

Fostering tourism: The Future Role of Embassies

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Degree programme in Tourism	
Report/thesis title Fostering tourism: The Future Role of Embassies	Number of pages 39
<p>Describing the collaboration between embassies and stakeholders in the tourism field will be one of the key aims of this thesis. The thesis pursues to explain the benefits of such partnerships as well as identify pitfalls that might exist. Through these discoveries, the efforts embassies make to support the travel & tourism industry are preferably made more visible to the public.</p> <p>In addition, future outlook for embassies will also be provided. After reviewing what actions has been taken in the past, the thesis aims at presenting current measures as well as briefly forecast two plausible scenarios for the future. The forecasts will have a subtle linkage to tourism, however they will be more or less concerned with the overall development.</p> <p>In light of theory, key characteristics of diplomatic missions together with peculiarities in tourism industry are introduced. Here tourism is argued to be a driver for economic well-being as well as a catalyst for peace and tolerance in its cultural contributions. Since diplomacy shares a set of similar aims, common ground can be found.</p> <p>The thesis exploits qualitative research methods, and in particular semi-structured interviews to gain a descriptive view on embassies and their future. Six of these interviews were conducted abroad in Dublin, Ireland and the remaining ones in Helsinki, Finland resulting in nine interviews altogether. Meetings were arranged during the time period of 13.4.2016 – 11.5.2016.</p> <p>Despite the prevailing challenges, embassies do show interest towards fostering tourism within the resources they have. Reducing costs in terms of budget and staff are seen as the main constraints. Nonetheless, the perceived value of tourism motivates embassies to continue integrating tourism strategies in their operations. These strategies follow the country specific interests and are affected by a multitude of players with varying desires, even though embassies are empowered to make individual decisions as well.</p> <p>Future outlook is much divided, but a positive attitude on maintaining some formal representation prevails. The form of embassies will be left unclear, however as long as there are entities resembling societies, representational establishments are needed. Whether or not tourism will remain in the future agenda, will be greatly dependent on the way embassies overcome the barriers within their discipline.</p>	
Keywords tourism promotion, embassies, diplomacy, partnerships, future	

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1 Introduction

Work in an embassy is multidimensional and often includes collaboration across sectors. Being a representation of a country's government brings its own set of challenges and considerations to the equation. It is righteous for every country to be concerned with their best interests and welfare, therefore points of focus should be thought through and collaborative partners carefully selected (Petrovsky 1998.)

Diplomatic missions exist to coordinate communication among the players within economic and political sectors, and as an intermediary between two countries are responsible for taking care of informing, negotiating and networking. Missions abroad are peaceful means to strengthen global partnerships and awareness, whereby values such as tolerance and justice are fostered (The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development 2015, 9.)

Embassies partnering with tourism industry is not a novelty, however not self-evident either. As one of the key economic sectors, tourism boasts moderate, yet continuous growth and is included into the strategies of embassies. The thesis aims at explaining the nature of such collaboration and demonstrate to what extent and in what manner is the cooperation implemented. Some standardized similarities already exist, for instance embassies' willingness to publish travel bulletins and their essential role in issuing visas. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that embassies will most likely have country specific strategies for fostering tourism and are thus limited to the country relations as well as government involvement (Petrovsky 1998.)

The thesis will additionally implement some future analysis. Forecasting the future is challenging due to its unknown nature, yet immensely important in order to prepare oneself to changes, interpret weak signals and recognize trends as well as risks. Hence the thesis also pursues to examine the future of embassies with a slight focus on the strategies undertaken to foster tourism. The thesis will present two plausible future scenarios which will help to see the future as more structured and in some ways more manageable.

To build understanding around the themes of this research, Chapter 2 introduces the concept of embassies as systems and establishments. The theory dives into such topics as the development of embassies, for what purposes they are for and what the benefits and threats they face are. Chapter 3 continues with reviewing key concepts of tourism. Here the theory argues why tourism matters and how it reinforces a country's competitiveness.

The theory presents tourism as an enabler that can consolidate industries with the help of embassies as unique intermediaries.

Chapter 4 on the other hand determines the research methods and tools to implement it. Insight will be provided on qualitative methods, conducting semi-structured interviews as well as on the limitations and delimitations of the research.

Afterwards, the results are reviewed in two sections. Firstly, embassies today are examined through the strategies, responsibilities, networks and overall attitude they have towards tourism industry. Secondly, the results present embassies tomorrow by describing two future scenarios. The first one, "Time to go our separate ways" suggests a trend to close down embassies, whereas "Towards greater collaboration" is far more optimistic in its outlook. A short ethical discussion is also provided to support the reflection about academic research.

The conclusion will offer a range of suggestions in the end. Key findings of the research suggest some alternative pathways for the work of embassies with and preferably results in assessing the current contributions, questioning them and considering ways to improve. These findings can be read by a representative of any embassy and still offer valuable insight to spark up discussion for further development. The work will contribute to viewing embassies from a wider perspective and thus the results can be applied on a global, more generalized level.

2 Embassies as establishments

Chapter 2 and 3 will introduce and furthermore discuss the principal themes that are relevant to the study at hand. These themes include the concept of embassies in the light of their development, system structure and operational environment. In addition, tourism industry will be reviewed in terms of its characteristics as well as its importance to the society at large. Using these insights as a basis for reading the revealed results, will provide a more meaningful experience as a whole.

2.1 Understanding embassies: a brief timeline of diplomacy

Today, diplomacy accounts for “peaceful conduct of relations amongst political entities, their principals and accredited agents” and holds the role of “organized dialogue” among the international community (Hamilton & Langhorne 2011, 1.) The core tasks of diplomacy include representation, sharing and exchanging information as well as coordinating negotiations (Klavins 2011, 7.)

It is argued that the age of modern diplomacy began after the Cold War (1947-53), however as a unique communication tool, the practice of diplomacy dates back to the origins of the human world (Hamilton & Langhorne 2011, 141; Klavins 2011, 2-3.) The earliest means of diplomacy were discovered to be in linkage to the communication between neighbors in the most primitive societies (Hamilton & Langhorne 2011, 1.)

Evidently over the course of time, diplomacy developed along with the mankind. Witnessed in history, diplomatic relations started to play a vital role in post-conflict situations through exchanging envoys between two countries. These foreign envoys maintained open channels of communication despite the distressed circumstances, and even pursued alliances to prevent conflicts from occurring again. Diplomatic immunities, through which the envoys were protected to complete their missions successfully, are still put into practice today (Poltat 2013). These immunities are acknowledged in the conduct of modern international law, and provide the delegates of overseas missions and their families exemption from the local laws and regulations (Farahmand 1990, 90.)

During times of conflict or any other pressuring event alike, it is usual for diplomacy to develop towards finer forms (Hamilton & Langhorne 2011, 2-3.) For instance, when one perceives war as an inefficient solution to lead changes, diplomacy is likely to become a chief substitute, and therefore reach a higher level of sophistication. It is then logical to regard diplomacy as a preventive alternative in a world largely dominated by power relations, and

the affinity for viewing power as something that is distributed unjustly (Hamilton & Langhorne 2011, 2-3.)

A distinct turning point in the evolution of diplomacy appeared at the end of the Middle Ages. States began to form in Europe and diplomacy started to gain more ground as a legitimate tool to coordinate communication. It became as a counterforce to solve issues in increasingly structured societies that started to establish governmental entities, and therefore became ever more precise of their points of interest and negotiation (Hamilton & Langhorne 2011, 1-2.)

Since diplomacy continued to evolve into a more systematic and applied concept, eventually it was necessary to lay a basis for its legality. Thus Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations held by the United Nations in 1961, introduced a treaty to set out the guidelines for modern overseas delegations and their implementation in a universally accepted manner. The treaty addresses several considerations and harmonizes the nature of diplomatic relations as well as defines some of the key terms.

2.2 Embassies as systems

On a general note, diplomatic missions exist to represent any sending state in a receiving one and thus treasure the national rights and interests abroad (UN 1961, 2.) As part of a country's Foreign Service measures, these missions opt for safeguarding continuity in areas such as economy and culture, giving the nationals home and abroad the sense of a secured future. Briefly described, this is usually done by implementing security and foreign policy as well as trade promotion and development cooperation sufficiently. Public diplomacy, which also falls under the responsibilities of foreign missions, entails activities to enhance a country's image abroad and this way gain more visibility for potential visitors (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2015.)

Diplomatic delegations also provide a number of services for citizens living abroad. In addition to issuing visas and assisting in passport related matters, one can seek for advice when giving birth, getting married or in other cases, such as death or illness. In event of a crisis, embassies are also a relevant source of reliable, up-to-date information for people in distress and therefore a register of nationals spread out across host countries is maintained (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2015.)

According to the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations, every nation has the right to enjoy diplomatic status by appointing "diplomatic agents" amongst them. In essence, the significance of having such agents is to maintain global peace and security as well as to

enhance the good-natured interaction between nations. Therefore practicing diplomacy should not be bound to different constitutional or social systems, instead it is a global right (UN 1961, 2.)

Permanent missions abroad are always mutually agreed on between the countries of relevance. The person in charge of such a mission is accredited as the “head of the mission”, whereas the “members of the mission” include the remaining members of staff (UN 1961, 2.) Diplomatic delegations of those sovereign states that have not had any interference with the British rule, are commonly called embassies, which also connotes with the physical place of the actual work. These mission are then headed by the ambassador (Andrews 2007, 33.)

In addition to embassies, the arena of diplomatic missions also includes high commissions, which represent those Commonwealth states that were once ruled by the Britons. The diplomatic missions in these particular countries are headed by high commissioners. Consulates on the other hand, are smaller sections of embassies or high commissions for that matter. Consulates were established to ease the process of applying for a visa or other permits and are headed by consul generals (Andrews 2007, 33.)

Although this paper is concerned with the functions of embassies in particular, it is noteworthy to mention them having close relations with consular affairs. Thus consulates should not be regarded as separate entities, but instead as supporting and complimentary sections that are commonly hosted together with embassies.

2.3 Operational environment

The operational environment of embassies stretches across industries and covers a spectrum of dimensions in society, that are all regarded as equally important. This is the profound reason behind the extensive network that embassies have acquired for themselves but also the underlying ramification of the complexity in their nature (The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development 2015, 9.)

Since embassies are aligned with a multitude of stakeholders, they have obtained the role of intermediaries (Petrovsky 1998.) The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review 2015 (QDDR) administered by the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development, points out this network to include governmental bodies along with non-governmental organizations and business communities as well as academic institutions and think tanks; the incubators for innovation and development (The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development 2015, 9.)

The power of embassies is greatly reliant on civilian power, which is a form of non-militant power and “includes economic, diplomatic and cultural policy instruments” (Smith 2004, 1-2.) It also readily addresses and is concerned with the dominating issues on the international arena (Smith 2004, 1-2.) Civilian power is practiced across the globe by civilian personnel such as experts and diplomats, who with their knowledge and abilities contribute to development projects, combat crises and secure partnerships (The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development 2010, 2) This particular form of power, which strives for being neutral in nature, is a necessity in implementing the key principals of diplomacy, such as peace fostering.

Moreover according to QDDR 2015, modern power is also diffused, meaning that a growing number of people today are actually accountable for having some form of power (The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development 2015, 8.) Hence civilian power practiced by embassies also means tapping the potential of regular citizens and thus adds up to the already massive network.

Despite the universal and widespread nature of diplomacy, “one-size-fits-all” mentality hardly ever applies. Countries draw the strategies for overseas missions using their own foreign policy as a baseline, which naturally ranges from country to country. National points of focus and matters worth of pursuing are in the heart of any single decision, act or agreement. (The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development 2015, 1-13.)

In terms of the most frequent agreements done by embassies, two types exist, namely bilateral and multilateral kinds. In case of bilateral treaties, the agreement is binding between any two countries, whereas multilateral treaties involve several other parties as well, for instance the European Union (EU) or the United Nations (UN) on top of the sovereign states (Government of the Netherlands). These multilateral agreements, where international organizations are immersed into the process of negotiation, are apt to strengthen global partnerships and generate common ground for ever more unified diplomatic methods (Petrovsky 1998.)

In order for an embassy to operate successfully and manage prosperous agreements, solid governance in the sending country is essential. Diplomacy should always be implemented in accordance to country's interests, core values and to some extent tradition, but most importantly be aligned with the governance practiced. This has been widely acknowledged by many leaders. For instance, U.S Secretary of State John Kerry has stated that

“good governance affects the country’s security and underpins the long-term success of foreign policy objectives” (The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development 2015, 10.) Thus by improving governance, the objectives set out to be achieved through diplomacy can be better reached. Streamlining operations, being agile through transparent communication and balancing governance and values into a coherent strategy is the key.

In addition to governance, different memberships and alliances also affect the implementation of diplomacy. Strategic differences occur when belonging to different organizations, associations or unions, for instance the European Union. EU countries face their own set of strategic challenges that can be reformed through particular treaties. For instance the Lisbon treaty entering to force in 2009 influenced the decision-making structure of the whole union (EUR-Lex 2015.)

It would therefore be right to view embassies as establishments, which are largely steered by desired strategic alliances and particular pursuits but which all share a common objective. Although diplomacy can and will indeed serve different purposes for different countries, the chief force to exist for every embassy should be reinforcing democratic societies and friendly relations between nations while ensuring economic growth and prosperous future.

Although this study is mainly interested in examining embassies as touristic players, future prospects for their operations are also considered. The landscape of diplomacy has changed drastically and continues to evolve gradually (Klavins 2010, 3.) There are novel challenges and risks that designate the environment modern embassies need to cope with, but also new possibilities to avail the potential of diplomacy like never before.

Many research papers suggest that one of the most evident changes shaping the profile of diplomacy is the entry of unconventional actors to the field. It is no longer the governmental entities exclusively exploiting diplomatic means, but also alternative players sharing the responsibility and furthermore acknowledgements. While governmental diplomacy still holds the leading authority over international relations, non-governmental organizations and other non-state actors such as different interest groups, entrepreneurs and opinion leaders are increasingly involved and implementing their skills in diplomacy (The Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development 2010, 3; Klavins 2010, 3.)

As the field trends towards more fragmented and dispersed nature in terms of power and thereby influence, it is then essential to cooperate even with the unusual actors. This is exactly why strategic matches such as embassies and players in the tourism field should not be dismissed. Having first established the baseline for understanding embassies, the focus will shift towards deepening knowledge on tourism.

3 Tourism and its key contributions

This chapter examines characteristics and common features of touristic products through a range of arguments derived from literature. Moreover, in order to be able to successfully explain what kind of collaboration there is between embassies and tourism field, it is first necessary to understand why this network should even exist. Therefore it is not sufficient enough to only analyse what tourism field holds inside, but also give grounds why investing into tourism matters. The importance of tourism will be reviewed by using economic and social impacts as indicators.

Better yet, since one of the key aims of missions abroad is to develop the economic, cultural and scientific affairs between the sending and receiving country, the topic is essential (UN 1961, 3.) Since tourism can be regarded as an activity fostering economic performance as well as cultural exchange, it is thus natural for embassies to participate and take stance on tourism related matters.

3.1 Nature of tourism

It is important to keep in mind that in essence tourism field is a composition of many industries, and only when cooperating together these industries deliver the final product (UNWTO & ETC 2011, 6.) In other words, the supply chain in tourism is largely fragmented since there are multiple sectors in the economy catering for tourism (UNWTO & ETC 2011, 6.) Smith acknowledges the fact in his paper “The tourism product” (1994), which examines the end deliverables of tourism through a variety of academic views. It also offers insight on whether or not tourism can fulfil the requirements of an industry.

Smith (1994) does conclude tourism to be an industry, yet not in the most traditional sense. The unconventional nature emerges in the references attained from Kotler (1984). He characterizes the tourism product predominantly as an experience in which physical objects are infused with the service, people and ideas (Smith 1994, 584.) Tourism is thus an industry since a demand and produce are at place, however because lacking the “single production process, homogenous product and locationally confined market” it is stripped off from dogmas distinctive for classic industries (Smith 1994, 583.)

Another definition for a tourism product showcased by Smith, but derived from Medlik and Middleton (1973) is worth of presenting as well. Medlik and Middleton identify the tourism product to entail a bundle of separate activities and services which all have their own responsibility in contributing to the end product and to implement it successfully. This bundle

constitutes of the attractions and facilities at the destination, its accessibility, reputation of the destination and lastly the price tag of the experience (Smith 1994, 584.)

What is also interesting, yet challenging in the scientific study of tourism is that it cultivates into human emotions and mental images (UNWTO & ETC 2011, 7.) Each tourist is a mixture of expectations to begin with, which is the reason behind the subjectivity of tourism industry. Tourism is also concerned with its intangible nature, meaning the experience cannot be seen, touched, smelled or felt before consuming - up to this point the tourism product as such exists only in the minds of those who intent to travel. Furthermore, because the tourist cannot "test drive" the experience, engaging into touristic activities contains always a little risk. Therefore it is crucial to match the expectations to reality and thus offer an experience that is worth taking the risk (UNWTO & ETC 2011, 7.)

Lastly, once the experience is consumed, the tourist is left with yet another set of intangibles, namely the memories. The aftermath of the experience should not be underestimated, since through memories tourists build special relationships with destinations and trips. Unlike tangible goods, intangible memories can last for a lifetime and should thus be treated as essential parameters in delivering a memorable experience (UNWTO & ETC 2011, 7-12.)

Thus tourism has attained a unique status in the world of business due to its unconventional qualities in comparison to many other sectors. These include the dispersed supply chain, which allows tourism industry to be as dynamic and diverse as it is. Although numerous players involved can lead to challenges in coordination, tourism industry could not be reliant on a single supplier. Individual suppliers such as hotel chains, airlines, tour operators or restaurants cannot provide the desired experience alone – to constitute a proper touristic experience, contribution from each supplier needs to be in place (UNWTO & ETC 2011, 6.)

Because tourism industry delivers experiences rather than physical goods, it is subject to personal presumptions, images and expectations. Acknowledging the symbiosis between expectations, experiences and memories is beneficial since it will generate customer satisfaction. Whether the end product, that is the experience, is successful or not is largely determined by the tourists' perceived value of the overall trip, visit or encounter. Moreover, how well the expectations meet the reality crucially designates its value (UNWTO & ETC 2011, 7-12.)

3.2 Tourism as an enabler

The fact that the industries operating inside tourism field are growingly intertwined and connected, provokes challenges. Multitude of different actors signifies the complexity of measuring the impacts generated by tourism (WTTC 2015, foreword).

In this chapter the key impacts, namely economic affluence and cultural heritage will be discussed. It is desired to reach a conclusion whereby tourism could be regarded as a driver for both economic growth as well as cultural diversity.

3.2.1 Economic contributions

No matter whether examining tourism primarily as business or as social phenomenon, the importance of it comes widely accepted (UNWTO 2016, 2.) Fortunately The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) together with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) have produced measures to demonstrate the importance.

To start with, a number of arguments on why tourism matters has been identified by UNWTO in their latest edition of 'Tourism Highlights 2016'. The report claims international tourism to hold a 7% share of today's export industry while surpassing world trade in its speed of growth, indicating tourism to be among the most rapidly growing sectors in the world (UNWTO 2016, 2.)

UNWTO also suggests the international tourist arrivals to have gone up from 25 million in 1950 to 1186 million in 2015 and furthermore international tourism receipts to have increased from US\$ 2 billion in 1950 to US\$ 1260 billion in 2015. These tourism receipts tell how much international inbound visitors spend during their trip (UNWTO 2016, 2.)

Figure 1 presents the global distribution of the international tourist arrivals (ITA) as well as international tourism receipts (ITR) to give an overall view on the current situation.



Figure 1. Distribution of international tourist arrivals & tourism receipts in 2015 (UNWTO 2016)

Tourism has also managed to prove its resilience and profitability notwithstanding occasional disruptions such as natural disasters, global shocks and economic crises (UNWTO 2016, 2-5.) For instance, despite the collapse of the World Trade Center in 2001, an event classified as an act of terror and the global economic shock in 2009, both adding up concerns on security and stability, tourism field still continued to boom.

In the light of more recent events, the United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU (Brexit, 2016), has purportedly had more visible changes within the economy of the UK itself, rather than shaking the world's status quo. It is evident however, that due to Brexit the British currency got seemingly weaker and therefore made the UK a more affordable destination to travel to (WTTC 2016, 8.) Examples like these only demonstrate the linkage between political decisions and economic twists to travel behavior and patterns.

What another paper, namely the annual research of the Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism conducted by The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) in 2015 reveals is

great news for tourism industry. The research reinforces the fact that the economic impact of tourism is significant, yet it also addresses some developments that positively affected the growth of the industry compared to the previous year (2014). It is argued that the drop in oil prices led to increased expenditure of travel related products in 2015. It comes after people having more disposable income in their hands due to the decrease in oil prices and thus lowered cost of living. According to WTTC, price of the oil also had a favorable impact on air-fares, which encouraged people to fly more often and thus support the travel industry directly (WTTC 2015, foreword).

On another note and similar to many other sectors, tourism also faces its lows points. Recent developments in mind, WTTC recognized the overall world trade to have slowed down in 2015 and in combination with volatile fluctuations of foreign currencies against the US dollar, travel and tourism sector cannot be described solely through upswings. In addition, WTTC describes Russia to be one of the most important markets generating tourists, and believes the ongoing recession to have a negative impact on their outbound spending. The global travel market will most likely experience a slight downturn due to this (WTTC 2015, foreword).

Nevertheless, the economic contributions generated by travel and tourism are worth of taking a closer look. First, a few key terms which WTTC uses to quantify and organize its data need to be understood. There are namely three different ways to contribute to the economy, which all combined together will form the total impact.

Figure 2 indicates the direct, indirect as well as induced contributions that the travel and tourism sector can undertake to benefit the world's gross domestic product (GDP) or employment. GDP is a basic indicator of the economic health inside a nation, or in this case, the world. It measures the value of all goods and services produced during a certain time period. The value is presented in monetary terms (Investopedia).



Figure 2. Direct, indirect, induced & total economic contributions of tourism (WTTC 2015)

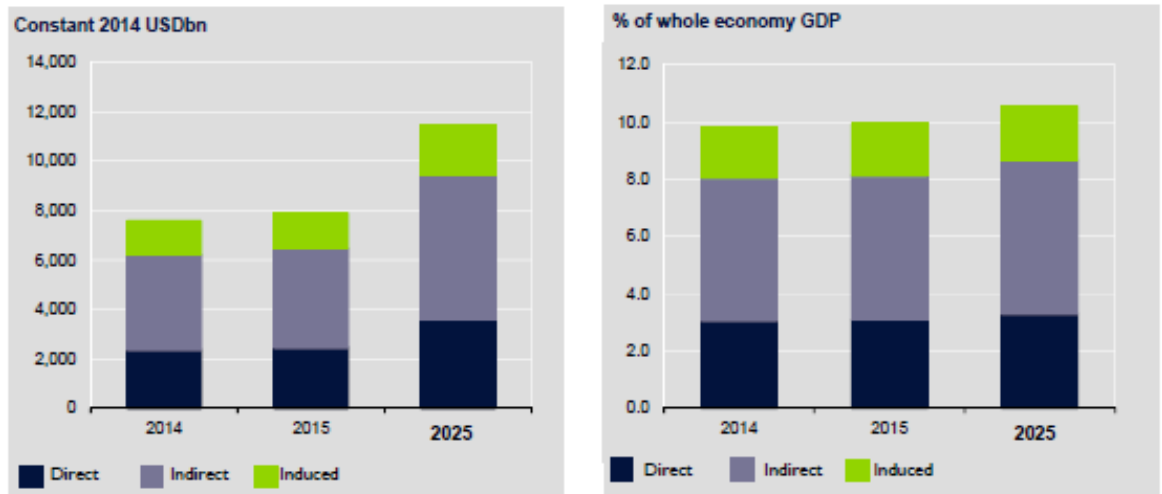
Direct contributions make up the spending generated from activities directly addressing tourists, such as hotel visits, car rentals, airlines or travel agencies. This direct spending takes into account the individual spending of a country's residents or its visitors engaging into business or leisure activities, but also the investments made by governments. Usually these investments are concerned with recreational aspects or public spaces, such as renovating a museum or rehabilitating a natural site – something that is however directly linked to the traveler (WTTC 2015, 2.)

Indirect contributions, on the other hand, support the growth of the total GDP and employment with slightly different means than the direct ones. Here the purchases are targeted to developing, innovating or acquiring something new that will benefit the traveler, however with a long-term goal in mind. Examples such as developing an easier customer interface for booking or investing into new fleet are self-evident in their advantages. Additionally, in comparison to the direct government spending, governments can also contribute indirectly. These efforts are put into practice to profit the travel and tourism industry at large. Refining tourism marketing strategies and campaigns or running through administrative issues are good examples of such contribution. Lastly, when a business operating in the travel industry procures goods or services from the domestic market, the economic contribution is classified as indirect. An example here could be a youth hostel acquiring food and beverages for their breakfast assortment (WTTC 2015, 2.)

The third and final term, namely the induced contribution is a measurement targeting the spending of the employees who work either directly or indirectly in the travel industry. Their spending on goods such as clothing or services such as housing can be considered to contribute the world's overall GDP and employment (WTTC 2015, 2.)

After the direct, indirect and induced contributions are calculated together, one gets what is called the total contribution. Figure 3 demonstrates the total contribution of travel and tourism related activities in relation to the GDP. On the left side of the figure, this growth is indicated in monetary terms, while the right side presents the change in percentages.

WORLD: TOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF TRAVEL & TOURISM TO GDP



¹ All values are in constant 2014 prices & exchange rates

Figure 3. Total contribution of travel & tourism to GDP (WTTC 2015)

Because the numbers in Figure 3 are calculated in 2014, it lacks the exact numbers for 2016. This is also why it shows merely an estimation for the year 2015, however the figure reveals something that is more important. It indicates growth that is gradual, yet continuous. Also, future forecast looks rather promising: WTTC expects the contribution from travel and tourism sector to increase roughly to US\$ 11 billion and account 3, 8 % of the total GDP by 2025.

As a further indicator of the economic importance of tourism, employment will also be reviewed. Figure 4 showcases how many people travel and tourism industry employed in 2014 and an estimation how many it will continue to offer jobs to (either directly or indirectly).

WORLD: TOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF TRAVEL & TOURISM TO EMPLOYMENT

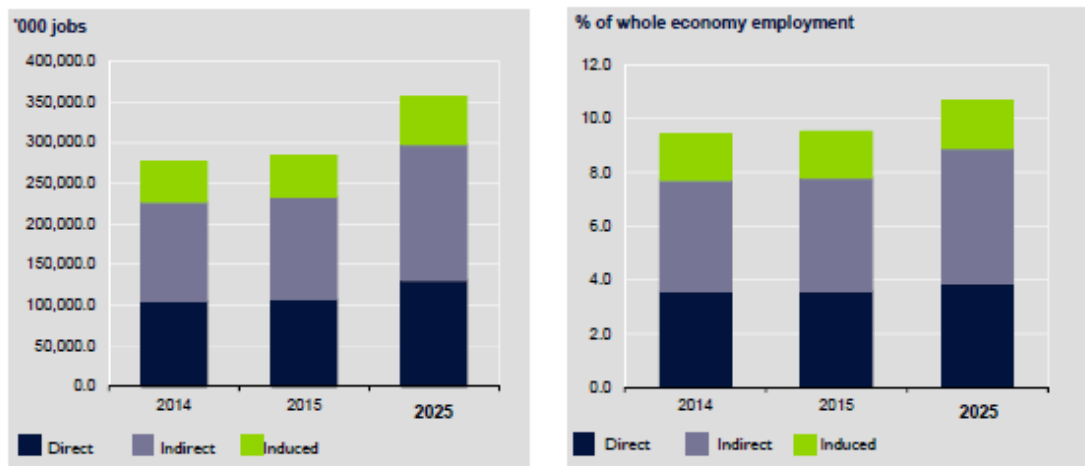


Figure 4. Total contribution of travel & tourism to employment (WTTC 2015)

As a total contribution in 2014, travel and tourism industry employed 276, 845, 000 people and had a share of 9, 4 % of the overall employment. Similar to the development of the GDP, the growth is evident in this case too. In 2025, the amount of jobs generated by travel and tourism is forecasted to increase to 356, 911, 000 while having a share of 10, 7 % of the total employment (WTTC 2015, 4.)

Together the contributions done with respect to GDP and employment are adequate ways to point out the lucrative nature of tourism. Tourism has managed to establish itself as a consistent business which employs people and provides them with stability. Rather than be weakened by changes in the environment, tourism has proved its resilience and should thus be recognized as a solid part of our economic structure (UNWTO 2016, 3.)

To further argue why investing into tourism is important, a quick look into the future is appropriate. Having demonstrated its prosperity in the past, the outlook for the future of tourism is equally favorable. A collaborative report by the UNWTO compiles views together on long-term development of international travel, and uses trends to forecast the direction it is heading to. "Tourism towards 2030" predicts continuous growth for travel industry, however not as exponential as before, but rather with a pace that is more subtle and moderate (UNWTO 2011, 10.)

The decelerated pace has been rationalized as a result of a few determinants. UNWTO identifies a decline in the growth of the gross domestic product as economies start gradually get more and more mature. In these cases the economic performance of a country starts to slow down due to stabilization or a decline in the population. One can link the falling GDP rate to worsened living standards and furthermore to weakened purchasing

power, both logically regarded as hindrance to tourism industry. Furthermore travel industry is concerned with price elasticity, which seeks to explain the shifts in demand whenever price or income changes (Investopedia). Lowered elasticity, meaning fewer people consuming travel products combined with the aforementioned decline in GDP is forecasted to be one of the main reasons to slow down tourism industry (UNWTO 2011, 10.)

Backed up by the data provided, it is safe to say that embassies can establish prosperous economic partnerships with players in the tourism field. Although the economic benefits alone are a great impetus to collaborate, other motives to do so exist as well. Having first established the necessity to focus on tourism from an economic point of view, the attention moves towards another key element in the society, the culture.

3.2.2 Cultural contributions

Cultural benefits of tourism are perhaps not as prominent as the economic ones, yet they ought to be recognized. With the help of travel and tourism industry, cultural diversity can be fostered and made more apparent.

Culture comprises of elements which are common for a larger group of people but which also serve as building blocks for an individual's identity (UNWTO 2012). Initial starting point is any belief that creates values and norms around it. Values indicate what is worthy, whereas norms steer the actions to match these values. In addition, culture also entails symbols, habits and traditions to reinforce the most important beliefs and to make a distinction between cultural entities (Root, 2015).

Differences in culture and curiosity are significant motives for people to travel. Cultural tourism is a growing market segment which is steered by the desire to visit museums or historical sites, engage into performing arts or foreign cuisine et cetera. Tourists seek evermore authentic experiences whereby they can immerse themselves into a whole new cultural environment and build bridges across borders. Such encounters are in key position to foster peaceful contacts and nurture tolerant values, both aligned with the core responsibility of diplomacy (UNWTO 2012).

Furthermore cultural heritage can provide people and communities with sustainable livelihoods and a way to make a living. When executed responsibly, cultural tourism with its best intentions can alleviate poverty, rehabilitate regions and empower communities to pride their own heritage (UNWTO 2012). These are all contributions done on a local level, however having an impact on a global scale.

When it comes to a more business and marketing oriented view on culture, it is fair to say that the cultural peculiarities offer a way to distinguish destinations. A well-established base for cultural experiences can serve as a competitive advantage attracting more visitors than any other given destination. Therefore it is beneficial for countries to acquire a comprehensive cultural policy, which will address the means to ensure visibility and help in building national identity. It is preferable that cultural policy outlines all the actions and measurements taken in the pursuit of guaranteeing international presence, and to serve as a “window” to the cultural gems a country possesses (Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs 2015, foreword).

Tourism and culture are therefore an inseparable match, and in some cases culture is the reason for tourism to exist. Culture wraps immense importance around itself and creates meanings, shapes individuals and contributes to the society with its own share. Understanding but moreover trying to accept cultural disparities is crucial for the sake of humanity. In this light, by mobilizing people tourism holds a remarkable role in enabling friendly dialogue and thus promotes virtues such as tolerance, equality and wisdom.

Furthermore creating cultural policies indicate the cultural contributions of tourism to be significant enough to be included into the government strategies. Oftentimes cultural policy is perceived to be a substantial part of a country's foreign policy, which reinforces the necessity of having plans for cultural engagement. Consequently it is possible for embassies to be better off with a clear focus on culture.

Having presented several arguments in favor of the contributory character of tourism industry, a positive conclusion can be drawn. Although the travel sector is imposed to a number of challenges ranging from the changes in the global economy to political reforms, investments are still worthy. Many alternative justifications still exist to explain the importance of tourism, however in light of economic and cultural contributions, it is fair to suggest embassies to continue acknowledging the power of such industry.

4 Methodology

Chapter 4 will cover the methods that were chosen to conduct the research in question. The purpose here is to demonstrate the author's knowledge on discovering a research problem and finding suitable methods to examine it. Through this chapter, knowledge will be gained on qualitative research method, semi-structured interviews and the process of conducting such interviews. Additionally the delimitations together with limitations will be assessed.

4.1 Setting the objective

Discovering the research problem and establishing objectives around it is behind every successful study. In this particular case, the research problem is to obtain a view on embassies as touristic players and furthermore generate knowledge on their future prospects.

There are two objectives to the research. On the other hand the research is concerned with current measures to discover the nature of interaction between embassies and tourism associates today. Here the objective is to examine the strategies embassies have for tourism, the extent embassies collaborate with tourism industry and the overall attitude towards travel sector. The second part intends to find out the direction embassies are heading to, and whether or not touristic efforts will be regarded worthy investing to in the future.

4.2 Qualitative research method

When examining a social phenomenon, qualitative research methods are regarded as a useful set of instruments to implement the study successfully. Another prominent research method, the quantitative approach is equally sufficient, however with different aims.

To furthermore discuss the differences between these two main research approaches, quantitative data provides the researcher with rigorous, numeric knowledge that is easy to organize and present, for instance, with graphics. On contrary, qualitative approach offers a more humanistic view on social reality, and pursues to explain its oftentimes complex nature (Finn, Elliot-White & Walton 2000, 8.) The freedom and space that the qualitative means allow, is desirable in light of this paper's objective.

Walle (1997) describes the quantitative approach to be driven by a more scientific model than the qualitative one, into which he associates implications from art. He thus recommends to opt for the qualitative approach, especially in tourism research. When conducting research on tourism related matters, the researcher deals with sensitive themes, such as feelings, mindsets or values. Therefore quantitative methods are not seen as a reasonable fit for examining human perceptions and experiences. On contrary, Walle argues that this might result in delimitation of the study since researcher should always be able to avoid interpretation based on instinctive feelings (Walle, 1997, 524 – 525.)

Nonetheless, it is a necessity to gain descriptive data to increase understanding of the research problem examined in this paper. Keeping in mind that the aim is to shed light on the future of embassies while achieving more visibility for embassies' efforts to foster tourism industry, explanatory data accounts as remarkable source. According to Marshall and Rossman, key elements in a qualitative research are the perceptions and attitudes that the research participants give to the prevailing environment (Marshall & Rossman 1999, 2.) This is the profound reason why qualitative methods are applied to a thesis, which pursues to explain the world through a particular topic and offer insight to consolidate observations.

4.3 Conducting the semi-structured interviews

It is paramount that the research problem and the methods used should always match. Hence semi-structured interviews that are apt to generate in-depth knowledge were chosen as the research method.

Professionals from nine embassies were selected to participate in the interviews. Composition of the countries represented in the order of their interviews is as follows:

- Austria
- The Republic of Colombia
- Czech Republic (Czechia)
- United Mexican States
- Italy
- Hungary
- Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- Greece
- People's Republic of China

In this part it is noteworthy to mention, that the embassies interviewed should not be viewed from the perspective of the country they are representing. Thus the thesis will not focus on presenting any country specific strategies to foster tourism, but pursues to attain

a joint picture. The range of participants consist of several heads of mission, a commercial counsellor, a head of political section, a first secretary as well as a first counsellor.

In addition, due to a desire to provide variation and even a greater pool of multifaceted data, some of the interviews were conducted abroad in Dublin, Ireland (8.5.2016 – 12.5.2016). Ireland in particular has had a positive impact on the author's professional development, and was thus seen as a suitable destination to go and conduct part of the research.

The interviews were constructed from several open-ended questions allowing the somewhat natural flow of conversation. To stay true to qualitative approach, it was important to identify an opportunity during the interviews to alter the questions in accordance to the situation. At times reading into context instead of pre-determined conditions is more reasonable. This can also be regarded as a prerequisite to ensure the "co-creation of knowledge and meaning" between the respondent as well as the interviewer (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011, 109.)

The participants were contacted via e-mail with an invitation to contribute to academic research. Although the sample was derived solely from embassies, there was no clear pattern of choosing the actual participants, and so the invitation was sent to a wide range of embassies with no preconditions. Thus random sampling, as in choosing the research participants without particular requirements, was applied within moderate limits. Choosing the participants randomly was a deliberate act, despite its inadequacy in qualitative studies. Random sampling is ideal in attaining data that can be generalized to a wider population but not in gaining a deep understanding of a phenomenon (Marshall 1996, 523.) However, since the research objective requires examining embassies as a whole, the sampling can be considered appropriate enough.

All of the professional interviews shared the same research questions as a solid core to initiate and steer the conversation. The preliminary research questions were sent beforehand to all participants as an opportunity to prepare themselves better. Most of the discussions were recorded after being given a permission, yet a few exceptions remained. In these cases, the author herself documented the insights by making her own notes. During the interview with the Colombian Embassy in Helsinki, the Ambassador had prepared a memorandum based on the preliminary questions, whereas the Chinese Embassy in Helsinki participated in the research by sending their answers through an e-mail. This was taken into consideration as a possible delimitation – after all it was a deliberate decision of

the author to include the data gained from the Chinese Embassy without a face-to-face interview.

The data from the interviews was compiled systematically into an Excel-file while allocating each interview a separate sheet. Key insights and terms were then typed in and organized accordingly. After initial overview and careful scrutiny, common themes as well as significant differences were identified. These insights were then placed under a mutual context creating a joint pool of data to draw conclusions from.

Semi-structured interviews oftentimes reveal personal stories that are brought forth as a result of intentional inquiry (Marshall & Rossman 1999, 4.) Therefore in this research paper, content analysis was exploited due to its optimal nature to draw holistic conclusions from narratives (Priest, Roberts & Woods 2002, 13.) On top of the direct content obtained from the embassies, literature used earlier in the contextual framework was also analyzed. This analysis served as a supportive and complementary element throughout the whole research and thus contributed positively in generating a sound outcome together with the professional interviews.

Moreover it is ideal to use insights from semi-structured interviews inductively in the pursuit of detecting correlations and patterns in data (Finn & al. 2000, 4-8.) The inductive approach allows the creation of novel theory based on the correlations discovered. The theory generated from this study will most preferably contribute into the wider realization of the solidarity that exists between embassies and tourism industry.

To finalize the research process, the current situation as well as future assessments for embassies were brought forth based on the aforementioned cohesion in the content. This data account as the research results, which will be covered later on.

4.4 Limitations & delimitations

In a research, limitations together with delimitations must be discussed transparently. Limitations refer to the circumstances that cannot be controlled by the researcher and links up to the reliability and validity of the research, which will be discussed later on in chapter 5. Delimitating factors on the other hand can indeed be influenced by the researcher him/herself intentionally or accidentally (Simon & Goes 2013, 1.)

In this paper the most prominent delimitations can be identified rather easily. There is a chance the author as an interviewer has not refrained herself from personal interference and has led the conversations to a direction of her preference. Interviewer's attitude,

choice of words and non-verbal communication plays an important role in semi-structured interviews as does the actions of the participants. The nature of interaction dictates the atmosphere of the interview, which can range from relaxed and encouraging to pressuring or challenging.

Moreover, one can regard the limited number of participants as a delimitation. Needless to say, it was necessary to draw a line at some point due to the author's restricted capabilities to analyze such amount of data. Nonetheless, it is not unusual to have a smaller sample size in qualitative research; this way complex narratives on reality are guaranteed (Finn & al. 2000, 8.)

5 Results

Chapter 5 will present the results of the research. Since the research has two objectives, the results will also be examined in two sections. The first objective, which seeks to take a look into the current operations of embassies while acquiring more visibility for their actions, will be discussed first. Afterwards, the future of embassies, as professionals perceive it, will be described.

5.1 Embassies today

Based on the insights gained in the interviews, the environment of embassies will be further broken down to four constants. These four elements aim at providing a clearer picture on what embassies regard as their touristic strategies and responsibilities, which players constitute their network and lastly what kind of attitude exists in the minds of the professionals when it comes to tourism industry.

5.1.1 Strategies

The majority of the embassies shared a set of similar strategies to promote their touristic interests. It was acknowledged that due to the different desires and motives that tourists have, strategies to attract them should vary as well.

The most prominent element was the distribution of promotional material, such as brochures or goodie bags that were specifically obtained from the official tourism agencies. Only one embassy opposed this view by noting brochures to be outdated. In this case, it was preferred to update the official embassy websites with visuals such as videos, pictures and infographics to support the distribution of cultural information.

A few responses on the positive effects of public diplomacy were brought up. It was said that thanks to the tools of public diplomacy, the flow of international visitors had accelerated. These tools vary from country to country but they share a mutual aim. Strengthening country image, increasing the knowledge on culture and policies as well as fostering bilateral cooperation are all objectives of public diplomacy.

A few tools of public diplomacy appeared several times during the interviews. For instance, cultural events such as film festivals, exhibitions on national days, gastronomy nights or attending design weeks were listed as vital elements. Attending different travel

fairs and shows, such as Matka in Helsinki or ITB in Berlin was also seen as a good strategic move. In addition, meetings with opinion leaders, entrepreneurs, university students and figures from mainstream media were regarded as worthy. Some embassies included press trips into their strategy by inviting journalists, bloggers or travel agents to the capital country in the hopes of reaching coverage on media. Value was also placed on a phenomenon called word of mouth (WOM) whereby people push information further with seemingly little effort by just talking to their closed ones. Information catches on reaching a snowball effect through networks people have. WOM can contribute positively but it might also have damaging effects if negative or false information spreads out.

The role of social diplomacy as an extension of public diplomacy was also addressed. It was obvious that the Facebook pages along with other social media channels the embassies utilized, were important elements in their strategies.

A common concern in terms of strategy and implementation was budget and money that is allocated for cultural endeavours. There seems never to be enough resources to do what the embassies aspire. Hence it is crucial to find low-cost events to attend to as well as creative, yet affordable means to promote tourism. Embassies representing bigger countries argued that for well-established destinations big campaigns are not sufficient, yet smaller countries are in need for louder promotion. However to stage massive campaigns like this, the threshold is huge due to the heavy means that they require. A few of the embassies questioned the power of such campaigns by wondering whether or not they would pay off in the end. To ease the financial constraints, the role of sponsors came forth. A few of the embassies had acquired sponsors for themselves, but it was not thought as something to be added to the overall strategy.

Although being quite independent in their actions, a clear majority of the embassies followed a strategy that was created globally to concern all the missions of their country. This strategy was usually developed by their own national tourism organization.

5.1.2 Responsibilities

When asked about the touristic responsibilities of an embassy, links to the general level responsibilities were identified on great terms as well. Some of the embassies were straightforward on their minimal role in tourism, while others emphasized their involvement.

All embassies however reached a consensus in thinking that facilitating communication is their main responsibility. Communication happens between two governments through direct involvement (e.g. meetings) as well as does it exist between governments and the commercial world. In both of these links, embassies act as a notable intermediary.

The results reveal that it was seen as a necessity to be ahead of the game as such link. In case of developments or changes taking place in the prevailing environment, getting the word out on time was considered to be vital in order to maintain embassies' accountability. Furthermore to unravel the oftentimes complex language in bureaucratic documents, embassies identified themselves as messengers between governmental entities and regular citizens.

Although representing governments, one of the key responsibilities identified was securing and protecting the interests of own nationals. Many embassies agreed on the fact that their work deals with people to a large extent, and offering assistance is self-evident. One of the embassies interviewed was extremely specific in their personal approach to information sharing. Answering the flock of emails individually, without discarding a single one was thought to be ideal. Another representative had created a LinkedIn group for young professionals working within various industries to provide them with a reliable platform to network.

Naturally in travel related matters, the responsibility of issuing visas was regarded as indispensable. Nonetheless it became evident that embassies contribute in other ways as well. Results show that embassies educate and inform people on travel practicalities, and offer travel tips upon request. Practicalities include information on matters that are needed to travel smoothly, such as road rules, payment types or opening hours. Although a few exceptions remained, majority of the embassies issued travel bulletins. The travel tips on the other hand were closely linked to security concerns, and in addition to recommending where to go, embassies could suggest to avoid certain places. According to one embassy, this fostered cautious travel and prevented emergencies. Issuing emergency passports and thus being available at all times was considered as additional core responsibility.

It was also evident that embassies were very much aware of their responsibility to create a favourable environment for tourism. Many of the embassies had identified gaps in the tourism supply chain and tackled these issues with their own initiatives. They had rightfully realized that in order to have more tourists, one needs to facilitate it and this way tap the potential of travellers. For instance, thanks to the endeavours of one of the embassies, direct flights between the sending and receiving country were recently launched.

Furthermore encouraging foreign investment, promoting exports (tourism included) and strengthening country image classified as essential duties of an embassy. Lastly, the importance of conveying a positive image of the respective country through the representative's own actions was also mentioned.

5.1.3 Networks

A look into the existing networks and structural matters of the embassies revealed similarities rather than conflicting realizations. It was usual for either a ministry of regional or national development to lead change in tourism and furthermore a national tourism board or office to work under the ministry. These agencies are independent in nature, however attains close ties both to the ministry they are working under as well as to the embassies. It was pointed out that national tourism organizations were usually located across the globe. For a handful of embassies this resulted in having the nearest tourism organization in a whole different country, which made it more difficult to coordinate communication. Only one embassy interviewed stated to have a ministry of tourism in specific and another appointed ministry of foreign affairs to be the leading body.

Other relevant partners that came up were tour operators and travel agencies, industry associations and think tanks, the ministry of culture, scientific institutions and universities as well as media and reporters (e.g. daily newspapers such as the Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times). Additionally regular people living or holidaying in a foreign country were included into the network. Embassies argued also them to be responsible of representing their country in a favourable manner.

Throughout the interviews the significance of harmonizing and coordinating communication became a standard. Embassies considered this to be a reason behind smoother travel across countries and the driver for squeezing out the maximum effect of tourism. One successful example of such collaboration between individual countries became in the form of introducing the Visegrad Group (V4). V4 is an alliance formed by the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia to generate mutual gains in the field of politics, culture and economy. As one synchronised group, it represents the interests of each country and is better off together. Combining forces instead of continuously competing was considered to be more effective and the absence of collaboration as something that would hamper everyone.

5.1.4 Attitude

The overall attitude and state of mind embassies possessed towards tourism industry was rather positive. Each embassy agreed tourism to be an important sector which was worthy of investing to, however opposing views rose in terms of the actual extent to get involved. One of the embassies was honest about not having enough time nor means to focus on promoting tourism and continued by saying that its efforts would not make a difference anyway. Another embassy reasoned small investments by relying on statistics. These statistics indicated that even during times of reducing costs and recession, the number of tourists had not declined. Thus being on the “safe side” did not motivate to make grand investments.

Rest of the views were more favourable. It was said that tourism should be even better integrated in the embassy’s operations, and that there would be no possibility of ruling out embassies from the tourism sector. Tourism was regarded as a special export product that deserved an equal amount of attention and support than any other so called “traditional” industry. One associate presented arguments on why tourism has been perceived separate to diplomacy. As opposed to diplomacy, tourism was described to be a soft industry, which is human oriented and easily approachable. However, since the concept of government involvement is rather distant for people, it makes it difficult to imagine such contrasting partners.

Although the professionals stressed the notion that no industry was superior to tourism, they also highlighted the fact that at any given point, the embassy was primarily responsible for the industries doing worse than others. In other words no single industry would receive the full attention. Furthermore it was discovered that people employed by embassies were expected to have a clear and comprehensive understanding on each aspect of tourism, even though they were not specialists. Tourism organizations were then considered to exist for this particular reason.

Having shed light on the existing collaboration between embassies and tourism industry, the focus will move on to the future considerations and find out the forecasts for their general development.

5.2 Embassies tomorrow

In order to find out what the future holds for embassies, several questions about personal ideas were asked. The professionals were clearly divided into two camps. Quite simply, one group of professionals argued that embassies as such will no longer operate in the

future (within 20-30 years). The opposing group on the other hand was confident in maintaining representations without major disruptions.

In light of the data and correlations in it, two possible outcomes or future scenarios were structured. These conform the opposing views that were discovered during the interviews, and can be identified as “Time to go our separate ways” and “Towards greater integration”. The following subchapters will introduce both of these scenarios in a matter of fact style and describe developments as well as challenges inside the two futures.

5.2.1 Time to go our separate ways

The interest towards foreign policy will be plunged during times of ever-growing security concerns, which however indicate to do the exact opposite. The future will be concerned with conflicts disrupting the equilibrium, and although globalized, the world seems to be more isolated than ever before. Countries will continue having some form of representation, however the classical concept of embassies will diminish undoubtedly. Closing down embassies will be a distinct trend within the next 20-30 years, however before this happens, embassies will face a set of challenges.

It is noteworthy to mention that closing down embassies will be more apparent within EU-countries due to their open borders and planned, however threatened, integration. The fundamental foreign policy of at least smaller EU-countries might get done on a greater EU-level, and thus risk the future of many embassies. Having open borders enables foreign embassies to issue visas and passports to others than their own citizens as well. However, Europeans do not always share the same language and thus dealing with official authorities might become difficult. Enhancing integration means central allocation of power and responsibility, and although as an ideal optimistic, here it would result in fewer embassies. Integration also puts the diplomatic immunities under pressure, although this will be only applicable to EU-embassies. Elsewhere immunities, however also in reduced terms, will still be considered to exist for valid reasons, such as to protect or for tax purposes.

Globally the diminished role of embassies will be a result of many considerations. Overall the conduct of diplomacy has changed drastically due to IT- revolution and the globalized way of doing business. In the past, developments in technology have generated a set of tools to ease the work of the diplomats however on contrary, have put their work at risk. Since no monopoly of information exists, everything can be found freely on the Internet. People will thus no longer rely on embassies as their primary source of knowledge, but will do their research independently. On a positive note, people will not trust everything

they read on the Internet and will continue asking the embassy for confirmation and validation. In this light, the role of embassies as facilitators of communication will remain, yet with minor alterations.

However, the abundance of data and the changed ways to access, share and use it will become a nuisance. Because knowledge seems to accumulate in excessive amounts, processing of it and hence red-tape will increase. Work in the embassies will be slowed down due to the growing amount of paper work.

Additionally, embassies will be exposed to cost-cutting and reducing staff due to the growing trend of privatization. Once more operations will be privatized, no one will see the benefits in investing into diplomacy. Efforts to change laws will be done in contribution to safeguard the status of embassies, however this will be time-consuming and slow. Furthermore regular citizens will reassess their stance towards embassies as governmental entities. Seeing conflicts and problems in their vicinity will make the citizens question the role of diplomats and their efforts. The lack of trust will be an issue embassies need to address.

To address this concern, embassies will start to brand themselves to gain a stronger presence and the trust they desire. Embassies start growingly feel that the value they generate is overlooked although contributions are made - only not in the most visible way. Means will be developed to change the twisted view public has on embassies and to receive greater appreciation. Branding will result in more approachable and human oriented appearance and will desirably restore the lost trust.

Positive branding will be part of the overall strategy to protect embassies from disappearing. It will be acknowledged that due to global risks such as climate change, cybercrime and terrorism no country will be self-reliant. Hence reminding the public of the irreplaceable role of embassies as problem solvers will be in key position. Furthermore lobbying will be practiced to influence and persuade the decision makers. Arguments such as the stability generated by embassies and the enhanced global interaction will be presented.

In case embassies will fail in their branding and lobbying endeavours, they will evolve into a different direction. It is possible that embassies will develop into interest sections or representational offices solely to deal with either consular affairs, promotion or representation. No other responsibilities will be included.

Having now painted a picture of the first future “Time to go our separate ways” it is clear that the outlook for embassies does not look promising. Based on the professionals’ thoughts, embassies as we know them now will fade away almost deniably. It is not a preferred direction, however the far-reaching changes in the environment dictate this development. Professionals today still regard it as crucial to try change the course of the direction with alternating methods and wish for a different outcome.

Next, a different approach to the future prospects will be reviewed. “Towards greater integration” presents the outlook for embassies primarily as positive, with a few negative notions included.

5.2.2 Towards greater collaboration

Diplomacy and hence embassies will be needed as long as there are structures resembling today’s societies. These societies would need to have their own population, borders, interests, rules and norms together with an organizational structure. It will be nearly impossible to imagine a world without societies.

Embassies together with consular affairs will continue to operate normally due to strengthened diplomatic relations and ever-growing collaboration. More and more people will move to foreign countries in hopes of finding a job or a study place. Mobility, integration and deepened bilateral relations will increase and thus raise the profile of diplomacy.

The job requirements for a diplomat will be expanding, and there will be a growing need for skilful people who can respond to challenges quickly. Diplomats will be pressured to stay relevant at all times and pursue continuous professional growth. To manage this, diplomats will require feedback in growing terms, which will also result in feelings of appreciation and empowerment. The power of Internet will be an element shaping the work environment and tasks. On a positive note, technology will help to react immediately but as a downside it will force the diplomat to be on duty around the clock. Working hours will diminish as diplomats are expected to be available at all times, regardless of time zones or personal life. As a result of new job requirements, novel positions such as tourism attaché will emerge. In addition, the desire among diplomats to be treated as any other person will indicate the diplomatic field to become more democratic.

Similar to the changed job descriptions, the responsibilities of an embassy will also alter. Embassies will no longer focus on security related matters as they will develop towards benefit-sharing approach. This approach will stress the importance of innovation and de-

velopment. Nonetheless, the core responsibility to coordinate communication and to influence cooperation between any two countries will not suffer in the slightest. No other entity will be able to replace embassies as unique intermediaries between ministries and governments in the exchange of confidential information.

Even though the form and official structure of embassies will be unclear, there will be no reason to question their existence. Just like any entity, embassies will adapt to the changes in the surroundings. For instance, missions of smaller countries will get smaller and in these cases reducing capabilities together with personnel will be evident. Even the smallest missions will still find a way to implement themselves. Also, fewer people from capital countries will be sent on diplomatic missions and other members of mission will be recruited from locals. Similar cost reductions will limit the work, however will not threat it as a whole.

Furthermore in terms of adapting, embassies will find ways to endure danger. Security concerns will be more imminent and embassies will face a higher risk of becoming a target of attacks. The increased influence of Internet will be considered as a harmful aspect to some extent, although it will never replace the human touch that embassies will provide. Citizens will still rely on embassies rather than information hanging loose in the Internet.

“Towards greater integration” is a replica representing a favourable environment for embassies to work in. Although changes are inevitable, through better integration and cooperation the professionals think it is possible to sustain embassies and keep them operating. Addressing challenges but not getting overwhelmed by them is a mind-set worth of practicing.

5.3 Reliability & validity of the results

Presenting a brief ethical discussion on the reliability and validity of this study is crucial in conducting transparent research. Whereas reliability measures the repeatability of a study, validity is concerned with its relevancy and credibility (Hirsjärvi, Remes, & Sajavaara 2008, 226–227.)

In qualitative study assessing reliability and validity is oftentimes challenging, especially in a study that is greatly reliant on personal views, perceptions and opinions. Since a standard measure for reliability is to see whether or not the researcher will get the same results during a second round of interviews, the reliability of this study can be questioned. It is acknowledged that the professional interviews cannot be replicated identically, and it is

difficult to say if their answers were affected by e.g. their current mood or the atmosphere. Also the decision to accept the answers of the Chinese Embassy in Finland via e-mail instead of a personal meeting, can harm the reliability. This is because in all other interviews the researcher could ask additional questions or alter the direction of the conversation.

In addition, some of the interviews were recorded and transcribed later on to wait the analysis. In some cases, due to the occasionally poor quality of the recordings, a few words or sentences remained unclear. Fortunately this did not have a major impact on the final outcome.

To reach validity, the research design and its methods play a lead role. They need to be appropriately selected in order for them to measure exactly what is needed. For a qualitative study like the one at hand, the sample size was sufficient enough. Furthermore by selecting the participants randomly supported the aim to reach an objective view on embassies. Although the research questions started off as a standardized collection, alterations were made on spot as well as afterwards. Alterations afterwards were due to realizing some questions to be irrelevant. These types of changes can be regarded to impact the validity negatively, however in this case they were considered to be necessary.

During the research process, the author's skills in interviewing and networking were increased as well as her professional manners enhanced. Academic writing in terms of finding correlations in content and opposing them with alternative views to construct realistic images was also improved. All in all the process of conducting the research followed the ethical principles and was done with care and consideration.

6 Conclusions & suggestions

Chapter 6 will draw a selection of conclusions based on the results. Conclusions will combine implications both from the current situation and the future scenarios and together will also provide suggestions to consider about.

The results reveal that the most popular way to promote one's country is to distribute touristic brochures or other related material. It is a simple way, however its efficiency can be questioned during time consumers expect and ask for innovative approaches to advertising. While the environment and needs of the consumers change, deliverables of the embassies should follow.

Understanding that embassies are burdened with a myriad of other tasks as well, a particular person to take care of these innovative approaches could be assigned. Adding presence on social media and investing into online strategies that engage the public could be regarded as beneficial means. Although costs can go up, getting closer to the regular citizens could help in repositioning embassies more approachable. For one's part this would help in building stronger base for trust, and thus mistrust would not be considered as a threat in the future. Furthermore by starting to adopt technological advancements as soon as possible within reasonable limits, the power of them would be alluring instead of intimidating.

The networks that embassies have are extensive and reach far: collaborative partners are included from almost every point of the economic, political and social chain. This is clearly a positive thing, however more collaboration and engagement ought to take place with regular nationals. Also the scarcity of sponsors should be taken into consideration and start obtaining them on a regular basis. The same person in charge of the online strategies could find ways to strengthen the relationship with normal citizens as well as take lead in sponsorships. These people could be called as the visionaries or trendsetters of the embassy.

Tourism strategies are most often received from organizations responsible for tourism in particular. From an embassy point of view, not having to ponder about the strategies individually frees time to implement and execute more. It is a shame however, that in majority of the cases the tourism organization is located in a different country. Although emails are exchanged and maybe virtual meetings arranged, not meeting personally on a regular basis is a hindrance for effective and meaningful communication.

Insufficient communication together with embassies' wish to harmonize collaboration in pursuit of coherence between industries, creates a dilemma. In case streamlining communication amongst touristic players in destinations and embassies is considered to impact positively on visitor numbers and expenditure, alternative solutions should exist to improve this interaction. Perhaps appointing new professions, such as tourism attaches, is a possibility in the future.

Considering the fact that tourism industry has showcased continuous growth and resilience, it would not hurt to invest into tourism attaches and therefore deepened collaboration. It is understood that investments into tourism are done on the basis of country interests, however in case embassies would claim more ownership in tourism sector, their place in the future might not be as threatened. Obtaining more foothold within an industry of such immense influence and thus leverage their irreplaceable position, embassies could be regarded as too valuable to lose.

Being experts in communication and facilitating knowledge sharing, embassies could further exploit these skills in linkage to tourism. Work within the travel industry is also largely about communicating the right thing to the right people at a right time. Changes in the environment force both embassies as well as the travel sector to be aware, but most importantly foresee the surrounding trends. Although not a pool of travel specialists, professionals at embassies possess a wide understanding of the travel industry, which should not be overlooked. Customer service and people skills are also talents worth of emphasizing. The public might think that embassies only represent the government, but as was discovered, embassies want to secure and protect their nationals – in other words to take care of people.

As a result of the knowledge base, people skills and overall positive attitude that embassies have towards tourism business, greater alliance could be formed. Embassies could however become more confident in their expertise in tourism, and vice versa players in the tourism field could give more meaning to the government involvement.

It is important that through this thesis, the actions embassies take to contribute to tourism are made more clear and obvious. Networking, informing and staying relevant are maybe not the most visible ways to be active, and quite often the role of embassies in travel related issues become evident in emergencies. Although operating in the background, embassies' contribution should be elevated and stressed. Representing accountability and security as well as providing unbiased information indicates embassies to be a vital link in

the chain of communication. Despite the trend of reducing costs, the value generated by embassies is not comparable to money.

The future is perceived to head towards either centralizing power with the cost of reducing embassies or coming together after realizing embassies need to continue operating to get their national message through. Power as centralized would decrease the involvement of embassies within tourism, since fewer embassies would be responsible of more countries. This development concerns especially the EU-countries. On contrary, to highlight the role of embassies and to preserve them would result in heightened collaboration with tourism industry as well.

Nonetheless, whether or not embassies can form a well-functioning match with tourism industry is undoubtedly clear. Views of the professionals show that common ground and mutual gains can be found despite the obvious differences. Most importantly, the curiosity and enthusiasm towards taking this collaboration to the next level will be the principal source to initiate change from.

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