17                 | 19,000             |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 10 | Cognitive pillar                      | Correlation | -,150              | ,613 <sup>**</sup> | ,399 <sup>*</sup>  | ,265               | ,725 <sup>**</sup> | ,723 <sup>**</sup> | ,408              | ,776 <sup>**</sup> | ,528 <sup>*</sup>  | 1,000  |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,277               | ,002               | ,036               | ,123               | ,000               | ,000               | ,107              | ,000               | ,015               |        |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 18                 | 21                 | 21                 | 21                 | 21                 | 21                 | 11                | 18                 | 17                 | 22,000 |        |                    |         |         |        |
| 11 | Normative pillar                      | Correlation | -,221              | -,104              | -,182              | -,303              | ,013               | -,092              | ,447              | ,867 <sup>**</sup> | ,645 <sup>**</sup> | ,391   | 1,000  |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,214               | ,362               | ,267               | ,146               | ,482               | ,377               | ,098              | ,000               | ,009               | ,084   |        |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 15                 | 14                 | 14                 | 14                 | 14                 | 14                 | 10                | 14                 | 13                 | 14     | 15,000 |                    |         |         |        |
| 12 | Number of FTE's                       | Correlation | ,228               | ,021               | ,010               | ,182               | -,072              | -,011              | ,115              | -,352              | -,261              | -,251  | -,404  | 1,000              |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,136               | ,458               | ,480               | ,178               | ,358               | ,477               | ,354              | ,076               | ,140               | ,130   | ,068   |                    |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 25                 | 28                 | 28                 | 28                 | 28                 | 29                 | 13                | 18                 | 19                 | 22     | 15     | 115,000            |         |         |        |
| 13 | Years international/export experience | Correlation | -,330              | -,316              | -,289              | -,246              | -,326 <sup>*</sup> | -,326 <sup>*</sup> | -,094             | -,158              | -,230              | -,100  | ,048   | ,344 <sup>**</sup> | 1,000   |         |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,053               | ,051               | ,068               | ,103               | ,045               | ,042               | ,380              | ,266               | ,172               | ,329   | ,433   | ,000               |         |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 25                 | 28                 | 28                 | 28                 | 28                 | 29                 | 13                | 18                 | 19                 | 22     | 15     | 115                | 115,000 |         |        |
| 14 | Number of public customers abroad     | Correlation | ,445 <sup>*</sup>  | ,057               | ,098               | ,261               | ,001               | -,094              | ,143              | -,137              | ,031               | -,323  | -,195  | ,044               | -,027   | 1,000   |        |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,013               | ,389               | ,314               | ,095               | ,498               | ,317               | ,320              | ,294               | ,450               | ,071   | ,244   | ,324               | ,390    |         |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 25                 | 27                 | 27                 | 27                 | 27                 | 28                 | 13                | 18                 | 19                 | 22     | 15     | 111                | 111     | 111,000 |        |
| 15 | Busines network                       | Correlation | ,187               | ,279               | ,308               | ,272               | ,260               | ,161               | ,101              | ,111               | -,110              | ,143   | ,179   | -,096              | ,225    | ,084    | 1,000  |
|    |                                       | Sig.        | ,185               | ,079               | ,059               | ,085               | ,095               | ,207               | ,371              | ,331               | ,327               | ,262   | ,262   | ,301               | ,108    | ,324    |        |
|    |                                       | N           | 25                 | 27                 | 27                 | 27                 | 27                 | 28                 | 13                | 18                 | 19                 | 22     | 15     | 32                 | 32      | 32      | 32,000 |

**Table 15 Independent sample t-test for Developed versus Developing countries on Institutional country profile**

| Variable N=18                 | N                 |                    | Mean              |                    | Std. deviation    |                    | Significance<br>(1 tailed) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
|                               | Developed country | Developing country | Developed country | Developing country | Developed country | Developing country |                            |
| Institutional country profile | 6                 | 12                 | 5,23              | 3,318              | 0,975             | 0,897              | .002*                      |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1tailed).

**Table 16 Independent sample t-test for Developed versus Developing countries on CD Value**

| Variable                                     | N                 |                    | Mean              |                    | Std. deviation    |                    | Significance<br>(1 tailed) |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
|  | Developed country | Developing country | Developed country | Developing country | Developed country | Developing country |                            |
| CD Value                                     | 8                 | 17                 | 5,1438            | 4,5088             | ,71885            | 1,25053            | ,099                       |
| Intelligence                                 | 10                | 20                 | 5,50              | 4,90               | ,850              | 1,518              | ,129                       |
| Assistance with trade disputes               | 7                 | 18                 | 5,14              | 4,61               | 1,952             | 1,819              | ,263                       |
| Partnersearch                                | 9                 | 17                 | 5,00              | 4,35               | 1,581             | 1,222              | ,129                       |
| Presence of diplomat at fairs, missions etc. | 8                 | 18                 | 5,00              | 4,50               | 1,069             | 1,886              | ,246                       |
| Assistance at fairs and trade missions       | 10                | 16                 | 5,00              | 4,19               | ,816              | 1,642              | ,080                       |

**Table 17 Independent sample t-test for International experience 0-20 versus 20- 40> on CD Value**

| Variable                                     | N            |              | Mean         |              | Std. deviation |              | Significance<br>(1 tailed) |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------------|
|  | 0 - 20 years | 20-40> years | 0 - 20 years | 20-40> years | 0 - 20 years   | 20-40> years |                            |
| CD Value                                     | 9            | 16           | 5,27         | 4,40         | 1,122          | 1,046        | ,033*                      |
| Market information                           | 9            | 20           | 5,33         | 4,90         | 1,000          | 1,586        | ,230                       |
| Information about rules and regulations      | 8            | 19           | 5,75         | 5,26         | ,463           | 1,368        | ,170                       |
| (trade) cultural information                 | 8            | 19           | 5,63         | 5,05         | ,518           | 1,177        | ,202                       |
| Information about (public) tenders           | 7            | 14           | 5,71         | 4,86         | ,756           | 1,956        | ,141                       |
| Partner search                               | 8            | 18           | 4,88         | 4,61         | 1,126          | 1,944        | ,363                       |
| Assistance with trade disputes               | 7            | 16           | 5,71         | 4,44         | ,488           | 1,788        | ,008**                     |
| Presence of diplomat at fairs, missions etc. | 8            | 15           | 5,13         | 4,67         | 1,126          | 1,496        | ,229                       |
| Assistance at fairs and trade missions       | 8            | 18           | 5,25         | 4,89         | 1,389          | 1,367        | ,271                       |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1tailed).

**Table 18 Independent sample t-test for no/few(NF) public customers/partners versus several/many (SM) public customers/partners on CD Value**

| Variable                                     | N                            |                              | Mean                         |                              | Std. deviation               |                              | Significance (1 tailed) |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
|  | NF public customers/partners | SM public customers/partners | NF public customers/partners | SM public customers/partners | NF public customers/partners | SM public customers/partners |                         |
| CD Value                                     | 12                           | 13                           | 4,25                         | 5,14                         | 1,069                        | 1,054                        | ,024**                  |
| Market information                           | 16                           | 13                           | 4,81                         | 5,31                         | 1,721                        | ,947                         | ,181                    |
| Information about rules and regulations      | 16                           | 11                           | 5,38                         | 5,45                         | 1,455                        | ,688                         | ,434                    |
| (trade) cultural information                 | 13                           | 14                           | 4,92                         | 5,50                         | 1,320                        | ,650                         | ,079*                   |
| Information about (public) tenders           | 9                            | 12                           | 4,11                         | 5,92                         | 1,965                        | ,900                         | ,005***                 |
| Partner search                               | 14                           | 12                           | 4,00                         | 5,50                         | 1,961                        | ,905                         | ,023**                  |
| Assistance with trade disputes               | 13                           | 10                           | 4,08                         | 5,80                         | 1,706                        | ,789                         | ,002***                 |
| Presence of diplomat at fairs, missions etc. | 14                           | 12                           | 4,00                         | 5,58                         | 1,342                        | ,900                         | ,002***                 |
| Assistance at fairs and trade missions       | 11                           | 12                           | 4,29                         | 5,83                         | 1,383                        | ,718                         | ,001***                 |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (1tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1tailed).

\*\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1tailed).

**Table 19 Independent sample t-test for Number of employees 1-50 versus 50 > on CD Value**

| Variable                                     | N      |      | Mean   |      | Std. deviation |       | Significance (1 tailed) |
|--|--------|------|--------|------|----------------|-------|-------------------------|
|  | 1 - 50 | 51-> | 1 - 50 | 51-> | 1 - 50         | 51->  |                         |
| CD Value                                     | 10     | 15   | 4,49   | 4,86 | ,879           | 1,282 | ,213                    |
| Market information                           | 12     | 17   | 5,00   | 5,06 | 1,279          | 1,560 | ,458                    |
| Information about rules and regulations      | 11     | 16   | 5,36   | 5,44 | 1,027          | 1,315 | ,439                    |
| (trade) cultural information                 | 11     | 16   | 5,45   | 5,06 | ,934           | 1,124 | ,175                    |
| Information about (public) tenders           | 8      | 13   | 5,00   | 5,23 | ,756           | 2,088 | ,384                    |
| Partner search                               | 12     | 14   | 4,92   | 4,50 | 1,311          | 2,029 | ,274                    |
| Assistance with trade disputes               | 9      | 14   | 4,78   | 4,86 | 1,302          | 1,834 | ,456                    |
| Presence of diplomat at fairs, missions etc. | 9      | 14   | 4,78   | 4,86 | 1,093          | 1,562 | ,448                    |
| Assistance at fairs and trade missions       | 12     | 14   | 4,83   | 5,14 | 1,193          | 1,512 | ,213                    |

**Table 20 Independent sample t-test for no network versus developed network on CD Value**

| Variable  | N             |                      | Mean          |                      | Std. deviation |                      | Significance<br>(1 tailed) |
|---|---------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
|   | No<br>network | Developed<br>Network | No<br>network | Developed<br>Network | No<br>network  | Developed<br>Network |                            |
| CD Value  | 13            | 12                   | 4,51          | 4,93                 | 1,313          | ,905                 | ,180                       |
| Intelligence                                    | 18            | 12                   | 5,11          | 5,08                 | 1,605          | ,900                 | ,479                       |
| Assistance with trade disputes                  | 14            | 11                   | 4,36          | 5,27                 | 2,061          | 1,421                | ,111                       |
| Partner search                                  | 15            | 11                   | 4,93          | 4,09                 | 1,387          | 1,221                | ,061*                      |
| Presence of diplomat at fairs,<br>missions etc. | 14            | 12                   | 4,21          | 5,17                 | 1,888          | 1,267                | ,076                       |
| Assistance at fairs and trade<br>missions       | 15            | 11                   | 4,13          | 5,00                 | 1,598          | 1,000                | ,063                       |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (1tailed).

**Table 21 Paired- t-test, sub-sample No/Few foreign public customers/partners, Relationship-based VS Intelligence**

| Variable N=12   | N                      |              | Mean                   |              | Std. deviation         |              | Significance<br>(1 tailed) |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
|                 | Relationship-<br>based | Intelligence | Relationship-<br>based | Intelligence | Relationship-<br>based | Intelligence |                            |
| Type of service | 12                     | 12           | 4,03                   | 4,92         | 1,154                  | 1,464        | 0,006                      |

**Table 22 Paired t-test. sub-sample Several/Many foreign public customers/partners, Relationship-based VS Intelligence**

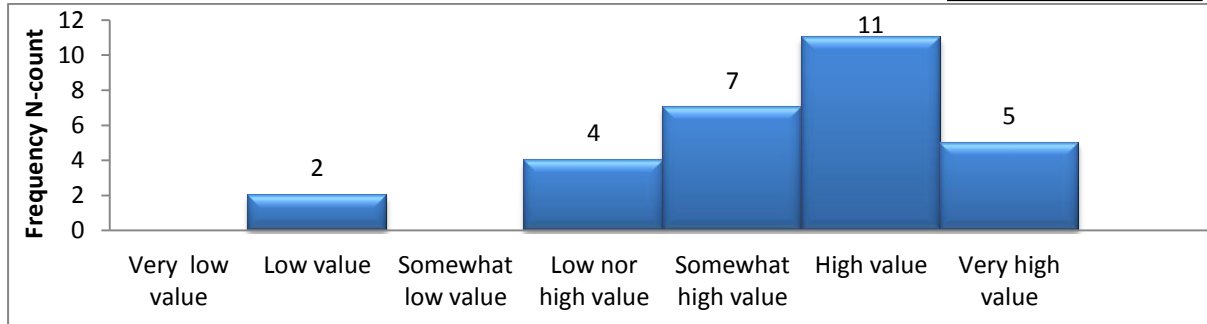
| Variable N=12   | N                      |              | Mean                   |              | Std. deviation         |              | Significance<br>(1 tailed) |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
|                 | Relationship-<br>based | Intelligence | Relationship-<br>based | Intelligence | Relationship-<br>based | Intelligence |                            |
| Type of service | 12                     | 12           | 5,67                   | 5,49         | 0,631                  | 0,566        | 0,16                       |

# Appendix O

Overall CD Value distribution

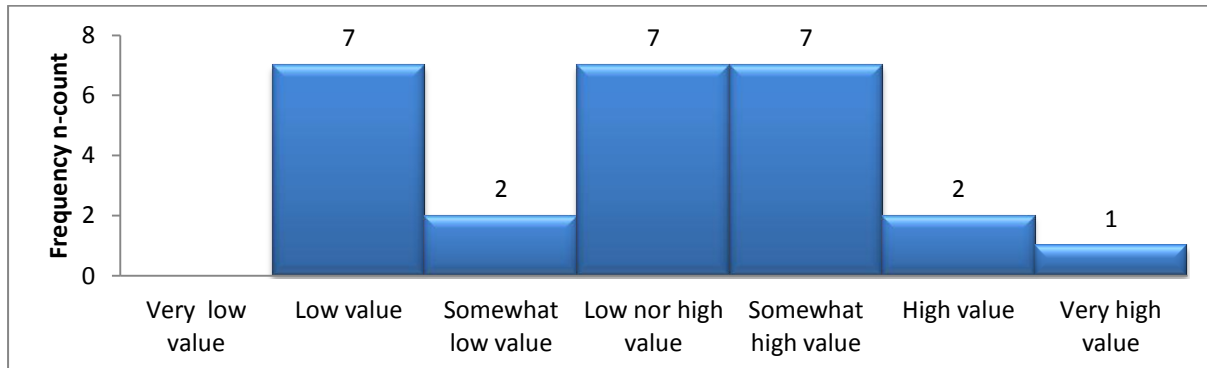
Mean =4,99  
Std.Dev =1,315  
N=29

Figure 3 Overall CD Value of respondents who used CD within the last two years



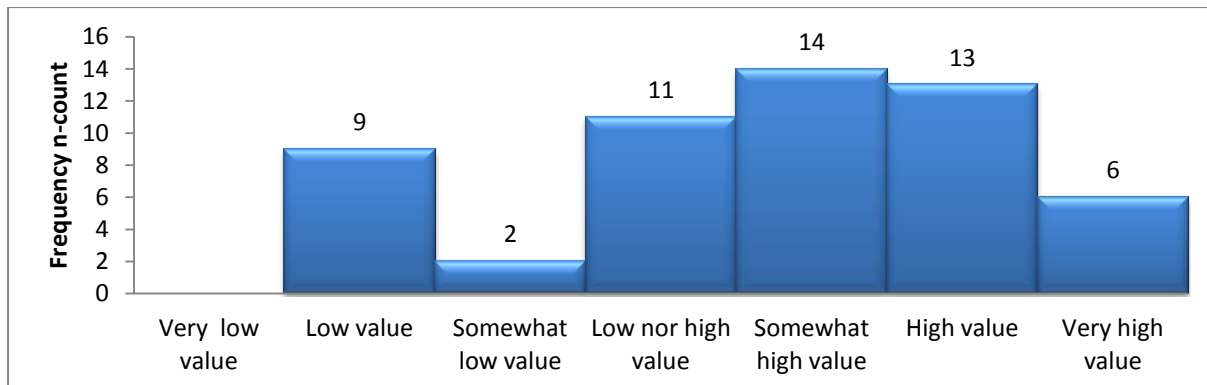
Mean =3,35  
Std.Dev =1,520  
N=25

Figure 4 Overall CD Value of respondents who did not use CD within the last two years



Mean =4,23  
Std.Dev =1,626  
N=54

Figure 5 Overall CD Value of users and non users



# Appendix P

*Qualitative data telephone questionnaire and open forum online-questionnaire*

**Table 23 Qualitative data: Reason for not using foreign posts**

## Reason for not using foreign posts

|                       |         |    |  |
|-----------------------|---------|----|--|
| Institutional profile | country | 1  | We hebben ons eigen netwerk met distributeurs en daar zijn Nederlandse posten niet bij nodig. Ik kan me wel voorstellen dat in landen als Brazilië deze service wel gewaardeerd kan worden gezien Brazilië hoge import barrières aanhoudt waardoor hulp van een ambassade wellicht nodig is. Maar dit gaat via de USA bij ons bedrijf dus daar kan ik hier niets over zeggen. Hier houden we ons bezig met landen als Scandinavië. Dit zijn erg toegankelijke markten waar wij geen hulp nodig hebben. |
|                       |         | 2  | Wij exporteren binnen Europa. Wij kennen deze markt erg goed en vraagt niet om overheidbemiddeling. Mochten we willen uitbreiden dan zou het eventueel interessant zijn. Vooral gerelateerd aan ontwikkelingsmarkten waar de export infrastructuur erg beperkt is  |
|                       |         | 3  | Indien wij zouden exporteren naar verre landen dan zouden ambassades wellicht interessant zijn.  |
|                       |         | 4  | Wij importeren alleen maar in west Europa en daar hebben wij geen ambassade bij nodig. Dit kan wellicht wel interessant zijn zodra wij producten zouden importeren uit Soedan of andere landen waar wij onbekend zijn en het rechtssysteem vrij onderontwikkeld is.  |
|                       |         | 5  | We zijn bekend met de faciliteiten maar maken geen gebruik van de service gezien wij volledig thuis zijn op onze markt. Indien wij moeilijkere markten aanboren zoals een Saudi Arabie dan zou het wellicht weer van toepassing zijn.  |
|                       |         | 6  | Wij hebben 35 jaar ervaring in het vak. Wij kennen onze weg op de markt en zijn zelfvoorzienend in het vergaren van informatie. Wij bevinden ons niet op ontwikkelingsmarkten maar indien dit het geval zou zijn dan kan een ambassade wel van pas komen gezien hier meer handelsbelemmeringen zich voordoen   |
|                       |         | 7  | Export in Europa dus geen noodzaak voor ambassades   |
|                       |         | 8  | In het verleden maakten wij gebruik van Ambassades en landbouw attachés om importeurs te zoeken en ons netwerk uit te breiden. Nu we een goed netwerk hebben opgebouwd vervalt het nut van het gebruiken van een ambassade. Het is in het verleden uiteraard er hulpzaam geweest.  |
|                       |         | 9  | Geen ambassades nodig maar wellicht wel interessant zodra wij nieuwe markten zouden betreden.  |
|                       |         | 10 | Wij exporteren binnen Europa. Wij kennen deze markt erg goed en vraagt niet om overheidbemiddeling   |
|                       |         | 11 | We zitten 30 jaar in het vak en hebben genoeg kennis om de export zelf te regelen.   |
|                       |         | 12 | We zijn niet bezig met het aanbreken van nieuwe markten dus er is de laatste tijd geen nut geweest van het gebruik van ambassades  |
|                       |         | 13 | Wij kennen onze markt en hebben daarom geen behoefte aan ambassade services  |
|                       |         | 14 | Ook al is Europa een bekende markt met soortgelijke regulaties, wij kunnen de ondersteuning in deze landen goed gebruiken omdat we net beginnen met exporteren en we niet de financiële middelen hebben om een consultant in te huren.   |
| Industry              |         | 15 | In relatie tot assistentie van handelsgeschillen hebben wij geen behoefte omdat onze leveringsvoorwaarden in ontwikkelingslanden bij de eindgebruiker ligt. MAW zei zijn verantwoordelijk voor de levering. Voor informatie voorziening is ook geen hulp nodig omdat onze industrie uit enkele grote leveranciers, producent en distributeurs bestaat. Dit maakt de informatie voorziening niet nodig.   |

- 16 We hebben eigen distributeurs en daarom weinig behoefte aan Nederlandse posten. Een klein groepje dekt vele eindgebruikers.
- 17 Dit is niet echt van toepassing voor een handelsbedrijf. Ambassades zijn naar mijn mening interessanter voor productie bedrijven.
- 18 Wij zijn erg bekend in deze markt en werken met lokale agenten die ons product vertegenwoordigen. Wij hebben daarom weinig behoefte aan een diplomatieke vertegenwoordiging voor handels bevordering. Bovendien hebben wij geen publieke klanten die wellicht beter via diplomatieke wegen moeten worden benaderd
- 19 De services zijn niet van toepassing en contacten komen veelal via referenties binnen. De maritieme sector een vrij transparante industrie is met enkele grote spelers. Hier is geen ambassade voor nodig om een nieuwe markt aan te breken

---

|                   |    |   |
|-------------------|----|---|
| Unawareness/image | 20 | Ik heb niets met ambassades, wij importeren wel uit China en leveren binnen Europa maar wij gebruiken daar geen ambassades voor. Wij vinden onze eigen weg wel en heb er nooit bij stil gestaan dat een ambassade iets voor ons zou kunnen betekenen.   |
|                   | 21 | Exporteur van airfresh solutions stelde dat geen hulp nodig is en dat ze te klein zijn om contact op te nemen met een ambassade. Op de vraag waarom men dacht ze te klein waren volgende het antwoord dat ambassades zich toch veelal richten op grotere organisaties en het behartigen van de belangen van multinationals als Shell  |
|                   | 22 | Er heerst bij het gevoel dat ze liever op de borrel gaan bij Heineken dan dat ze zich inzetten voor het MKB segment. Voor een meeloopstage van 1 van de handelsmedewerkers werden deze bij een bedrijf geplaatst. Wij stelden ons beschikbaar als plaatsing bedrijf om zo de samenwerking te bevorderen en ook een leerproces op gang te zetten om de informatie input af te stemmen op ambassade personeel maar ook voor de handelsmedewerker om te leren wat er in een MKB bedrijf speelt. Dit aanbod werd afgeslagen voor een plaats bij Heineken. |
|                   | 23 | De focus van ambassades ligt bij de grote MNEs.   |
|                   | 24 | Ik wist niet dat er marktscans en andere dienstverlening werd verleend door ambassades. Nooit langs die lijn gedacht dat ambassades iets voor het Nederlandse MKB zou kunnen betekenen. We zijn niet achterlijk en dit is nieuw voor mij. Ambassades hebben een andere bel bij ons maar dit is goed om te weten. Ons idee was dat Nederlandse posten grote orders binnenhaalden maar niet voor de kleinere bedrijven zijn.  |
|                   | 25 | De dienstverlening van de Nederlandse posten was mij niet bekend. Ik heb dus geen ervaring opgedaan.  |
|                   | 26 | Ik dacht dat de posten vooral op MNEs focussen. Wij waren hier totaal onbekend mee dat posten internationalisering services biedt voor ons.   |
|                   | 27 | Deze posten doen er goed aan om de diensten die zij kunnen bieden beter kenbaar te maken.   |
|                   | 28 | Wellicht kan het EVD meer wijzen op mogelijke ondersteuning van Nederlandse Ambassades e.d. in buitenland. Als beginnend exporteur is het zeker handig deze informatie te krijgen.  |
|                   | 29 | Is er een website beschikbaar waar ik dit op kan vinden?  |
|                   | 30 | Wij zijn hier totaal nog niet mee bekend, misschien dat dit in de toekomst nog eens van pas kan gaan komen daar wij ons op dit moment meer aan het richten zijn op export.  |
|                   | 31 | Is er een site waar het Nederlandse posten netwerk beschreven is?   |
|                   | 32 | Probeer middels communicatie (bijvoorbeeld magazine "Buitenlandse Markten" exportbevordering toe te passen. Daarnaast is het verstandig buitenlandse ambassades open te stellen, laagdrempelig te houden en de mogelijkheden te ontdekken.  |
|                   | 33 | Buitenlandse zaken en economische zaken zouden meer gebruik moeten maken van magazines, internet en televisie.  |
|                   | 34 | Ik ben hier totaal niet mee bekend. Wel erg handig om te weten gezien wij ons weer gaan focussen op de export.  |



|                           |    |  |
|---------------------------|----|--|
|                           | 35 | Deze diensten waren tot nu toe geheel onbekend voor mij.   |
|                           | 36 | Het is cruciaal is voor ambassades om op een neutrale manier het MKB te bereiken bijvoorbeeld via de televisie . Ambassades moeten zich op een andere manier profileren om (De ambassade wil de ambassade blijven met 40 uren werkweken. Je ziet alleen maar de glamour site. Ga eens meewerken en echt kijken naar wat er speelt in de markt. Anders profileren en blij met MKB bijvoorbeeld via branche bladen, en televisie programma's |
|                           | 37 | Het was ons niet bekend dat de consulaten dergelijke dienstverlening kunnen verrichten.  |
|                           | 38 | Wij exporteren voor 30 jaar in zowel europa en buiten europa en wij hebben nog nooit gehoord van dienstverlening van ambassades . Ze zouden ze duidelijker moeten communiceren waar ze ons kunnen helpen in de export.   |
| Own subsidiary            | 39 | Wij hebben vele vestigingen in het buitenland en daarom veel lokale kennis. Deze kennis maakt het gebruik van een ambassade als informatie punt onnodig.   |
|                           | 40 | Onze organisatie heeft kantoren in het buitenland, wij hebben daarom veel lokale kennis die het gebruik van ambassades voor informatie voorziening onnodig maakt.  |
| Does not fit my needs     | 41 | Ik heb wel wensen maar daar kan toch niets mee gedaan worden. Ambassades kunnen geen specialisten worden in een bepaald vakgebied. Dit maakt het moeilijk voor een ambassade om zinvolle dienstverlening te geven afgezien van de generieke markt informatie of wellicht een visum verstrekking.   |
| Complex industry/products | 42 | Ons bedrijf pioniert in bio afbreekbare verpakkingsmaterialen. Deze industrie is dusdanig kennis intensief dat een ambassade daar weinig in kan betekenen. Qua leverancier search is het ook niet relevant gezien het zoeken naar laboratoria en fabrieken echt iets is wat zelf moet gedaan worden. Dit proces is the complex. Daarnaast hebben wij ook logistiek uitbesteed waardoor assistentie op deze gebieden ook vervalt.           |
| Other organizations       | 43 | Wij maken geen gebruik van ambassades gezien zij hooguit MKBers kunnen wegwijsen met handelsgeschillen maar niet echt assisteren in handelsgeschillen. Indien handelsgeschillen zich voordoen dan maken wij veelal gebruik van Fenedex of brancheorganisaties die hun eigen juristen in dienst hebben.   |
|                           | 44 | Onze Informatie bronnen zijn: Internet, KVK en Fenedex   |
|                           | 45 | Op het gebied van handelsgeschillen zullen wij niet snel contact opnemen met een ambassade maar als we dat doen dan zijn het overheid gerelateerde belemmeringen   |
|                           | 46 | Wij zijn veelal in contact met EVD, KVK en Fenedex.  |
| Hard to reach             | 47 | Op beurzen en missies realiseer ik me dat ik meer gebruik zou moeten van de posten. Maar in werkelijkheid doe ik dit niet. Dit heeft er deels mee te maken dat er geen goed overzicht is van medewerkers, waar ze werken en telefoonnummer van ambassades. Dit kunnen ze echt verbeteren.  |
|                           | 48 | Wij gebruiken geen Nederlandse posten omdat het nog steeds moeilijk is om de juiste contactpersonen te vinden binnen het MINBUZ en LNV. Wanneer ik bijv. in ZA ben weet ik nooit wie ik moet bereiken gezien er geen overzichtelijke lijst beschikbaar is.   |

**Table 24 Qualitative data: Reason for using a foreign post**

## Reason for using foreign posts

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 49 | Wij maken regelmatig gebruik van ambassades en consulaten om onze markt te verkennen. We zijn nu bezig in oost Europa waar de ambassade contacten legt die erg relevant zijn. Binnen reeds bestaande markten maken wij geen gebruik van ambassades, toch kan ik mij goed voorstellen dat bedrijven die net beginnen met exporteren ook in markten als Duitsland en Frankrijk wel degelijk voordeel kunnen halen uit de dienstverlening van ambassades. Ervaring is de belangrijke determinant van het gebruik van ambassades en natuurlijk zijn bepaalde markten toegankelijk dan de andere. Voor het MKB zijn deze overheidsinstanties cruciaal gezien wij niet makkelijk naar lokale agenten kunnen stappen gezien de financiële kosten die daar bij komen kijken. |
| 50 | Wij zijn bezig met het verkennen van nieuwe markten en deze liggen zowel in Europa als in het buitenland. De waarde van de dienstverlening ligt wel hoger in 'verre landen' maar het is ook nog steeds zeer interessant in de EU. EU regulatie mag dan wel veel vergemakkelijken, de interpretatie van richtlijnen ligt in elk land anders. Meer inzicht in wet en regelgeving is daarom zeer zeker een verbeterpunt voor ambassades   |

- 51 Wij maken erg vaak gebruik van ambassades om handelsproblemen op te lossen of om betrouwbare klant informatie te verkrijgen.
- 52 Wij hebben een vestiging in Roemenie tijdens de export zijn goederen van ons vastgezet bij de douane terwijl ons papier werk in orde was. De Ambassade heeft op dit moment wel invloed en heeft er voor gezorgd dat onze zending alsnog het land in kon. Ambassades zijn erg bruikbaar voor overheidscontacten en geschillen. In de B2B markt zien wij minder nut. Bij handels geschillen zijn wij dan ook veel in contact met de advocaat ipv een ambassade.
- 53 Een exporteur in wijnen stelde dat ze vorig jaar zijn begonnen met marktscans en daar erg tevreden mee zijn en zien als een goede manier om nieuwe markten aan te breken. Marktscans verlopen weliswaar via de EVD maar worden wel uitgevoerd door ambassades.
- 54 Onteigening van buitenlandse bezittingen is een groot risico in dit land en rol van een ambassade en de lokale overheid speelt een belangrijke rol om het ondernemen in het buitenland zonder al te veel belemmeringen te kunnen voortzetten. Het zogeheten level playing field dat gecreëerd wordt is onmisbaar.
- 55 Het vinden van betrouwbare partners is erg moeilijk en in sommige landen en ambassades hebben soms een betere visie op de reputatie van potentiële partners.
- 56 Ambassades weten de juiste ingangen te vinden die ons erg hebben geholpen in het aanbreken van nieuwe markten.
- 57 De ambassade heeft ons in contact gebracht met nieuwe potentiële partners die wij niet hadden verkregen zonder de hulp van ambassades of het had ons een erg lange tijd gekost.
- 58 Ambassades zijn de tast zintuigen van het Nederlands bedrijfsleven. De kennis ervaring en relaties die een ambassade opbouwt zijn van onschatbare waarde. Wij zijn voor het laatst geholpen door de ambassade in Rusland en dat verliep perfect. Zij hebben ons veel praktische informatie toegespeeld en in contact gebracht met de juiste partners en instanties. MBT informatie voorziening:

**Table 25 Qualitative data: Service quality of the foreign post**

## **Service Quality of the foreign post**

- 59 In contact met consulaat in Duitsland voor grensoverschrijdende activiteiten. Leveren goed werk en zie dat het een positieve impact heeft op de bedrijvigheid tussen NL en Duitsland. Ook al is het een bekende markt een Duitse KvK is nogal een logge organisatie en zie dat het Duitse consulaat functioneert als olie tussen de tandwielen van Duitse instituties en NL bedrijfsleven.
- 60 Wij hebben enkele marktscans gemaakt en kan niet zeggen dat hier de laatste 10 jaar langdurige contacten zijn ontstaan. Het is een moeilijke markt en als dan de algehele speelgoedmarkt in land X in kaart wordt gebracht dan heeft dit weinig zin gezien het feit dat er specifiek in segmenten moet worden gezocht. Het is overigens wel zo dat Berg Toys ook zelf beter is geworden in de input naar de posten en daardoor hebben we wel meer bruikbare informatie verkregen. Helaas heeft het nooit tot groot succes geleid.
- 61 Ambassades kunnen weinig voor ons doen in deze markt. Wij werken veelal via referenties van bestaande klanten om nieuwe klanten of leveranciers te zoeken. De partner-search activiteiten van ambassades leveren veelal lijsten met mogelijke leveranciers van kleine wijn boertjes die niet economisch levensvatbaar zijn voor export.
- 62 Ambassades staan erg ver van het bedrijfsleven af. Ik heb enkele keren contact gehad met een ambassade maar daar nooit echt interessante informatie bemachtigt. Erg algemeen en veelal kan dit via het internet worden verkregen. Ook is hij van mening dat handelsmissies en beurzen vaker mogen georganiseerd worden met financiële ondersteuning van de overheid. Landen als Noorwegen organiseren vaak beurzen en handelsmissies waar een stand wordt afgehuurd voor Noorwegen en het bedrijfsleven enkel het hotel hoeven te betalen. Ook het assisteren tijdens handelsgeschillen is volgens meneer niet relevant gezien een ambassade hoogstens kan doorverwijzen of mogelijk iets aanklaarten bij de autoriteiten waar in B2B veelal weinig mee gedaan wordt. Daarnaast is het tijd intensief en kost het meer dan het oplevert om er een echte zaak van te maken.
- 63 Wij ervaren een groot verschil in kwaliteit per ambassade maar ook per wisseling van ambassadeur. Deze kwaliteitsverschillen zijn naar mijn mening vaak toe te schrijven aan de werkwijze en achtergrond van de ambassadeur, zakelijk of politiek. Vooral het beschikbare netwerk/relaties waar wij gebruik van kunnen maken indien nodig verschilt sterk per land.

- 64 Wij zijn een onderneming van 60 medewerkers en exporteren veel naar het buitenland. Wij hebben ook meerdere malen (geprobeerd) assistentie gevraagd bij ambassades om vrij simpele dienstverlening waar niet of nauwelijks op werd gereageerd. Zo was ik op reis in China waar ik verschillende klanten heb bezocht. Helaas kon ik van 1 klant geen contact gegevens bemachtigen en de secretaresse van deze onderneming sprak alleen maar Chinees. Op dit moment belde ik de ambassade op om te vragen of zij wellicht konden vertalen. De lokale handelsmedewerkers vertelde dat dit lastig was en ik werd doorverbonden met een diplomaat. Deze vertelde dat dit niet de bedoeling was en niet tot de taakomschrijving van de ambassade behoorde. Ook het verkrijgen van praktische informatie verliep in vele gevallen erg traag in andere landen. Zo wilde ik in feite een uitdraai van de goudengids of iig een lijst met contactgegevens. Deze gegevens konden ze niet verstrekken of dit duurde erg lang. Wij zullen geen ambassade contacteren als het efficiënter is maar alleen omdat het noodzakelijk is omdat bepaalde gegevens niet beschikbaar zijn. Tot nu toe valt de service erg tegen. Het beeld dat ontstaat, is dat ik en vele andere in deze industrie het gevoel hebben dat er meer waarde voor een Shell, Phillips en Heineken liggen dan voor een bedrijf in het MKB segment. Het gevoel dat er nu heerst, is dat er niet veel bereidheid is binnen het huidige posten netwerk. Om een voorbeeld te geven hoe het wel kan is bijvoorbeeld in een ambassade van België om Duitsland. Deze ambassades bieden bijvoorbeeld de mogelijkheid voor buitenlandse importeurs om contacten te zoeken en informatie te vergaren op de ambassade in het desbetreffende land om opzoek te gaan naar NL exporteurs. Deze faciliteiten ontbreken op dit moment en kunnen grote waarde toevoegen. Al met al heerst er een gevoel dat wij niet welkom zijn bij de ambassade terwijl wij vinden dat een ambassade zich moet opstellen als een verkoper van Nederland en niet als eilandje dit niet erg welwillend is om praktische informatie te verschaffen.
- 65 Recentelijk ben ik in contact geweest met de ambassade in India en in Pakistan mbt betalingsvoorwaarden in deze landen. Het viel me op hoe de kwaliteit van de service verschilt per land. Zo werd ik in India uitstekend geholpen maar in Pakistan juist het tegenovergestelde.
- 66 Ambassades begrijpen het MKB niet goed genoeg en ze zijn ze meer bezig met het grote geld en grote jongens.
- 67 Ik zou graag meer sector specialisme zien.
- 68 Voor handels missies zijn vaak in contact geweest met ambassades maar de kwaliteit en nut van deze service is erg afhankelijk van het aanwezige personeel en de achtergrond van deze mensen. De ambassadeur speelt hier een belangrijke rol in.
- 69 Het is wel erg belangrijk om de juiste vragen te stellen gezien een ambassade niet echt heel erg in de diepte kan treden voor jouw organisatie. Daarom zijn de juiste vragen cruciaal voor een goed resultaat. Een ambassade moet daarom ook niet als consultancy worden gezien maar meer als bron van praktische informatie. De relaties zijn overigens nog wel het belangrijkste. Ik zie ook dat ambassades business naar NL halen wat ook erg goed is voor de Nederlandse economie. Maar ik vind wel dat hier wellicht nog meer toegankelijkheid kan gecreëerd worden voor de kleinere bedrijven
- 70 Erg mag meer gecommuniceerd worden dat ambassades er ook zijn voor het MKB.
- 71 Als ze iets zouden willen toevoegen, moeten ze werken met mensen uit de praktijk, mensen die kennis hebben van de specifieke markt waar een vraag van komt.
- 72 Meer mensen aannemen met een zakelijke achtergrond.
- 73 Praktische mensen op de economische afdeling van de posten zijn een pre, vooral als ze ook ervaring in het bedrijfsleven hebben
- 74 Betere samenwerking tussen ministeries van BZ en EZ.
- 75 Een betere indruk geven, meer actieve informatie verstrekken, aan het bedrijfsleven wat de Nederlandse posten voor het MKB kan betekenen
- 76 Ivm Buitenlandse incasso's is het nooit duidelijk wat de posten kunnen betekenen. Hierbij zou een goede ondersteuning meer lucht kunnen geven aan een soepeler handels verband.
- 77 Duidelijkheid verschaffen rondom waar je met welke vragen terecht kan.
- 78 Ambassades doen er verstandig aan om dit bekend te maken!
- 79 Meer samenwerken met andere marktpartijen
- 80 Meer specialisme bij ambassades en daarmee inzetten op de kernactiviteiten van de Nederlandse industrieën.
- 81 Vooral vanuit de echte Hollandse gedachten gaan werken met uitgangspunten de Nederlandse bedrijven op een goede efficiënte en commerciële manier te ondersteunen en te informeren.
- 82 Treedt nog meer naar buiten naar NL exportorganisaties en bijeenkomsten met startende ex/importeurs
- 83 Actiever samenwerking met Branche organisaties
- 84 Ambassades zijn bureaucratisch en te star met betrekking tot het uitnodigen van partners buiten de EU.
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