Going international – firm internationalization support and the relevance of business networks

A comparison study between Germany and Sweden

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Abstract

Background: Globalization is well known in the business world and more and more firms, especially larger ones, are expanding into other countries. Though SMEs represent the largest share with about 99% of firms contributing to the wealth of import or export reliant countries, the majority is not taking the chance to grow by going international. It seems that the internationalization barriers play a crucial role in hindering this process wherefore this thesis aims at collecting possible support providers and activities which are aiding SMEs to overcome these barriers. More specifically is this thesis mainly offering an in-depth summary on major support organizations, firms and networks in Germany and Sweden including their specific activities of assistance.

Purpose: The purpose of this master thesis is to describe and compare the internationalization support providers in Germany and Sweden including their respective offered activities.

Method: A qualitative and inductive research approach was used in this study, following a practice-oriented, descriptive case study. Data was collected through secondary data collection and the analysis was based on content analysis including coding. Quality criteria for qualitative research such as credibility, thick description and conformability were enforced.

Results: In Germany the main services offered are networking, market research and financing assistance, while mobility aid and training is rather rare. In Sweden in comparison training is highly provided as well as market research and networking assistance, whereas marketing and strategy enhancement plus mobility and implementation assistance are uncommon.

Conclusion: Since each firm has individual needs, it was refrained from a standardized valuation. Therefore, each firm is advised to use the information provided in the appendices to quickly find service providers suitable to their requirements.

Language: USA English

Keywords: SME internationalization, internationalization support, (social) networks, network theory, Germany, Sweden
List of abbreviations

BNI – Business Network International
EU – European Union
GEM – Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
IE – International entrepreneurship
SMEs – Small and medium-sized enterprises
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1 Introduction

In this chapter the background, problem discussion and purpose as well as the delimitations and relevance of this research are presented.

1.1 Background

Nowadays it is almost necessary for firms to operate internationally, which is creating a knowledge gap on how to actually pursue this strategy, especially for locally oriented SMEs. The background gives therefore a description of the key terms used in this research for a better understanding of the following chapters.

Internationalization

“In Globalization 1.0, which began around 1492, the world went from size large to size medium. In Globalization 2.0, the era that introduced us to multinational companies, it went from size medium to size small. And then around 2000 came Globalization 3.0, in which the world went from being small to tiny.” Thomas L. Friedman (in Strauss, 2012, p.191)

The past decades most countries of the world grew more and more together, also in doing business, because of a seemingly borderless world as Friedman described above (Strauss, 2012, p. 191). This phenomenon is described by globalization which is mainly possible due to major technological advances, resulting in an “interconnectedness” of economies and opportunities for trade and investment” (Ndhlovu, 2012, p. 95). These international trade opportunities are especially significant for countries focusing on goods export and import as well as exceed the common understanding of trade opportunities. As General Electric CEO Jack Welch (in Marques, et al., 2012, p.165) emphasized: “Globalization has changed us into a company that searches the world, not just to sell or to source, but to find intellectual capital – the world’s best talents and greatest ideas.”. The importance of globalization to business is therefore exceeding the sales and source act by exploring new opportunities through enhancement of the firms intellectual capital in form of people and their knowledge.
Germany

Both countries compared in this study, Germany and Sweden, can be seen as examples of countries trying to leverage the bespoken international trade opportunities by focusing on goods import and export. Germany has rising import and export rates for decades now (see figure 1.1.1).

They exported goods and services for 1 207 billion € in 2016 (export rate 38,5%) and imported 955 billion € worth (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017a). With these 250 billion € export surplus, Germany can be seen as an export focused country especially for automobiles including their parts, machinery and chemical products (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017c). Research of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb, 2017) even goes as far as to say that every 4th employee job in Germany is export dependent and therefore the whole country is as well. Besides dependency on export, Germany must also import, especially in the energy industry due to low amounts of natural resources (bpb, 2017). The main German trade partners are China (import) and the US (export) but also the EU member states. One important trade partner for Germany is Sweden, securing rank 13 in export and 17 for importing German goods (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2017b).

Besides the broad trade situation of Germany, also the direct environment of internationalization willing SMEs must be given a closer look. The entrepreneurial ecosystem of Germany was investigated by the Global Entrepreneurship Research Association (2016a) and figure 1.1.2 gives an overview of the outcomes. The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Germany is slightly above the level of the average GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) country. While a sufficient physical, commercial and legal infrastructure as well as governmental entrepreneurship programs are offered, Germany lacks most of all in entrepreneurial education in school.
Sweden

Especially, in economies with a small domestic market, international trade is imperative for a country to grow economically (Achtenhagen, 2011). Accordingly, in comparison to export strong Germany, Sweden had almost the same level of export (SEK 1 194 billion ca. 124 billion € (Statistics Sweden, 2017a; finanzen.net GmbH, 2017)) and import (SEK 1 204 billion, ca. 125 billion €) in 2016 which is mainly increasing the past decades as well (see figure 1.1.3).
The main trade partner for Sweden in 2016 is Germany with regards to export as well as import (see figures 1.1.4 and 1.1.5).

![Figure 1.1.4: The Swedish export of goods to five large countries of destination (SEK million) (Statistics Sweden, 2017b)](image)

However, while Germany takes very significant lead in terms of importing goods from Sweden, it ties first with a competitor concerning export.

![Figure 1.1.5: The Swedish import of goods from five large countries of consignment (SEK million) (Statistics Sweden, 2017c)](image)

With this increase in international trade during the past decades comes not only the moment for large established companies to boost their sales abroad further, but also the opportunity and sometimes necessity for rising entrepreneurs and SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) to trade and expand internationally.

With regards to the entrepreneurial environment available in Sweden, figure 1.1.6 displays the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem of Sweden based on the study of the Global Entrepreneurship Research Association (2016b).
According to the study, Sweden offers overall a slightly better entrepreneurial environment in almost all points in comparison to the average GEM country. In detail, Sweden offers a sufficient physical infrastructure and internal market dynamics, however entrepreneurial education is not offered extensively (Global Entrepreneurship Research Association, 2016b).

**SMEs**

SMEs represent about 99% of the total number of enterprises (Collis & Hussey, 2009) in the EU, reporting every nine out of 10 firms is an SME (European Commission, 2017d). These rather small companies have a huge impact on the competitive environment and employment practices within the EU, as argued by the European Commission (2015q), due to their stimulating entrepreneurial spirit and innovativeness. They continue, because of their great importance, one major focus point of EU policies are the creation of a fruitful environment, the previously mentioned entrepreneurial ecosystem (Global Entrepreneurship Research Association, 2016a; Global Entrepreneurship Research Association, 2016b), were SMEs can develop and flourish (European Commission, 2015q).
While talking about SMEs they need to be distinguished from other types of companies. One definition of SMEs is introduced by the European Commission (2017d) who define SMEs based on two factors. Firstly, the staff headcount and secondly the amount of turnover of balance sheet total. The European Commission (2015q) defines small companies by less than 50 employees in combination with less than 10 million € annual turnover or balance sheet total, whereas medium-sized firms are comprised of between 50 and 250 employees plus an annual turnover below 50 million € or less than 43 million € in annual balance sheet total (see figure 1.1.7) (European Commission, 2015q).

Moreover, SMEs are praised by Jean-Claude Juncker (in European Commission, 2015q), the president of the European Commission, as backbone of our economy since they are responsible for 85% of the total jobs created in the European Union (EU). This characterizes every 2 out of three jobs (European Commission, 2015q). To start or continue this positive trend of continuous foundation and development of SMEs, the EU offers two broad types of support or benefits. The first covers business-support such as research, competitiveness and innovation funding while the second offers minimization of requirements or reduced fees for EU administrative compliance (European Commission, 2017d).

SMEs come in different shapes based on their characteristics. One special group of SMEs, Start-ups, sometimes do not even have the choice to not directly position themselves in multiple countries at the point of or close to foundation (Patel, et al., 2016), due to a limited buyer’s market in the home country for example. These special

![Figure 1.1.7: SME definition threshold (European Commission, 2015q)](image)
types of SMEs are termed ‘born-globals’ (Dlugoborskyte & Petraite, 2017; Andre Machado, et al., 2016; Patel, et al., 2016; Knight, 2015) or young entrepreneurial start-ups (Patel, et al., 2016). While most companies internationalize by following a gradual internationalization process by use of traditional theories, the key distinction of born-globals is the quick internationalization process (Ibeh, 2006). Dlugoborskyte & Petraite (2017) highlight that core characteristics of these born-globals include high international activity from the point of foundation, operation from the SME basis (Patel, et al., 2016) with limited resources (Dlugoborskyte & Petraite, 2017) which they mobilize through cross-border knowledge networks (Knight, 2015). Especially these knowledge networks seem to be key in order for entrepreneurs and SME’s to reach the point of internationalization. Therefore, the internationalization process of SMEs was investigated thoroughly from the network perspective by multiple researchers (Zain & Ng, 2006). Zain & Ng (2006), for example, developed and investigated nine propositions with case studies on software companies concerning ‘the Impact of Network Relationships on Firms’ Internationalization Process’ based on previous research by various authors (Zain & Ng, 2006). As a result, seven propositions were found to be strongly supported by evidence, according to Zain & Ng (2006). The main findings were, that network relationships trigger and enhance internationalization intentions, influence the decision for a specific market, the entry-mode and pace, lead to a broader network, gain credibility as well as lowering costs and risk (Zain & Ng, 2006).

**Networks**

“If you want 1 year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people.”

- Chinese Proverb (Anon., 2011)

This old Chinese Proverb, quoted multiple times including by the former US President Obama during a state dinner with the President of the People’s Republic of China (Anon., 2011), emphasizes the importance of social connections for business success in comparison to the rather minor impacts of common business resources such as grain and trees.
Ibeh (2006) highlights exactly the development of a network as significant strand of internationalization which increases commitment and generates foreign market knowledge (Achtenhagen, 2011; Ibeh, 2006) as well as trust of all parties. According to Ibeh (2006), this is termed ‘Network Theory’. He continues, the principle behind it is an interplay between commitment and foreign market knowledge through interactions in those, resulting in a relationship of trust. Moreover, ‘Network theory’ consists of a network of relationships among players in a market such as business partners like customers, suppliers, competitors and public and private agencies as well as family and friends (Ibeh, 2006). Therefore, strategic actions are mainly taken as a response to and under consideration of the network influences (Ibeh, 2006). Johanson and Mattsson (1988 in Ibeh, 2006, p. 472) go as far as to say that “a firm’s success in entering new international markets is more dependent on its relationships with current markets, both domestic and international, than it is on the chosen market and its cultural characteristics.”.

**Business resources**

Business resources are described in this research as all resources and capabilities necessary for the internationalization process which each company possesses. This can include but is not limited to human or financial resources but also for example properties or foreign market and customer knowledge plus legal knowledge (Rigby, 2015).

1.2 Problem discussion

Multiple studies showed that the export impacts a countries economic growth (Achtenhagen, 2011). Thus, export reliant countries, such as Germany and Sweden, are trying to enhance their foreign trade business opportunities for the past decades successfully now (bpb, 2017). Viewing the big picture this can even be seen as public interest of societies to enhance their countries economy (Wymenga, et al., 2013). The globalization phenomenon is said to have brought the world closer together (Strauss, 2012), and as a result all types of firms, multinationals as well as SMEs, gained the opportunity to expand their business and broaden their customer base, because of the rather easy move across international borders (Albaum, et al., 2016). To reach this step of final international market participation, firms certainly are advised to conduct a variety of time consuming research (Musteen, et al., 2013) about the entry market,
including business customs and cultural differences as well as the industry and business structure. Accordingly, this considered easy move appears not to be such a simple process anymore, acknowledging it is comprised of multiple pitfalls and barriers of internationalization which both deeply restrict the success of the expansion abroad, stated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2009). These internationalization barriers mainly consist of tasks and activities necessary to be processed before the actual implementation. The studies from OECD (2009) and BUSINESSEUROPE (2011) found barriers to export and investments as well as knowledge generation in relation to foreign markets and regulations plus assistance to facilitate cooperations and networks and obtain financial means. A specific example, mentioned by the OECD (2009), is the conduction of market research necessary to gain in depth market knowledge in order to establish a strategic plan on how to enter the market, position the firm and choose of target customers prior to the actual internationalization implementation. This process is time consuming and often not all necessary information is directly and easily available, wherefore market research is rated as the third most barrier for companies to participate in the international market (OECD, 2009).

Since the majority of firms, about 99%, in a country are SMEs (Collis & Hussey, 2009), they represent the largest group to take on these internationalization opportunities provided by the countries governments (Ndhlovu, 2012; Strauss, 2012). Accordingly, they could be the drivers to restore European economic growth (Wymenga, et al., 2013). Despite the globalization phenomenon suggesting easier access to foreign markets, currently only a relatively small amount of SMEs dares to conduct business abroad (ECSIP Consortium, 2013) due to internationalization barriers (Achtenhagen, 2011; BUSINESSEUROPE, 2011; OECD, 2009) or the perceived lack of capabilities (Achtenhagen, 2011). BUSINESSEUROPE (2011) argues SMEs must be able to take the step of internationalization themselves, however support measures could encourage and help facilitate a positive decision. Achtenhagen (2011), adds that SMEs without an international vision of their firm are reluctant to do business abroad. Therefore, she continues, these companies must internally prepare themselves to internationalize by developing relevant resources and competences to overcome internationalization barriers. A problem might be occurring however for companies which either have a perceived lack of or cannot build strong competences (Achtenhagen, 2011). They could
rather take on the assistance of service providers as suggested by BUSINESSEUROPE (2011). In a study from BUSINESSEUROPE (2011), internationalization willing SMEs themselves were expressing which activities the EU could help them during the process, with the result to firstly map out existing support services including their support actions such as network facilitation and information generation. Accordingly, it seems necessary to assist SMEs in overcoming the previously mentioned internationalization barriers to increase their business activities in the international market (Achtenhagen, 2011). Viewing this issue from the other side, it is however not ensured that internationalization willing companies know what assistance they require or whether they only see the problem at hand assuming a possible relief through a specific activity even though it is only a theoretical guess.

Internationalization service providers on EU-level, in member-state governments as well as business level might be able to act as stepping stones to foreign networks, reducing some barriers and making market access easier (BUSINESSEUROPE, 2011). There was already research conducted on which firms and organizations are supporting SME internationalization in some European and non-European countries including their activities (Wymenga, et al., 2013), but since the study was not comprehensive and mainly investigated governmental organizations, Wymenga, et al. (2013) recommended to conduct further research on other service providers. Moreover, governmental based aid is likely to change within the next years making frequent updates necessary (Wymenga, et al., 2013). Achtenhagen (2011) highlights, that networking enables SMEs to overcome most internationalization barriers and therefore act as catalysts for international expansion (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Besides this quality networking is also seen as trigger to enhance internationalization intentions (Zain & Ng, 2006). Therefore, the relevant internationalization promoting networks and private firms should be further investigated and it is imperative that internationalization willing SMEs are able to find these services providers (BUSINESSEUROPE, 2011). Also the question remains which specific services are offered per service provider and whether their offering assists to reduce or overcome barriers of internationalization.

Based on the call for further research regarding the mapping of internationalization providers by Wymenga, et al. (2013), BUSINESSEUROPE (2011) and Achtenhagen (2011), this research aims at closing the gap using Germany and Sweden as examples.
Therefore, the following research question originated: *What are the current business networks in Germany and Sweden supporting SME’s during the internationalization process and what kind of support are they offering to whom?*

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this master thesis is to describe and compare the internationalization support providers in Germany and Sweden including their respective offered activities.

1.4 Originality/ Value/ Relevance

The internationalization process of SMEs was thoroughly investigated in prevailing literature from multiple viewpoints. Especially the strategic decisions SMEs have to face during the internationalization planning and execution, such as choosing a suitable entry mode, were focused on. The available support structures however were only partially investigated (Achtenhagen, 2011) where the attention seems to be directed on governmental agencies or private firms (Wymenga, et al., 2013). Moreover, the compilation of specific assistance offered per firm or organizations as well as the matching with barriers was disregarded in previous research as well. Since the belief to increase future business success by building and maintaining strong network ties is still prevalent, the networks available including their respective aiding activities to increase the success of the internationalization process should be investigated as well.

1.5 Outline for thesis

This master thesis is divided into five sections. The introduction is followed by a short presentation of the problem. Section two offers an analysis of the methodology of the research, while in section three a presentation of the empirical data can be found. This display is ensued by a an insight into the available relevant theoretical background and an analysis of the findings. The final section offers conclusions and recommendations.
2 Methodology

This chapter outlines the framework of this research by firstly explaining the underlying research paradigm, followed by the research approach and design as well as the data collection and analysis methods. Each sub-chapter starts with a short theory discussion including a more elaborate part on the final choice, concluding with an explanation why this specific approach was decided on in this research.

2.1 Research paradigm

The “research paradigm is a philosophical framework that guides how scientific research should be conducted.” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 55). It consists firstly of the two main paradigms highlighted by Collis & Hussey (2009) – positivism and interpretivism, or as Burrell and Morgan (1979 in Bryman & Bell, 2011) coined them with regards to business research – objectivism and subjectivism. Positivism or objectivism investigates phenomenon from an objective (Collis & Hussey, 2009) external viewpoint, where the goal of theory development must be pursued through hypothesis testing in a value free environment (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Interpretivists/subjectivists in contrast find that firms are a social construct which can only be understood from those parties directly involved wherefore the researcher must be immersed in this specific culture as well, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979 in Bryman & Bell, 2011). A key concept in this internationalization research are business networks focusing on the link between social entities and actors. These available network constellations are supposedly different and subjective for each actor. Hence, this would create distinct realities as well as research facts for each actor, so accordingly the interpretivism paradigm seems to be the most suitable to be utilized in this research even without direct involvement of the researcher. Moreover, the interpretivist epistemological assumption is used to investigate the real facts in both specific cases on Germany and Sweden. The interpretivist methodological assumption in this study examines smaller samples by use of multiple research methods aiming at discovering patterns (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

2.2 Research strategy and logic

Research strategies are techniques to collect the empirical data. Bryman & Bell (2011) argue that there are three research strategies – qualitative, quantitative and the third
approach, mixed methods, offers a combination of the two. Collis & Hussey (2009) distinguish qualitative from quantitative research by describing the type of data to be collected. Whilst quantitative data is in numerical form, qualitative data is displayed in nominal form such as words and images (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this research a qualitative strategy is used wherefore the data will be mainly presented in nominal form. The aim of this research is to describe the internationalization support networks and their activities with regards to Germany and Sweden, calling for a very detailed collection of data. Accordingly, in qualitative research a case on one can be investigated, without having to resort to large samples like in quantitative analysis (Dul & Hak, 2008). Moreover, the quality and depth of the collected data is emphasized in this research, producing multiple levels of meaning without the intention to quantify data as common in quantitative research (Collis & Hussey, 2009). There is no necessity for this research to be quantifiable since exactly these possible differences are points of interest in this study. Collis & Hussey (2009) define the two main research logics – inductive and deductive – depending on their onset and result. While a hypothesis deduced from theory is tested on an example in the deductive logic (Bryman & Bell, 2011), “inductive research is a study in which theory is developed from the observation of empirical reality” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 8). This research follows the Bryman & Bell’s (2011) suggestion, that the inductive research approach is usually used in qualitative research. The inductive research logic is utilized in this research attempting to induce a general presumption from the specific cases of Germany and Sweden. This research therefore onsets with an empirical investigation of the two case studies, resulting into an examination and development of prevalent literature.

2.3 Research design

The research design frames the guidelines for the study in order to answer the research question in accordance with the purpose. It consists of and guides the data collection and analysis processes which includes the decision on information sources as well as how and what data will be collected (Bryman & Bell, 2011). While Bryman and Bell (2011) distinguish between five designs in business research – experimental, cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study and comparative – Collis & Hussey (2009) use the differentiation of – exploratory, descriptive, casual and predictive. It should be noted that the commonness of research designs varies greatly depending on the research
strategy. As previously defined this study will pursue a qualitative research strategy offering the longitudinal, case study, comparative, exploratory, descriptive, casual and predictive designs to choose from (Bryman & Bell, 2011). By refraining from hypothesis-testing or – building due to unavailability and inapplicability, both the explanatory and predictive research designs are excluded. The longitudinal design was omitted due to the limited time and financial resources as well as because exploring changes are not a focus of this research. The case study design is widely used in qualitative business research since it intensively examines the complexity of a specific case. A case can be either an organization, location, person or event (Bryman & Bell, 2011) but also groups, processes and other phenomena (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Accordingly, this research utilizes a practice-oriented multiple case study approach (Collis & Hussey, 2009) in combination with the descriptive design, were a case is constructed based on the country of research – Germany and Sweden – which is mainly used to compare multiple in depth case studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Also, an interpretivist case study does not need to define research questions or lay out the limits of the research first (Collis & Hussey, 2009), wherefore the latter is disregarded.

When using case studies as research method the research design predefines the objective of the study and can be either theory- or practice-oriented. While the former aims at advancing theory development through generalizability, the latter focuses on knowledge development of specific parties (Dul & Hak, 2008). An argument for the choice of a practice-oriented case study is that the general objective of the research is to contribute to the knowledge of practitioners - a person or group of people (Dul & Hak, 2008) – in this case represented by the internationalization willing SMEs seeking assistance. Practice orientation is based on the collection and evaluation of observable facts regarding practices (Dul & Hak, 2008). In this thesis the practice of internationalization support is observed with regard to Germany and Sweden. This was done by finding the main service providers via ‘Google search’ per country, followed by a detailed investigation of their offering including the activities, restrictions and limitations for the customer as well as accessibility and testimonials of previous customers. This data was mainly retrieved from governmental or company websites to ensure its correctness. The theory-oriented research design is therefore disregarded, since the generalizability is not aimed at in this master thesis.
Collis & Hussey (2009) present the descriptive design as a closer examination of the issue in comparison to the exploratory design. They continue, it is pursuing the determination and description of characteristics of a specific problem. Therefore, research questions commonly start with ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘why’, ‘who’ and ‘when’ (Collis & Hussey, 2009), which is also valid for this research. Another argument in favor of the descriptive design is the attempt to describe the internationalization support available to SMEs in a very detailed and structured way (Collis & Hussey, 2009) which is easy to understand for beneficiaries, the managers of SMEs. Therefore, the sub-chapters in the empirical data section follow the same order for both countries and the reader is guided by short outlines in the beginning of each chapter.

The process to conduct a case study usually follows five distinct steps (Collis & Hussey, 2009), which this research used as guide. Firstly, the cases of Germany and Sweden were selected without the constraint of being representative since no statistical generalization is attempted. Afterwards a preliminary investigation into the research context was conducted, followed by the process of data collection (see 2.4). Subsequently, the data was analyzed (see 2.5) either by within-case analysis investigating patterns through total familiarity with the data as well as cross-case analysis with the goal to explore “similarities and differences to help you identify common patterns.” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 83). Accordingly, a link with a comparative case study seems appropriate. Finally, the thesis was written under consideration of the appropriate presentation and demonstration of the large amount of data gathered. Moreover, graphs were used for explanations as Collis & Hussey (2009) advise for an interpretivist study. A limitation of case studies however is the always changing context (Collis & Hussey, 2009), wherefore this study can only offer a screenshot of the support in mid 2017.

2.4 Data collection

In order to collect data for the research there are two sources which must be considered – primary and secondary data (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). While primary data is “generated from an original source, such as your own experiments, questionnaire survey, interviews or focus groups, whereas secondary data that have been collected from an existing source, such as publications, databases and internal record, and may be available in hard copy form or on the internet.” (Collis & Hussey,
Depending on the research paradigm used, the data collection method needs to be chosen accordingly. Contextualization was the first step in this interpretivistic study since background knowledge must be established prior to the main research (Collis & Hussey, 2009). This data gathering was conducted by keyword search using the online search database ‘One Search’ of Linnaeus University, ‘Google Scholar’, Emerald and Scholarvvox as well as online and printed publications available at the university library in Hannover, Germany. The main keywords to find source relevant to the research were ‘SME internationalization’, ‘internationalization assistance’ and ‘social network’. The list was expanded by use of references found in these sources plus an alteration in search terms.

A collection of secondary data can however not only used for contextualization but also as a data collection tool (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Especially documents such as personal, public and organizational files can be used as well as visual and virtual documents and mass media outlets (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This master thesis will apply secondary data sources. Even though it is mainly used to establish a theoretical background yet concerning this phenomenon it is necessary to conduct further research to find suitable internationalization service providers and activities. Sources in this process are public data such as official reports, legislation and statistics on relevant firms in both countries, organizational documents tailored to each organization or firm as well as virtual data comprising all material to be found on the internet via ‘Google search’. These source are used, since they seem beneficial in establishing specific in-depth information on the support activities of the firms and organizations exemplified in the case studies. With regards to virtual data special attention is paid to the credibility of the internet data found, as urged by Bryman and Bell (2011), by mainly obtaining information from governmental or company websites.

2.5 Data analysis method

Following the research data collection phase, the information must be analyzed. This can be done for both primary and secondary data whereas secondary analysis only gained popularity the past years, Bryman and Bell (2011) argue. The gathered qualitative data can be analyzed in multiple ways, however a distinction can be made between the structured processes containing coding, summarizing and pattern identification as well as intuitive approaches focusing on capturing the core statements.
through repetitive reading and vigilance (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Neither approach is said to be best thus “the value of the analysis will depend on the quality of your interpretation.” (Collis & Hussey, 2009, p. 171). As previously established the data in this research is gathered through secondary research. There are three prevalent techniques in research to analyze documents: qualitative content analysis, semiotics and hermeneutics, explain Bryman and Bell (2011). The qualitative content analysis seems most beneficial for this study, since it is aiming at discovering and extracting themes out of the data through a coding approach. The guidelines for this filtering process however are usually implicit state Bryman and Bell (2011). Accordingly, in this thesis the themes were all possible internationalization barriers, limitations for the customers and accessibility, plus possible further services the providers offered. Moreover, data collection, coding and analysis were done simultaneously in a systematic way (Bryman & Bell, 2011), giving the researcher the possibility to fully embrace the freedom of interpretivism. The coding was done by collecting key words based on frequently found results for each theme. These were analyzed by counting the number of occurrences with regards to the type of company or organization for each case study separately, followed by comparing both analysis and examining them in contrast based on each sub-chapter.

Semiotics was excluded because its aim does not match the one of the study. Hermeneutics could also be a valid approach when the underlying social forces of the business networks thought to be explored. This however seems more essential with regards to the analysis of primary data due to the direct contact with participants.

2.6 Quality of the research

In qualitative research quality measurements are not very significant, wherefore the necessity of application is in discussion, highlight Bryman and Bell (2011). In response, specific criteria for evaluation of qualitative research are developed (Bryman & Bell, 2011) – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, explain Lincoln and Guba (1985 cited in Collis & Hussey, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Collis and Hussey (2009) define credibility as the accuracy of identifying and describing the research subject which can be enhanced by total immersion of the researcher in the study, persistent observation and use of multiple data collection methods. To establish credibility in this study, the researcher immersed herself as much as possible in the subject matter, especially through online research, under consideration of ‘the canon of
good practice’ (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since transferability focuses on the
generalizability of the findings to similar studies (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Bryman &
Bell, 2011) which is irrelevant in this research, the researcher has the ambition to follow
thick description (Geertz, 1973a cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011), describing and
presenting all parts of the research in as much detail as possible to the best of her
abilities. Since dependability ensures a systematic and adequate documentation (Collis &
Hussey, 2009) which includes all data from every step of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011),
the verifying process of the data for others is very time-consuming and is
therefore not seen as a valuable tool for validating the research. Furthermore, the
researcher attempted to the best of her ability to act in good faith (Bryman & Bell,
2011) throughout the research and based the empirical data chapter on the gathered data
(Collis & Hussey, 2009) in order to ensure confirmability. It must be noted however
that testimonials are taken from both independent sources as well as the websites of the
service providers itself.

2.7 Ethics of the research

The clarification of ethical behaviour during the research is necessary since multiple
people have differing perceptions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Moreover, “The AoM Code
of Ethical Conduct states that it is the responsibility of the researcher to assess
carefully the possibility of harm to research participants, and, to the extent that it can
be, the possibility of harm should be minimized.” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 128).
Nevertheless, researchers should also be aware that non-participants can also be harmed
in process of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Bryman & Bell (2011) indicate that
other ethical and legal considerations must be undertaken. They argue, copyright must
be obeyed wherefore nothing may be copied without authorization and proper citation
(Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher hereby declares that she obeyed the regulations
stated in the intellectual property right in the whole master thesis.

2.8 Summary of methods applied in this research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research approach</th>
<th>Inductive, qualitative</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research design</td>
<td>Practice-oriented, descriptive, comparative case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection method</td>
<td>Secondary: contextualization, public, organizational, virtual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>Content analysis, coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality criteria</td>
<td>Credibility, thick description, conformability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Empirical data

The results of primary and secondary research are displayed in the following. The chapter is divided by country of research – Germany and Sweden – accordingly. Moreover, this chapter offers insights into the types of service providers including their target group, support activities, specialties offered, contact details and customer reviews. Throughout the following chapters a distinction between support provider types of businesses is made visible through color-coding. Networks are blue, private companies are red and governmental organizations can be recognized on the orange color.

3.1 Germany

This sub-chapter gives an overview of internationalization support providers in Germany. In Germany the firm internationalization can be assisted by multiple service providers. These providers can be private companies, governmental organizations as well as business networks. A full overview of these including contact information can be found in appendix A. Since the traditional service providers are governmental organizations and private companies, the results of these will be presented first. Afterwards the results on business networks in relation with company internationalization are elaborated on. In appendix B, a table with the complete information concerning testimonials of clients/ customers/ members can be found. Not to all firms, organizations and networks testimonials or reviews could be found, wherfore only information on the Enterprise Europe Network, FBN, Go International, atlas relocation, ZENIT GmbH and WTSH is presented.

3.1.1 Private companies

Starting with the internationalization support offered by private firms, there are multiple financial institutions such as AKA Bank, Investitionsbank Berlin (Investitionsbank Berlin, 2017), KfW Ipex Bank (KfW, 2016) and NRW Bank (NRW.Bank, 2017). While the later three are offering financing solutions to cover the costs of the firms internationalization process, the AKA Bank on the other hand specializes in financing solutions for international buyers of German firms (aka, 2017). To limit the risk of international trade for German exporting firms the banks also provide the opportunity to make use of the Hermes Credit Cover, securing firms against financial and political
risks when conducting business abroad. This credit cover can however not only be enforced through the banks but also through the German federal ministry of Economy and Energy (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie) offers an export credit cover (“Hermesdeckung” (BMWI, 2017a)). The German Development Association (DEG) is part of the KfW bank, also offering financing solutions with focus on firms wanting to internationalize into developing countries (DEG, 2016).

The German Chamber of Commerce Abroad, situated in Berlin, offers market entry support, legal and taxation advice, marketing aid and assistance in international accounting. Moreover, help to learn foreign languages is provides as well as mobility support e.g. visa applications. Furthermore, the German Chamber of Commerce Abroad also offers frequent member network events. They are not only operating in Germany but in 90 countries of the world with about 45.000 clients (AHK, 2017). 2connectBusiness, Go International and the IHK Exportakademie are also chambers of commerce with specializations. 2connectBusiness has about 2.200 clients. While it is specialized in the internationalization of firms between Germany and the Netherlands with legal and tax assistance as well as policy and market information (2connectBusiness, 2017), financial support of up to 40.000€ per SME can be obtained through Go International for the internationalization process (Außenwirtschaftsportal Bayern, no date). Go international received five testimonials from clients between 2005 and 2016. All of them were highly satisfied with their assistance in financing the business internationalization. The IHK Exportakademie offers seminars on the legalities and taxation regarding exporting as well as market information on specific countries. Moreover, firms can get financing advice for internationalization plus the opportunity to take part networking within organized business travel (IHK-Exportakademie GmbH, 2017).

The ZENIT GmbH is the center of innovation and technology in North Rhine-Westphalia. Their internationalization support includes a customized strategic planning linked to aid throughout the implementation process of foreign trade activities, the provision of necessary information such as market research and legal advice plus the help to secure the required funding (ZENIT GmbH, no date).
Germany Trade and Invest is present in 45 countries and available in two German cities. The total number of clients is 73,000, while the majority (55,000) of them are German firms. It offers besides a market analysis and marketing support, assistance in investor relations activities (Germany Trade & Invest, 2017c). IXPOS belongs to Germany Trade & Invest but is focusing on supporting especially a firms market entry by providing necessary market knowledge, assistance with the market entry decision as well as provision of a network of contacts. Moreover, IXPOS has a member community offering the opportunity to receive information and hear experiences from third parties as well. It has a client base of about 17,500 companies (IXPOS, 2017).

Consulting firms such as PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC), also offer support to internationalizing companies in form of strategically planning and later implementing it. This service includes tasks such as market research, support in finding funding, tax and legal guidance as well as aid with accounting and auditing procedures (PwC, 2017). In this case PwC is taken as an example for all major business consulting and accounting firms since the variety of activities only slightly differs between these types of firms. Besides large business consulting firms there are also smaller firms such as Rödl & Partner. They offer the same services as PwC in 49 countries plus provide international expatriate consulting, export and outsourcing support as well as real estate management services, just to name a few (Rödl & Partner GmbH, 2017a). All of these companies have branches in various countries making them accessible worldwide.

Another form of internationalization service is offered by the Atlas relocation GmbH which supports firms in making the relocation of their employees abroad, especially in groups, as smooth and easy as possible. Moreover, their service also includes intercultural training and language classes (atlas relocation GmbH, 2016a). Five clients of Atlas relocation testified on the successful and highly satisfactory assistance of the firm during their relocation in a foreign country. Another special internationalization service is trade fair assistance abroad which the Auslands- und Messe Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft e.V. (foreign trade fair program) offers (Auma, 2017).

3.1.2 Governmental organizations

There are multiple types of governmental organizations offering internationalization support in Germany.
Another form of governmental aid can be obtained through Bureaus for international business relations which are available in many federal states by respective organizations and are specialized in everything regarding the internationalization of companies. Examples of these international bureaus are Baden-Württemberg International, Bayern International, NRW International, Wirtschaftsförderung Sachsen and Wirtschaftsförderung Brandenburg. Baden-Württemberg International offers the possibility to build international corporations and networking as well as support in financing and marketing (bw-i, 2017). Bayern International in comparison focuses more on the assistance throughout the whole export process of Bavarian SMEs from the planning phase till the finalized implementation. (Bayern International, 2017). The third bureau, NRW International, provides support with industry and market knowledge, in international trade fair participation and delegation trips for networking reasons to the country the firm wants to internationalize in. Their service is however limited to SMEs from North Rhine-Westphalia only (NRW.International GmbH, 2017).

Wirtschaftsförderung Sachsen (Silicon Saxony) also mainly supports SMEs but its service is also available to all other company types and it is not limited to firms from Saxony. Their service includes strategic consulting on the international firm development including suggesting possible contacts and marketing support. Moreover, Silicon Saxony has a member network facilitating knowledge exchange and network enhancement. The client base of Silicon Saxony currently contains 324 German firms (Silicon Saxony e.V., 2017a). The Wirtschaftsförderung Brandenburg (WFBB) offers the same services as in Saxony plus gives advice on financial funding opportunities and assists with innovation advice. Additionally, they also have a network cluster available. Also, Wirtschaftsförderung Brandenburg is a German governmental institution which is explicitly offering their services for free, individual for each company and with absolute confidentiality (Wirtschaftsförderung Land Brandenburg GmbH, 2017). These characteristics are common for German governmental institutions.

The Bundesamt für Wirtschaft und Ausfuhrkontrolle is a federal agency providing market information, marketing advice, consultation on export strategies including possible risks as well as assistance in networking abroad (Bundesamt für Wirtschaft und Ausfuhrkontrolle, 2017). Export Innovative for Energie has the same offer although it does not provide the networking assistance (BMWI, 2017b). The promotion of economy
and technology in Schleswig-Holstein (WTSH) has a similar offer as the previously introduced organizations which includes networking and innovation assistance (WTSH, no date d). Three clients of WTSH (Wirtschaftsförderung und Technologietransfer Schleswig-Holstein) made testimonials. Their concerns were market entry assistance for China, Brazil and a joint venture. All three were highly satisfied with the service.

Saaris offers internationalization support to firms in Saarland in form of strategic business development consulting, assistance at trade fairs and events as well as networking opportunities (saaris, 2017b). Moreover, Saaris also offers two possibilities of financial funding assistance during a firms internationalization. On opportunity is to apply for the funding program ‘Go International’, which is especially useful for firms approaching the international market for the first time. The program starts with coaching and planning of the internationalization, costing the company 250€, followed by the implementation of the strategy including the possibility of 50% cost reimbursement. The second option is ‘inKontakt’ focusing on the contact match-making with suitable partners abroad. This process of market analysis, contact search and travel expenses to e.g. trade fairs can be reimbursed for up to 3000€ (saaris, 2017a). With regards to the German agricultural industry, the German federal ministry for nutrition and agriculture (Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, short BMELV) provides internationalization support including marketing and promotion, market research travel as well as the support in matchmaking with possible profitable contacts. Moreover, it also offers an export funding program similar to ‘Go International’ (BMELV, 2017).

3.1.3 Business networks

The Enterprise Europe Network was launched by the European Commission in 2008 and is partly financed through COSME a program of the European Union (EU). The service is available for free to companies from member states of or neighboring states to the EU, however organizations from countries outside of the EU may also apply for membership with the barrier to pay a membership fee themselves. It is focusing on enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs. This network brings together knowledge from different areas of business such as the technology industry, innovation and support organizations, research institutions, regional organization as well as governmental organizations such as chambers of commerce (European Commission, 2017a).
Accordingly, a central point on their website is the international partner search (European Commission, 2017c). It has over 600 (partly governmental) institutions worldwide within its total network (saaris, 2017b). Moreover, it is operating in 60 countries and makes use of the knowledge of 3000 experts. About 13,000 business partner matchings outside of the EU are done through this network every year and according to them they have a customer satisfaction rate of 85% (European Commission, 2017b). The Enterprise Europe Network links the resources of various governmental institutions, private firms as well as other networks together within Europe. Companies can make use of these resources and networking opportunities by contacting their local Enterprise Europe Network branch which will advise on further steps and for example puts up an online search request in their extensive database. When the employees see that some requests match, the contact details of both firms are exchanged. Examples of institutions partnering with the Enterprise Europe Network in Germany are Saaris, Wirtschaftsförderung und Technologietransfer Schleswig-Holstein GmbH, ZENIT GmbH and IHK. Regarding the Enterprise Europe Network 19 testimonials of previous customers between 2013 and 2016 were fund. While eleven clients were only making use of this network, the other eight also mentioned the cooperation with other firms and organizations in combination with the Enterprise Europe Network. Examples of these firms and organizations are the ZENIT GmbH and the IHK. Customer requests concerned funding, partnerships, market entry assistance, training, supplier, foreign representatives and distributor search. All 19 previous clients were highly satisfied of the service of all firms and organizations engaged.

**BNI** is a trademark and stands for **Business Network International** operating worldwide and therefore as well in Germany. BNI says about itself to be the world’s leading referral organization. Its network currently has over 211,000 members worldwide separated into 7,800 chapters. Moreover, it increased its members from 190,000 in 2015 to 211,000 in 2016 (BNI Global, LLC, 2017c). BNI measures its success based on the generated revenue for the companies of its members which was US$ 11.2 billion only in 2016 (BNI Global, LLC, 2017b). Their mission is to “help members increase their business through a structured, positive and professional referral marketing program that enables them to develop meaningful, long-term relationships with quality business professionals.” (BNI Global, LLC, 2017b). BNI aims at business success enhancement of their members through knowledge sharing and
network building by connecting them in groups, or how they call it – chapters. These chapters have weekly, organized meetings with mandatory attendance (BNI Global, LLC, 2017b). Only three times a year a member is allowed to miss a meeting, however there is the possibility to send a representative instead. Through this rather strict policy the basis for strong, long-lasting network relationships are built. In 2011 BNI also launched an online networking platform, connecting members with each other as well as with non-members with the searched knowledge or resources. This is especially helpful due to their policy of only having one expert of each profession in each chapter. Through the networking platform, deeper and more thorough insights into subject matters can be provided. In addition to the global network chapters, a charitable foundation, the BNI-Misner Charitable Foundation was established in 1998 with the goal to give back to local communities (BNI Global, LLC, 2017c). This is done for example through a cooperation of local businesses and schools to enhance learning and unprecedented flow of resources for both parties (BNI Global, LLC, 2017d).

FBN is the Family Business Network with the mindset “By Families – For Families” (FBN Deutschland, 2017c). FBN Deutschland is the German chapter of this internationally operating network. It has a total of around 8.000 members in 60 countries around the world, of which 600 members are located in Germany. Their service includes support concerning international activities, knowledge exchange, participation at congresses and event, as well as promotion and development of the next generations through activities, seminars and internship opportunities in other family companies. Additionally, FBN also makes two Family Company visits per year using those firms as case studies, resulting in an in-depth consulting session (FBN Deutschland, 2017a). To become a member, the company must be owned by a family member in at least 2nd generation and make at least 50 million € revenue yearly. Moreover, yearly member fees of 200-1000€ must be paid depending on the age and number of the prospective member (FBN Deutschland, 2017b).

The BPW Germany (Business and Profession Women) represents females in business and is active in 100 countries around the world, also with about 40 clubs in Germany. The total amount of members is 30.000 while about 1.800 are from Germany. The aim of BPW international is to support all women in business with the development of their skills and enhancement of potential. At BPW Germany this is also a central aspect,
however political (influence, lobbying, insurance for women) and gender quality issues (equal pay, women in management, work-life balance) are much more in focus. Therefore, members get the opportunity to take part in international lobbying, mentoring sessions and seminars. Moreover, BPW has a partnership with the international trade center (ITC), resulting in international trade assistance for its members (BPW Germany, 2017).

The **German American Business Association (GABA)** tries to enhance the knowledge exchange, networking abilities and finally trades between German and American businesses. Their members come from all different kinds of backgrounds spanning from entrepreneurs, marketing firms, attorneys and bankers to high-tech engineers (GABA - German American Business Association, 2017b). They offer the opportunity to connect with other members through regular networking mixers both in California (US) as well as in the two German branches in Berlin and Munich. Moreover, meetings with experts in their fields can be booked for which a fee of US$375/h is charged (GABA - German American Business Association, 2017a). There were nine testimonials of members of the German American Business Association (GABA) found. Members were looking to promote their companies, services and products, find partners, employees, customers, conference speakers and broaden their network. All members were highly satisfied with the service.

The **German Australian Business Council** was established 20 years ago to enhance the long term business relationships between Germany and Australia. They see themselves as catalysts for business opportunities and relationships by offering high quality, industry specific networking events. Besides their Australian branches they have three German offices situated in Berlin, Frankfort/ Main and Munich (German Australian Business Council e.V., 2016a). This network is also linked to the Australian Business in Europe (ABIE) network where other European countries such as Belgium, Finland, France, Holland, Denmark, Greece and the UK take part as well (German Australian Business Council e.V., 2016c). Everyone and every business with an interest in Australia is welcome to join the network for a yearly fee of 75€ (single person) or 500€ which is valid for five staff members to participate in events (German Australian Business Council e.V., 2016b).
The **Sino-German Business Network** tries to bridge the geographical, timely and cultural differences between China and Germany through network relationships in economy, politics and society. As a result it supports German companies wanting to enter the Chinese market and vice versa. Through their own online networking platform they offer the opportunity for its members to connect. Their service also includes business matchmaking and recommendations for experts in their respective fields and countries as well as marketing support (Sino-German Business Network, no date).

The **Business Network International** (BNI) also belongs in this category, however it is used as an in-depth case study and the results of the research are therefore displayed later on.

### 3.2 Sweden

The findings of the research on internationalization support providers are described in the following for the country Sweden. This sub-chapter has divided the results of the study by private companies, governmental organizations and business networks. Further information including contact details is given for each support provider in a quick overview displayed in form of a table in appendix D. In appendix E, a table with the complete information concerning testimonials of clients/ customers/ members can be found. Not to all previously introduced firms, organizations and networks testimonials could be found, wherefore only information on the Enterprise Europe Network, BEN, Connect Sverige and Företagsakademin is presented.

#### 3.2.1 Private companies

The Swedish counterpart to the German DEG is **Swedfund**. Both are part of the European EDFI network aiming at developing new economies in evolving countries, supporting the increase in sustainable companies as well as to reduce poverty and the overall living standards. In order to achieve these goals the participating financial institutions offer financial support to profitable private companies (Swedfund, a). The financial support consists of the partial financing of the internationalization process through equity and loans, or the assistance to find partnerships in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Easter Europe. Moreover, Swedfund provides a special kind of support for Swedish SMEs through Swedpartnership were the collaboration with firms in developing countries is central (Swedfund, b). Besides the participation in the EDFI
network, Swedfund has multiple strategic partners in Sweden: Business Sweden, Exportkreditnämnden, SEK, ALMI Företagspartner, Tillväxtverket (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth) and Tillväxtverket/ Swedish Cleantech (Swedfund, a).

The **Swedish Export Credit Corporation (SEK)** offers different financial assistances to export willing Swedish companies. Their expertise lies especially in international project financing and is gained through a network of collaborators such as ALMI and Business Sweden (SEK, 2017a) as well as partners like the Swedish Export Credit Guarantee Board (EKN), Swedfund, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and the Swedish Cleantech (SEK, 2017b).

The **Eurochambres** network connects most of the Chambers of Commerce in Europe with the goal to increase cooperation between state and private companies, enhance business conditions, simplify these within markets relevant for European business and aid entrepreneurs (Stockholm Chamber of Commerce, 2017). Additionally, foreign business travel is organized as networking events (Sweden's Chambers of Commerce, 2017b) and a network of business contacts is available. In comparison to the rather broad aim of Eurochambres, the Swedish Chambers of Commerce have more specific goals such as the promotion of infrastructure, energy policies, talent supply and the increase in service from municipalities to businesses. Worldwide the network consists of 2,000 Chambers of Commerce with 20 million member businesses of which 93% are SMEs (Eurochambres, no date), while in Sweden the following 11 Chambers of Commerce are set up within the network **Jonkoping Chamber of Commerce**, the **Chamber of Commerce of Mälardalen**, **Chamber of Commerce of Central Sweden, Mid Sweden Chamber of Commerce**, the **Chamber of Commerce in Norrbotten**, the **Chamber of Commerce of East Sweden, Stockholm Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden**, the **Värmeland Chamber of Commerce**, the **Vesterbotten Chamber of Commerce** and **West Sweden Chamber of Commerce** (Sweden's Chambers of Commerce, 2017a). Even though all of these Chambers are independent and self-governing (Handelskammaren Mittsverige, 2015b), they have very similar offerings for their members (The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden, 2009c). Besides the already mentioned support of the Eurochambres member associations the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce offers six
times a year information seminars on how to go about on the internationalization process of firms as well as can their experts assist with customs and trade regulations (Stockholm Chamber of Commerce, 2017). Moreover, there are other points of distinction. The West Sweden Chamber of Commerce has 2800 members and has five branches in west Sweden (Västsvenska Handelskammaren, no date), the Chamber of Commerce of Central Sweden has about 450 members and two branches (Mellansvenska Handelskammaren, no date), the Mid Sweden Chamber of Commerce has about 300 members and three branches (Handelskammaren Mittsverige, 2015a), the Chamber of Commerce of East Sweden has 850 members and three locations (OHK, no date), the Värmeland Chamber of Commerce has about 1100 members (Handelskammaren Värmland, no date) the Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce has about 250 members at three locations (Västerbottens Handelskammaren, no date), while the Jonkoping Chamber of Commerce has 13 branches (Handelskammaren Jönköpings län, no date). The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden, for example, has branches in six cities in Sweden: Malmö, Halmstad, Helsingborg, Kalmar, Karlskrona and Växjö (Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the south of Sweden, 2009). A membership can be obtained by all companies from the south of Sweden and a membership is valid for all employees of a company (The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden, 2009). Moreover, also over 100 networking events per year are organized with more than 4000 participants. Besides these events there are special interest group networks such as the Asian Business Club and Trade Network with Swedish as foreign language. However, there is one network also available to English speakers (The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden, 2009a).

The **Chamber Trade Sweden (CTS)** aims at enhancing the development of the private sector in Sweden with local business networks and governmental organizations as well as international business especially with developing countries. With its 11 regional Swedish Chambers of Commerce having 11.000 member companies, it is one of the largest business network in Sweden. Moreover, SMEs make up the majority of CTS members (CTS, 2016c). To internationalization willing companies they provide support in market research, contacts to local companies abroad as well as specialized consultants, governmental organizations and other networks (CTS, 2016b) on their platform ‘Sweden on the go’ (CTS, 2016d; Chamber Trade Sweden, 2016). Through a
network of 10 development partners in Europe they aim at increasing trade with developing countries Germany GIZ & Import promotion desk of SEQUA (CTS, 2016a).

The *Swedish Export Credits Guarantee Board (ekn)* is commissioned by the Swedish government to assist and increase internationalizations and export of Swedish firms. Therefore, a risk insurance is offered by ekn to companies and banks to secure the case of non-payment and as a result make transactions more secure (The Swedish Export Credits Guarantee Board, no date).

*Innovatum* has a broad offering to drive business forward. Business owners can conduct research and development projects with other firms or entrepreneurs matched through Innovatum’s incubator and network knowledge exchange with experienced business owners (Innovatum, no date).

*NyföretagarCentrum* focuses on the increase of entrepreneurship. Therefore, local entrepreneurs act as volunteers, which must undergo a certification process beforehand, to help others with the establishment or development of their businesses for free (NyföretagarCentrum, 2016).

### 3.2.2 Governmental organizations

The *Swedish Trade and Invest Council* belongs both to the government as well as the Swedish industry. The aim is to enhance the international development and growth of Swedish firms as well as to increase the investment opportunities in the Swedish market for foreign firms. The council is not only operating in Sweden but has offices in 50 countries around the world (Business Sweden, no date c). Swedish companies planning to internationalize can receive free information and advice but may also make use of their consulting service for the planning and implementation phase, sometimes with a consultant taking on the role as representative for the firm (Business Sweden, no date b). In cases this can continue afterwards as well through marketing and sales assistance. Moreover, educational seminars and their own network including foreign contacts can be consulted (Business Sweden, no date f). Since Sweden wants to increase the number of exporting companies, especially with regards to SMEs, the Swedish Trade and Invest Council has a special focus on these prospects (Business Sweden, no date e). On the other hand consists their offer for foreign companies coming to Sweden consists of
market and industry research, aid in opportunity generation, partner search and matchmaking. Moreover, they provide access to their network as well as support to set up the business including legal and taxation advice (Business Sweden, no date a). The Swedish Trade and Invest Council noticed that each of their regions has special characteristics, attracting specific kinds of investors. Therefore, one task of their employees is to match the clients demand or idea to the most suitable region in Sweden (Business Sweden, no date d).

The National Board of Trade Sweden (Kommerskollegium) provides international trade analysis and background material to the Swedish government. Moreover, it passes on its expertise to Swedish companies wanting to trade internationally as well as foreign firms wanting to enter the Swedish market (National Board of Trade Sweden, no date a). The expertise specifically includes market knowledge, financial support and complete assistance in relation to international trade (National Board of Trade Sweden, b).

Almi is a Swedish governmental institution supporting internationalization willing Swedish firms to enter foreign markets. The organization is made up of 40 national branches and provides financial assistance through loans or venture capital as well as consults in the internationalization, growth or innovation phase of a business, matches firms with mentors and offers seminars to clients (Mårdbrant, no date).

Företagsakademin describes itself as business academy for company growth, especially in the technology industry. It has 3,800 members and is aiming at enhancing small firm (0-49 employees) business development and growth. Financing comes from the European Union (Företagsakademin FA AB, no date). The offer is comprised of classes on internalization regarding global market and export as well as leadership, marketing, sales, communication, project management and environment. Each course is over a period of one up to nine days (Företagsakademin FA AB, no date). One client of Företagsakademin testified on his great satisfaction with the offered business classes.

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth is an information and statistics providing governmental agency. Nevertheless, it also acts as facilitator and puts firms in contact with other, more suitable organizations fitting the company’s
request and need such as the Enterprise Europe Network, eufonder.se and interreg (tillväxtverket, no date). While on eufonder.se the possibilities of EU funding with regards to Sweden are displayed for companies, organizations and governments (eufonder.se, 2017b), interreg describes the cooperation of all European countries in business (eufonder.se, 2017a).

3.2.3 Business networks

The Swedish branch of the previously introduced Enterprise Europe Network, Enterprise Europe Network Sweden, aids SMEs in their internationalization endeavors. Therefore, the offer consists of matchmaking with business partners (Enterprise Europe Network, 2017b), innovation and financial assistance or information assistance on concerns of the business owners (Enterprise Europe Network, 2017a). Both is offered for free. The Swedish branch of the network is mainly financed by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and the program COSME of the European Commission. The network is made up of 13 Swedish businesses and research organizations such as multiple local Almi institutions, Business Region Göteborg AB, Foretagarna SME AB, Invest in Skåne AB, LTU Business AB, RISE, Stiftelsen Tekikdalen, Swerea IVF and Uminova Innovation AB (Enterprise Europe Network, 2017c). Regarding the Enterprise Europe Network seven testimonials of previous customers in 2015 and 2016 could be obtained. All members only mentioned this network and no cooperating outside organizations. Customer requests concerned partnerships, internationalization expert guidance and the distributor search. All seven previous clients were highly satisfied with the service of the Enterprise Europe Network.

BNI Sweden – Business Network International is the Swedish chapter of the international BNI and the Swedish counterpart to the previously introduced German chapter. Therefore, the same guidelines and aims apply.

The business network FBN Sweden is the Swedish branch of the family business network introduced previously. In Sweden the network combined their own resources with those of their partners, the auditing and consulting firm PwC, the law firm Vinge as well as the Danske Bank (FBN Sweden, 2017d). Accordingly, their members have the opportunity to have a direct contact to experts in their fields. Members can become all entrepreneurs and business owners wanting to pass on their company to the next
generation in his or her family. There are two different kinds of memberships offered. Firstly, the individual membership but also a company subscription for the whole firm is available, which includes specific educational activities (FBN Sweden, 2017b). FBN Sweden also offers the opportunity for young sometimes prospective business owners between the age of 18 and 40 years, to become a member of their Next Gen network. Members have the opportunity to attend meeting, seminars, dinners, conferences as well as the same international internship program organized by the German FBN branch (FBN Sweden, 2017c). Moreover, FBN Sweden has its own FBN Academy where tailor-made courses on family business management are offered by partnering international universities to its members (FBN Sweden, 2017a).

**BEN or Business Event Network** is Sweden’s most personalized business network. It wants to attract entrepreneurs from Sweden who are keen on developing profitable long-term relationships through networking. The network consists of multiple regional networking groups (BEN, no date a). Each group again is made up of maximum 50 firms exclusively representing their industry in the network group. Yet, it is possible to visit other groups as well (BEN, no date b). The groups meet four times a year during organized events, however members are also welcome to join other topic related events as well (BEN, no date c). There were three testimonials of members of the Business Event Network (BEN). Members were looking to find new business contacts as well as prospective customers. All members were highly satisfied with the service.

**Connect Sverige** is based on the Connect networking concept established at the University of California in San Diego. It aims at supporting entrepreneurs and firms in their development and growth by offering assistance in skill development, with finance and networking (Connect Sverige, no date d). It is possible to take part in or even set up events after becoming a connect member (Connect Sverige, no date a). Since Connect Sverige is part of networks such as the Swedish Venture Capital Association and the European as well as the Nordic Business Angel Network, their financial assistance consists of matchmaking activities between possible investors and businesses (Connect Sverige, no date b). Moreover, Connect Sverige has partnerships with multiple firms and organizations such as Handelsbanken, ALMI, PwC, the European Union, Swedbank, eon, SEB, Nordea and KPMG (Connect Sverige, no date c). Three clients of
Connect Sverige also made testimonials and all of their aims were to broaden their business networks. All three were highly satisfied with the service.

The *Swedish Turkish Business Network* aims at strengthening social, economic and industrial relations between the two countries by increasing trade through investment and capital flows (SWETURK, a). Furthermore, it offers its members the possibility to enhance their network during conferences as well as business travel trips to Sweden, respectively Turkey (SWETURK, b).

The *Chamber Business Networks (CBN)* offers moderated half-a-day round table discussions of specified topics as well as individual discussions about the problems of one specific company in a small team of experts. Only business leaders or high-end managers are allowed to become a member. Yet if the leader is not able to attend the meeting or another manager from the firm is more suitable, this person may act as one-time replacement (CBN, no date).

When wanting to conduct business between Sweden and India the *Sweden-India Business Council (SIBC)* is a suitable network to join (SIBC, 2016a). The list of new members on their website exceeds 100 companies (SIBC, 2016b) and they are a collaborator with Business Sweden. SIBC has different offerings for small and medium/large companies. While everyone can participate in cross cultural seminars and networking events, small firms are offered report based seminars and roundtable discussions. For medium and large companies executive luncheons, an executive roundtable discussing strategy and future technologies as well as strategic sourcing are arranged (SIBC, 2016).

*BPW Sweden* – Business and Professional women is the Swedish chapter of the international BPW and the Swedish counterpart to the previously introduced German chapter and applies the same guidelines and aims. The network is present in 12 Swedish cities (BWP Sweden, no date).
4 Theory on SME internationalization and networks

Regarding the internationalization process of SMEs with focus on support networks, some but not an extensive amount of literature can be found. Therefore this chapter cannot be seen as a strict theoretical frame but rather as an introduction to multiple aspects which need to be kept in mind when investigating the support of business networks for internationalization willing SMEs. As a result, the two main concepts mentioned in the research question, internationalization of SMEs and business networks, are investigated more costly.

4.1 Internationalization

Since the twentieth century there is a powerful growth of internationalization of firms (Ibeh, 2006). Researchers Welch and Luostarinen (1988) and Bell et al., (2004) defined the term internationalization as a “process of increasing involvement in international operations” (Ibeh, 2006, p. 467) based on opportunities (Musteen, et al., 2013). Internationalization was mainly seen as an influence on and a necessity of large corporations, wherefore the prevailing theories [product life-cycle, market imperfection, internationalization/ transaction cost and the eclectic paradigm (Ibeh, 2006)] concentrated on multinational enterprises (MNEs) and rather disregarded small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) (Ibeh, 2006; Cerrato, et al., 2016). Still, Zain & Ng (2006) see the issue of internationalization as an important part of SMEs as well.

To determine the prospective future of a business, recognized consulting agencies such as Bain & Company (Rigby, 2015) advise to systematically and strategically plan ahead in order to best achieve the company goals and the overall goal to create value (Grant, 2010). This strategic planning can be used either as a tool to position the firm (product market-, geographical-, vertical scope, competitive advantage) or to give direction for the further intended development (mission, vision, performance goals, guidelines, growth modes) (Grant, 2010). For SMEs there are three theoretical approaches to internationalization: incremental internationalization, network theory and resource-based perspectives (Ibeh, 2006). In addition, the use of widely discussed models for internationalization such as the Uppsala internationalization process model, applying an incremental internationalization process, (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009) is suggested. Besides the previously mentioned gradual internationalization approaches, another form of SMEs grew especially in the past decades due to a more global competitive
environment – the born globals (Andre Machado, et al., 2016). Through their rapid internationalization after initiation the main source of revenues receive born globals in international business. This rapid development contradicts the previously mentioned gradual internationalization approach mentioned in prevailing theories. Since this research is investigating the gradual internationalization of firms, born globals are therefore excluded.

In comparison to the gradual approach stated in academic literature, in practice internationalization is done via market entry modes such as exporting/ importing, licensing, franchising, joint ventures, strategic alliances as well as direct investments, according to Twarowska & Kakol (2013). In comparison, Ibeh (2006) differentiates between direct and indirect importing and adds management and turn-key contracts as well as contract manufacturing/international sub-contracting, industrial cooperation agreements, mergers and acquisitions plus completely owned subsidiaries. It is suggested that strategies are selected based on the company’s resources (De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002). International joint ventures are increasingly used as internationalization mode of choice by SMEs (Lu & Beamish, 2006)

4.1.1 Drivers and benefits

According to Zhand, et al. (2016), the internationalization drivers of SMEs gained increasing interest in the past years. Globalization is driving the opportunities available in foreign markets especially through technical advancement (Silva, et al., 2014). The main reasons for internationalization of a firm are increasing growth, the wish for expansion (Twarowska & Kakol, 2013) or to create social network ties (OECD, 2009). The rapid growth of firm-level internationalization is based on changes with regards to technology and (inter-) organizational resources in their external environments as well as to reduce costs (Silva, et al., 2014; OECD, 2009; Ibeh, 2006) and risks through diversification of markets (Silva, et al., 2014; Ibeh, 2006). There is also the motivation of expected higher returns when entering new markets (Silva, et al., 2014). This is a result of the attempt to achieve the specific company goals and the overall goal to create value for the customer (Grant, 2010). Hardships with sales in the home market are also driving internationalization (Silva, et al., 2014; OECD, 2009; De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002). As a result, studies on SME characteristics with regards to internationalization found innovativeness, proactivity and risk-taking to have a positive influence on the behaviour (Zhang, et al., 2016). Benefits such as efficiency, procedure and
communication optimization, resolution of cultural differences as well as opportunity generation for training can especially be recognized during firm collaborations (Silva, et al., 2014).

Germany and Sweden seem to follow the same drivers for SMEs to internationalize such as to attain a better market position, the generation of knowledge and search for relationships (OECD, 2009). In Sweden however other stimulus are also predominant motivations like the aspects of company growth, usage of previous international experience, unique products and limitations in the home market (OECD, 2009).

There are stimuli or ‘attention evoking’ factors, according to Ibeh (2006), which might be necessary to successfully initiate and develop internationalization of a company. These factors can be differentiated into four categories: internal-proactive (unique internal competence), internal-reactive (internal pressure), external-proactive (market opportunities) and external-reactive (external environmental changes) (Ibeh, 2006).

4.1.2 Barriers

In contrast to the drivers of internationalization there are also barriers aggravating it. A report of the OECD (2009) ranked the top 10 internationalization barriers for SMEs (see table 4.1.2) including but not limited to a lack of financial capital and opportunity, limited information, hardship of customer contact abroad.

Table 4.1.2: Internationalization barriers of SMEs (OECD, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Description of barrier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shortage of working capital to finance exports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Identifying foreign business opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Limited information to locate/analyse markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inability to contact potential overseas customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Obtaining reliable foreign representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lack of managerial time to deal with internationalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Inadequate quantity of and/or untrained personnel for internationalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Difficulty in matching competitors’ prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of home government assistance/incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Excessive transportation costs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regards to Sweden, a study covered the shortage of working capital to finance exports in the country, however there are no studies on Germany so far (OECD, 2009).
Moreover, in SME internationalization social norms (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015), a change-resistant culture (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015; Silva, et al., 2014; De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002), centralized behaviour or country-specific factors can impede the process (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015; De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002). Moreover, missing resources (Silva, et al., 2014), especially financially (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015), and capabilities (De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002), differences in communication (Silva, et al., 2014), or a lack of reputation and recognition can also hinder the product introduction abroad (Zhang, et al., 2016). Governmental restrictions (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015), diseconomies of scale (De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002) as well as a limit to the specialization of skills also disclose a barrier for SMEs on the international market (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015; De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002). Finally, the competitiveness of the environment further represents a significant internationalization barrier (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015). Twarowska and Kakol (2013) highlight that possible occurring obstacles can be prevented by two factors. First, both parties should receive the same level of advantage from the deal, plus they must communicate effectively with strong consideration of possible cultural differences (Twarowska & Kakol, 2013). With regards to cultural differences, research was already conducted from various angles such as the differentiation between types (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Hofstede Center, no date; Lewis, 2006), characteristics (Lewis, 2006), practices (Hofstede Center, no date; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), influences (Trompenaars & Hampden Turner, 2009) and challenges (Trompenaars & Hampden Turner, 2009) of culture. Specifically, the barriers in SME internationalization are classified into four categories by Leonidou (1995 cited in Ibeh, 2006) include internal-domestic, internal-foreign, external-domestic and external-foreign problems.

4.1.3 Support services

By engaging the service of internationalization support facilitators SMEs can optimize opportunities regarding country-specific factors and increase their competences (De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002). BUSINESSEUROPE (2011) conducted a study finding out that SMEs see public internationalization support as essential in barrier removal, information provision, cooperation facilitation, finance insurance and with the identification of reliable support services. Moreover, De Chiara and Minguzzi (2002) advise internationalization willing SMEs to rather book a full package including guidance regarding strategic internationalization
planning as well. Valikangas and Lehtinen (1994 cited in De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002) developed three distinction criteria of support activity packages. General services are standardized by nature, specialized services entail unique adjustments and customized services comprise a tailor made package for the company. Table 4.1.3 below shows a classification of necessary business operations categorized by means of the support packages.

Table 4.1.3: Classification of Services (De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standardized Services</th>
<th>Customized Services</th>
<th>Services Whose Effect is not Always Uniformly Definable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Market analysis</td>
<td>Logistics, distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, credit on advantageous terms</td>
<td>Identification and selection of customers</td>
<td>Sales intermediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management, credit solvency</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Packaging innovation and countertrade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of these business operations need to be fully or partially replicated for other markets, wherefore the establishment and use of electronic collaboration tools is advised (Silva, et al., 2014). They are especially helpful in resource, process and communication optimization, resulting in an advancement of financial, marketing and operational performance and an enhancement of productivity, profitability and market share. During collaborations, other firms can aid the process of objective and strategy development (Silva, et al., 2014).

4.1.4 Support provider

There are multiple ways for internationalization willing SMEs to receive help in the process. Firstly, there are public support organizations such as chambers of commerce and sectorial associations, as well as private firms to choose from (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015; OECD, 2009). Moreover a differentiation can be made between EU level support, member-state government support and aid on business level. While the EU offers assistance through the European Commission and European External Action Service, the country governments offer help through Trade support and promotion agencies as well as ministries focusing on internationalization, and on business level European business organization, bilateral chambers, national or regional industry an employers’ federations plus EU-member states sector federations supply aids
A study of the OECD (2009) showed that the German Federal Government, Swedish Export Credit Corporation as well as the European Investment Fund help to eliminate financial barriers. To overcome informational and contact barriers ‘Global active initiative’ offers assistance in Germany, especially with the entrance of high-risk markets. With regards to Sweden no research has been done so far on this topic. Moreover, the European Commission’s Joint European Resources for Micro and Medium Enterprises (JEREMIE) is also an example of a support provider for internationalization willing SMEs (OECD, 2009).

Another group of internationalization support providers are networks (Musteen, et al., 2013) which are elaborated on in the following chapter. As introduced previously, other companies can also take on the role of a support provider through strategic alliances such as international joint ventures (Lu & Beamish, 2006). These collaborations are especially fruitful when the processes and goal of the participants are similar (Silva, et al., 2014). Through electronic collaboration tools support can also be facilitated internationally (Silva, et al., 2014). Fayos Gardo, et al. (2015) advise support providers to use a marketing approach to reach customers based on investigating their needs and therefore offering aid or solutions. They continue, during a consultancy project a comprehensive understanding of the clients company including customer profile, needs and application and a tailored plan is expected of the supporters. While an advantage of using the help of support organizations is the stimulation of company growth, policies seem to incorporate a hindering effect. Since these regulations are constantly changing due to politics regarding globalization, it is crucial for supporters to be highly adaptable in generating useful and functional internationalization support plans (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015).

4.1.5 Needs of SMEs

The previously introduced strategic planning process (Rigby, 2015) includes steps for a successful business development. He explains, while some steps are solely related to the business organization, others examine the needs of that firm for a successful internationalization process. This includes new market and customer segment exploration, compilation of knowledge regarding regulations and policies, resource allocation and establishing a room for quick maneuvers when the external environment is changing (Rigby, 2015). Musteen, et al. (2013) on the other hand see opportunity recognition and exploitation as key aspects to successful internationalization. This
phenomenon of identifying and examining foreign market opportunities of firms is called international entrepreneurship (IE) (Zhang, et al., 2016; Musteen, et al., 2013). Moreover, when companies acquire adequate foreign market knowledge, internationalization hardships are reduced (Musteen, et al., 2013).

Existing literature investigated which support services customers wanted and or needed. There is a necessity for companies to overcome organizational changes and prevent risks when internationalizing (Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015). SMEs operating in more than four countries preferred the specialized packages (customized, tailor-made) and especially the services aiding opportunity generation: innovation, countertrade, promotion, sales, intermediation, customer selection and market analysis (De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002). In comparison are companies with a smaller operating market more interested in standardized packages managing daily activities such as credit management, accounting and logistics (De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002). There is also a distinction made between firms competing for price or quality. While the former requests standardized services to increase efficiency or resources, the latter aims at setting themselves apart from their competitors (De Chiara & Minguzzi, 2002).

4.2 Business networks

In the previous chapter the support providers for the internationalization process of SMEs were highlighted and a connection is drawn with regards to business networks in the following. This research takes the following definition of business networks as a basis:

“A business network is a form of inter-firm cooperation that allows companies, located also in different regions or countries, to collaborate together on a basis of common development objectives expressed in a cooperation agreement/contract. The companies decide to join their strengths, share information and create synergies to become more innovative and competitive on the domestic and international markets, while keeping their autonomy, not creating a separate legal entity. This cooperation model is suitable for any kind of business activity and sector.” (Dr. Spanikova, et al., 2014, p. 7)
There is ample evidence that networks can be seen as a significant source of support in the context of internationalization since they can provide valuable resources to companies wanting to expand abroad (Musteen, et al., 2013). According to Zhang, et al. (2016), internationalization willing SMEs can gain insights into product demands of the market they want to sell in as well draw from the internationalization experience of others. Moreover, the factor of benefiting from an advantage regarding internationalization is closely linked to resource exchanges in social networks, since the availability of necessary resources is imperative (Zhang, et al., 2016). Also, established networks can lead to trusting customer relationships abroad by exploiting partnerships with reputable companies (Zhang, et al., 2016). Moreover, Zhang, et al. (2016) emphasizes, resource sharing within a network can enhance the development of all parties. Resources include “knowledge, technologies, inputs, and develop products with greater responsiveness to international demand” (Zhang, et al., 2016, p. 524). To present and visualize these interconnections, network mapping is advised by Conway & Steward (1998).

4.2.1 Benefits and support activities

The development of a network is a significant strand of internationalization which increases commitment and trust of all parties (Zhang, et al., 2016) plus generates adequate foreign market knowledge (Zhang, et al., 2016; Musteen, et al., 2013). Moreover, with help of networks new opportunities could be identified (Musteen, et al., 2013) to increase competitiveness by for example focusing on export development (Ibeh, 2006). Another advantage is the assistance of others, sometimes through joint ventures (Lu & Beamish, 2006), to bypass the burdens of foreignness, newness and smallness (Musteen, et al., 2013). Ibeh (2006) differentiates between direct and indirect assistance where the first consists of “export service programmes (e.g. seminars for potential exporters, export consultancy and export financing) and [the second one of] market development programmes (e.g. dissemination of sales leads to local firms, participation in trade shows and preparation of market analyses)” (Ibeh, 2006, p. 479) as categorized by Crick and Czinkota (1995 cited in Ibeh, 2006). Indirect assistance on the other hand rather focuses on influencing changes in company structure and processes (Ibeh, 2006). Examples for such support activities are market research, financial assistance, management advisory service and helping to enhance the business environment through networking and sub-contracting (Ibeh, 2006).
4.2.2 Barriers

Besides the positive internationalization enhancing activities, there are barriers on the opposite site. Musteen, et al. (2013) introduced the three liabilities of foreigners: foreignness, newness and smallness. Lu and Beamish (2006) describe foreignness as the shortage of local familiarity and knowledge. Newness represents the challenges of establishing a firm in a new market such as financing, staffing, network building, customer generation and legitimacy establishment, whereas smallness relates to the company size as well as the restricted availability of resources (Lu & Beamish, 2006). Research showed that SMEs are often not aware of the support they could receive (Matos Torres, et al., 2016; Fayos Gardo, et al., 2015; BUSINESSEUROPE, 2011; Ibeh, 2006) or they simply do not make use of it possibly since the overall satisfaction with the support is adverse (Ibeh, 2006). This reflects the toughness to assist and improve the internationalization of SMEs (Ibeh, 2006). Of course when interacting with people, cultural differences could enhance or hinder the overall degree of understanding and trust between both parties. Therefore, based on Hofstede’s’ cultural dimension research, people from countries with similar levels of all dimensions are more likely to have an increased sympathy and trustworthiness for each other, in comparison to countries with largely differing levels of the dimensions (Szymura-Tyc & Kucia, 2016; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Styles and Ambler (1994 in Ibeh, 2006) seem to agree by elaborating, that an export willing company will take the formation of new knowledge yielding relationships as first step towards internationalization. As a result, strategic actions of the firm are influenced by the networks they have either positively with expansion or negatively with restrictions (Ibeh, 2006).

4.2.3 Types

Business networks can be classified in business associations, were the parties have the choice to work together, in comparison to company aggregations were becoming a member implies the willingness to collaborate (Dr. Spanikova, et al., 2014). Dr. Spanikova et al. (2014) give NIRO Network Industry Ruhr/Ost as an example of a leading business network for engineering in Germany. However, according to Zain and Ng (2006), supporting business networks come in two shapes. On the one hand governmental funded organizations and on the other private firms charging for their assistance. An example for private organizations are e-commerce corporations, which
consist of various interdependent companies with certain specialized or unique skills, according to Anchrol & Kotler (1999) and Singh & Kundu (2002 cited in Zain & Ng, 2006). Ibeh (2006) emphasizes the different levels of involvement between governmental and private support organizations depending on the country. As an example, he mentions that in Germany the private sector is much more involved in the offer of supporting activities. For research and analysis tasks there are policies and support institutions in place in most OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries (Ibeh, 2006). Moreover, the EU program for Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs developed the European cluster collaboration platform where partner searches and the participation in network clusters is possible (Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, 2016). While the types of business networks differ, so do the objectives, argue Dr. Spanikova, et al. (2014). A distinction can be made between strategic and operational objectives. Strategic objectives target long-term activities such as innovation, internationalization or foreign matchmaking. In contrast, operational objectives include the assistance with organizational tasks such as legal and financial aid, project collaborations, joint purchasing, optimization of HR-marketing and intellectual property protection (Dr. Spanikova, et al., 2014).

4.2.4 Composition

A network is made of multiple dimensions including but not limited to size (number of actors), diversity (types of actors), density or ‘connectedness’, openness (strong vs. weak ties/ interconnectedness of actors) and stability (change of a network pattern in frequency and magnitude over time (Tichy, et al., 1979). While the architecture (size) defines the range of the network and diversity increases the breadth of knowledge. Nature (density) is a benefit on the one hand due to strong trust-based relationships as well as when actors in the network involve their connections outside of it (Musteen, et al., 2013). All seem to have a great impact on sharing knowledge (Musteen, et al., 2013). Networks are a constellation of relationships among players in a market such as business partners, like customers, suppliers, competitors and public and private agencies but also family and friends (Musteen, et al., 2013; Ibeh, 2006). As a result, strategic actions are mainly taken as a response to and under consideration of the network influences (Musteen, et al., 2013; Ibeh, 2006). Johanson and Mattsson (1988 cited in Ibeh, 2006) go as far as to say that current national and international relationships of the
firm are much more important for the internationalization process than networks in the go-to country including cultural aspects. Another finding in general research was the changing importance of actors in an entrepreneurial network. While family and friends are mainly important in the starting phase, formal business relationships are very much thought after in later stages (Birley & Cromie, 1988). This highlights the importance and necessity of a well-established network, especially with regards to advancing a business, both nationally and internationally. Ibeh (2006) adds, that in service, high-technology and comprehensive information sectors internationalization can also be driven by customers, describes Hellman (1996 cited in Ibeh, 2006). Though despite possible positive influences networks could have, Birley et al. warn, that it takes a considerable amount of work to set up and maintain networks (Birley et al., 1991 cited in Conway & Jones, 2006).
5 Analysis

In this chapter, the internationalization support is firstly analyzed according to the country, respectively Germany or Sweden. Afterwards, the findings are looked upon under consideration of a comparison.

5.1 Germany

In Germany internationalization willing firms can receive support in various ways through multiple companies. In the following the distinction between types of support providers is analyzed including their target customers and offerings, followed by a comparison with the actual internationalization support demand of the firms.

5.1.1 Internationalization support providers

In Germany internationalization support is provided by governmental institutions, private companies as well as networks, both international and local. Further information including contact details is given for each support provider in a quick overview displayed in form of a table in appendix A. The following table 5.1.1 gives an overview of the internationalization support providers in Germany divided according to business types.

Table 5.1.1: SME internationalization providers available in Germany (own elaboration)
In Germany 34 providers are actively involved in supporting firms to internationalize. The majority of internationalization support providers belongs to the group of private companies with 47% (16 out of 34). About 32% (11) are governmental institutions and 21% networks (7). While some private firms charge for their services, most of the Chambers of Commerce also offer free advice and only charge for in-depth consulting services. Moreover, most networks stipulate a monthly or yearly fee. Therefore, the information and assistance provided for free in Germany covers about half of the help available. Besides the cost aspect, some providers limit their services to companies operating in specific industries such as agriculture, technology or the renewable energy sectors, whereas some only support females or family businesses for example. The majority (26 providers) of support providers however provides their services specifically to all SMEs (11) or even all types of businesses (15).

5.1.2 Internationalization support offer

Each of these institutions offers a specific set of support activities to its customers. The support activities offered per service provider in Germany are visualized in appendix C. On average provides each governmental institutions four assistance services to overcome internationalization barriers which is the same for networks, whereas private companies offer on average three different services. There is no difference in the number of different provided service per company type since all three offer one till seven services. It can be noticed however that there are differences in the amounts between each company or institution. The EU Enterprise Europe Network takes the lead in the network category with seven offered activities, followed by the German Australian Business Council with six. Yet, it must be taken into account that the latter is only specialized on internationalization between Germany and Australia, whereas the former covers especially European countries but also the whole world. With regards to private companies the German Chamber of Commerce Abroad offers the most support activities (7) and is mainly supporting SMEs, followed by ZENIT GmbH (6) and PwC as well as Rödl & Partner (both 5). Regarding the support accessible through the government Bayern International comes in first (7), WT.SH offers five services and multiple others provide four distinct aids. Here as well should be noted that Bayern International only provides assistance to companies from Bavaria and WT.SH is mainly serving SMEs.
The specific support activities offered per company type in Germany are visualized in table 5.1.2 below.

Table 5.1.2: SME internationalization support activities offered per company type in Germany (own elaboration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support offer total</th>
<th>Networks</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Governmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market research</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal advice</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Network establishing assistance is the most offered support activity in Germany by 22 of all 34 providers recorded in this study. Market research and financial assistance come in second with 18 providers both and marketing is third with 14. Networks seem to provide mainly networking assistance, followed by opportunity generation. Private firms in contrast focus on financial aid and market research, whereas networking, market research and marketing are also the key services of governmental institutions. While, market research is mainly offered by private (8) and governmental firms (8), six out of 10 providers for legal advice are private. Regarding financing the fast majority (12 out of 18) consists of private firms, whereas governmental organizations take the lead for marketing. Network generation is supported by all business types, however is mainly enforced through governmental organizations and networks. While business opportunity generation is channeled through networks, innovation as well as strategy improvement are mainly supported by the government. Mobility assistance is only offered by three providers and training by 4, making it rather harder to access. Regarding implementation assistance private firms take the lead (4 out of 7).
5.1.3 Members, clients and bases of operation

Some of the firms, institutions or networks introduced in this chapter do not solely provide information on other countries and help firms to go abroad, but also operate themselves internationally. In the following table 5.1.3, the total amount of members or clients per service provider is displayed. Only service providers where this information is publically available are included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Members (total)</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>German members</th>
<th>Cities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eurochambres</td>
<td>20 million</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNI</td>
<td>211.000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany Trade and Invest</td>
<td>73.000</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55.000</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Chamber of Commerce Abroad</td>
<td>45.000</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPW</td>
<td>30.000</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.800</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iXPOS</td>
<td>17.500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Europe Network</td>
<td>13.000</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBN</td>
<td>8.000</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2connect Business</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silicon Saxony</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rödl &amp; Partner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that Germany Trade and Invest have the most users 972.000 in 2015 (73.000 registered) (Germany Trade & Invest, 2017a). They also stated on their website that their number of customers increased in 2015 by almost 40% where the large majority is German. They also showed a statistic that 40% of their clients consist of private, small enterprises with less than 50 employees. Followed by businesses of 250 employees with 35%. iXPOS is a sub-organization of Germany Trade and Invest in cooperation with the Export Initiative for “Renewable Energies” with another 17.500 members (Germany Trade & Invest, 2017a).

On the other hand are the members of 2connect Business with 2.200 people (2connectBusiness, 2017) and therefore it represents the smallest group of members. In between the two extremes comes the German Chamber of Commerce Abroad with 45.000 users (Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag, 2017b), BWP with 30.000 (BPW Germany, 2017), iXPOS with 17.500 , the Enterprise Europe Network with 13.000 (WTSH, no date a) and FBN with 8.000 members worldwide (FBN Deutschland, 2017c).
Moreover, it can be seen in table 5.1.3 that BWP is operating in 100 countries and 40 German cities (BPW Germany, 2017), while the Germany Chamber of Commerce Abroad is active in 90 (Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag, 2017a), the Enterprise Europe Network (WTSH, no date a) and the FBN in 60 (FBN Deutschland, 2017c), Germany Trade and Invest in 45 and two German cities (Germany Trade & Invest, 2017b), Rödl & Partner in 49 (Rödl & Partner GmbH, 2017b) and 2connect Business in 2 countries (2connectBusiness, 2017).

With focus on the number of German members or customers, 55,000 Germans or German companies made use of the services from Germany Trade and Invest, 1,800 of BWP (BPW Germany, 2017), 600 of FBN (FBN Deutschland, 2017c) and Silicon Saxony consist of 324 people (Silicon Saxony e.V., 2017b).

5.2 Sweden

This sub-chapter analyzing the internationalization support in Sweden follows the same structure as the previous one regarding Germany.

5.2.1 Internationalization support providers

In Sweden the support providers can also be divided in groups of governmental organizations, private companies and networks. The following table 5.2.1 gives an overview of the internationalization support providers available in Sweden categorized according to their business types.

Table 5.2.1: SME internationalization support available in Sweden (own elaboration)
In Sweden 32 internationalization service providers were found. The majority of them belongs to the group of private companies with 59 (%) or 19 firms. About 25% (8) are networks, followed by five governmental institutions (16%). Since all governmental services are free of charge and most services of the Chambers of commerce as well, about 50% of internationalization assistance is for free in Sweden.

5.2.2 Internationalization support offer

Each of these institutions offers a specific set of support activities to its customers. The support activities offered per service provider in Sweden are visualized in appendix F. On average provides each governmental institutions four services, whereas private companies and networks offer on average three different services. Moreover, there is a difference in the number of different provided service per company type. A single network and governmental institution in Sweden can provide between one and eight support services, while private companies only offer up to three activities. Additionally, it can be noticed that there are differences in the amounts of activities between each company or institution. BNI Sverige takes the lead in the network category with eight offered activities, followed by the Enterprise Europe Network Sweden with four. With regards to private companies mainly the Chambers of Commerce offer the most support activities in their category (3). Regarding the support accessible through the government the National Board of Trade comes in first (8), followed by Business Sweden (6) and Almi offers five services. Here should be noted that while Business Sweden is mainly focused on the internationalization of SMEs in 50 countries, the other two offer assistance to all firms.

The specific support activities offered per company type in Sweden are visualized in table 5.2.2 below.
Market research is the most offered support activity in Sweden by 20 of all 32 providers recorded in this study. Trainings, especially regarding language and intercultural behavior, come in second (18), closely followed by network establishment (17). Moreover, it can be seen that networks primarily provide the networking opportunity (8). Private firms focus on market research (14) and training offerings (13), while governmental institutions also aid in market research plus legal advice and financial assistance. Market research is mainly offered by private firms (14 out of 20), government takes the lead regarding legal advice and networks in financial support. Marketing is only supported by BNI Sverige and the National Board of Trade. Regarding networking assistance and opportunity generation both networks and private firms play a key part. Innovation support is offered mainly by private firms (10 out of 13). Strategy assistance is only available at BNI Sverige and the National Board of Trade, while mobility aid is exclusively offered at the National Board of Trade and Business Sweden. Training is mainly available at private firms (13 out of 18), whereas implementation support is only offered at the National Board of Trade and the Swedish Export Credit Guarantee Board.

Support providers with the aim of networking mainly organize mingling events or use the matchmaking strategy, however CBN uses a contradictory approach. It describes themselves as the network for Swedish business leaders, creating an environment of exclusivity. Their approach to meetings is also different from other networks since they
offer half-a-day round table conversations on specific topics in comparison to the mingling events and seminars from other networks.

5.2.3 Members, clients and bases of operation

Some of the firms, institutions or networks introduced in this chapter do not solely provide information on other countries and help firms to go aboard, but also to operate internationally themselves. In the following table 5.2.3, the total amount of members or clients per service provider is displayed. Only service providers were this information is publically available are included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Members (total)</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Swedish members</th>
<th>Cities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eurochambres</td>
<td>20 million</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNI</td>
<td>211,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Företagsakademin</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sweden Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Värmland Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce of East Sweden</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce of Central Sweden</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Sweden Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIBC</td>
<td>&gt;100</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Trade Sweden</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Sweden - The Swedish Trade &amp; Invest Council</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonkoping Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPW Sweden</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect Sverige</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest member base not surprisingly has Eurochambres since it combines all European Chambers of Commerce. Its total is about 20 million members. BNI International has 211,000 members, the Chamber Trade Sweden has about 11,000 Swedish members and Företagsakademin come in fourth with 3,800. With regards to the countries a network is available, Chamber Trade Sweden and Business Sweden can both be contacted for advice in 50 countries, followed by Eurochambres in 45. Information on the others is either not available or they only offer their service in one or
two countries. In Sweden Almi is most accessible in 40 cities, whereas the others can be consulted in 13 cities (Jonkoping Chamber of Commerce), 12 cities (BPW Sweden) and 11 cities (Chamber Trade Sweden).

5.3 Comparison of Germany and Sweden

The previously introduced figures 1.1.2 and 1.1.6 display the entrepreneurial ecosystems showing the key factors for a sustainable business development under consideration of the availability in specific countries. Entrepreneurial ecosystems differ and have distinct foci depending on the country. Even though most countries are interconnected in this globalized world, these relationships consist of superficial support offers, though the countries are still sovereign in most decisions. Therefore, countries usually have different legislations, inhabitants with distinct expertise and as a result diverse ways of handling issues. While Germany offers good physical, commercial and legal infrastructures and government entrepreneurship programs, Sweden also has a sufficient physical infrastructure as well but also features the internal market dynamics. For the service providers to receive customers or members it is necessary to aid them in minimizing or even offsetting the barriers to internationalization. Therefore, the providers offered support activities should be in about the same order as the ranking of the barriers (table 4.1.2). The most important barrier to breach according to the OECD (2009) is the financial funding. Therefore, it is the second most offered assistance in Germany (table 5.1.2), while in Sweden only about one third of support providers offer assistance with it (table 5.2.2). The second barrier was the identification of business opportunities which receives in both countries very little support with 5 out of 34 in Germany and 5 out of 32 in Sweden. The third barrier is also the most assisted activity in Sweden and the second most in Germany – market research. As fourth barrier the inability to contact foreign customers is described and as fifth the search for reliable foreign representation. This seems to be manageable by broadening the business network as some clients highlighted in their testimonials. Moreover, it is the main focus of the German support providers and the third most offered support in Sweden, making it easy to find assistance in business networking. The sixth barrier represents too little time available to the business owners to manage the internationalization process. This issue is only approached by a small amount of German service providers, especially in the private sector. Regarding Sweden, only the National Board of Trade and the Swedish Export Credit Guarantee Board are covering implementation support. Another
barrier is the lack of home government assistance. This is true with regards to certain barriers as established previously, however the others are already served satisfactory.

Additionally, in literature it was argued that customer dissatisfaction with the available internationalization assistance was central to why this aid was not utilized by firms. In this research however extremely large numbers of satisfied testimonials were found which leads to the assumption that there were major changes made since the publishing of the source.

Concerning the delivery of the services, there was no evidence found that services are offered as package deals as suggested by De Chiara & Minguzzi (2002). Moreover, a distinction between standardized and customized services was made by them. The research showed that standardized services such as financial assistance was covered in Germany mainly by private companies, while in Sweden the government as well as networks are the aiding key parties.
6 Conclusion and recommendations

This thesis addresses primarily the structured internationalization approach during the SME internationalization. The purpose of this master thesis is to describe and compare the internationalization support providers in Germany and Sweden including their respective offered activities.

Since countries aim at strengthening their economy which is closely linked to the enhanced SME internationalization, SMEs without an international company vision will struggle with taking the step of expanding the firm abroad, as suggested by Wymenga, et al. (2013), BUSINESSEUROPE (2011) and Achtenhagen (2011). When SMEs are not receiving support, two rather unfavorable outcomes are possible. Firstly, further self-distrust in their abilities might restrain their actual capabilities or secondly, they are not able compensate the lack of important internationalization resources and capabilities. Therefore, SME internationalization support should be considered one key focus of governments. By use of the created provider tables (see appendices A, C, D and F), SMEs are able to overcome the introduced internationalization barriers such as financial resources, identification of opportunities, market analysis, overseas network and representatives, lack of time, small amount of (un-)trained personnel and a lack of governmental assistance, as well as the perceived lack of competence. Despite the fact that many barriers can be overcome through some kind of support, the second barrier of opportunity generation is rarely available in Sweden and exclusively offered in Germany through networks. Also, overcoming the sixth barrier concerning a lack of managerial time seems to be difficult, since in Germany mobility assistance and training and in Sweden mobility, strategy and implementation aid are rarely provided. When the assistance, especially to the second most important internationalization barrier, is not available or even refused to be offered by the governments, SMEs are actively hindered in their international development. Accordingly, the country’s economy itself would be harmed, entailing serious consequences for the country’s economic position with regards to its competitors. By enforcing assistance services, however these countries could act as pioneers in offering a complete coverage for internationalization barriers and as a result advance the country’s economic growth.

It cannot be argued that internationalization assistance is needed by all SMEs, however since only a small amount of them dared to do business internationally it seems
essential to support the majority who holds back. Moreover, firms warranting aid should not be prevented from receiving it, but rather encouraged to internationalize through a sophisticated network of service providers.

Regarding Germany, there were 34 internationalization service providers found of which 16 were private firms, 11 governmental institutions and seven networks. From the providers in Germany it evolved that Bayern International, the Enterprise Europe Network and the German Chamber of Commerce Abroad offer the most variety of assistance by covering seven barriers. In Germany about half of the help available can be obtained for free. Therefore, for German SMEs, especially without major financial funding, it seems advisable to first approach the German Chamber of Commerce Abroad or the governmental organization WTSH for assistance, since both have one of the largest offerings with seven and five activities respectively for free or low cost. However, a German SME from Bavaria might be better advised to contact the smaller organization Bayern International which provides free service to Bavarian companies only. Nevertheless, the majority of German support providers offers their services either with focus on SMEs or to all businesses including SMEs and is therefore accessible for most companies. Internationally operating organizations and networks like Eurochambres and BNI have by far the most members in Germany. However regarding the countries of operation, BPW take the lead with 100 countries, followed by the German Chamber of Commerce Abroad present in 90 countries.

In Sweden a total of 32 service providers was found which consisted of 19 private firms, five governmental organizations and eight networks. In Sweden BNI Sverige and the National Board of Trade with eight covered barriers each. In Sweden about half of internationalization assistance is for free as well. Moreover, it seems that business networks play already a significant part in the successful internationalization of Swedish firms. Since most internationalization support providers are linked through networks already, it is very likely to receive all necessary information and assistance by just contacting one single provider at first and being referred to others afterwards. Business Sweden has the most diverse offer for free in Sweden specifically for SMEs and might therefore be favorable. Internationally operating organizations and networks like Eurochambres and BNI have by far the most members in Sweden. However when it comes to the amount of countries they are operating in, the Chamber of Trade Sweden
and the Swedish Trade and Invest Council are suggested with a breadth of 50 countries followed by Eurochambres with 45.

Since firms have different combinations of problems as well as abilities such as finance to pay a membership fee, they are advised to pick one or multiple service providers according to their needs based on the comprised information provided in the appendices. As a point of assistance in the decision making process, firms might decide on whether a standardized or customized aid is more suitable. Accordingly, this study showed that German SMEs should rather contact private firms for standardized services, while in Sweden mainly governmental organizations and networks offering this support. Moreover, testimonials seem not to present a sophisticated point of service provider differentiation, since those found in this research were highly positive throughout and therefore might represent a biased view. Since some governmental institutions in Germany and Sweden already work with the European Enterprise Network which is widely available, it might be a good idea to broaden the business network by making use of it. In Sweden it might be advisable to contact the National Board of Trade because they are offering multiple service which are rarely available.

Besides slight variations of services offered in Germany and Sweden, the large difference of training support in both countries is noticeable. While training is very rare in Germany, it is the focus of the Swedish internationalization service providers. A reason for this could be that Swedish society has a more inclusive, encouraging and advancing culture, whereas in Germany one prefers to stick with what one knows best to prevent failure, in my experience.

Concluding, by means of this study a description of possible internationalization service providers including their offering can be obtained. Therefore, it might be possible for SMEs to proceed with focus and thus find a simplification measure of the internationalization process through this publication.
Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

This study was limited to the investigation of internationalization service providers in two countries – Germany and Sweden.

Under consideration of the economic performance, research into all leading industrial nations might be an interesting point of comparison.

Moreover, to clarify the assumption on an increase in internationalization assistance satisfaction due to changes, it is suggested to conduct further research on customer satisfaction with the performance of each service provider.

Also, this research is mainly based on publications in German and English language. Swedish publications were only used when translations were available.
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Appendices

Appendix A – Service provider Germany

This table A.1 shows a summary of all investigated companies, organizations and networks including their target groups, activities and contact information. The table is structured in alphabetical order based on the company name. The information in this table is based on the sources associated with the contact information. The previously introduced color coding is applied as well were networks are blue, private companies are marked red and governmental organizations are orange. Moreover, all target group are described in the table below. Specializations on SMEs are highlighted through the bright yellow color. Service providers offering their services to multiple types of firms including SMEs are marked in light yellow, whereas services only available to medium-sized companies are colored light green.

Table A.1: Service provider information Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Contact information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2connect Business</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>German or Dutch SMEs</td>
<td>- legal/ tax assistance - policy information - market analysis</td>
<td>EU-Department, Kreishandwererschaft Borken, Wessumer Str. 30, 48683 Ahaus +49 2871 252413 <a href="http://www.inter-ned.info">www.inter-ned.info</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKA Bank</td>
<td>Financial institution</td>
<td>German exporting firms</td>
<td>- Hermes credit cover available depending on case - financing solution for international buyers</td>
<td>AKA Ausfuhrkredit-Gesellschaft GmbH, Große Gallusstraße 1-7, 60311 Frankfurt am Main +49 692989100 <a href="https://www.akabank.de/deutsch/ihr_nutzen/exporteure.html">https://www.akabank.de/deutsch/ihr_nutzen/exporteure.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlas relocation GmbH</td>
<td>Private firm</td>
<td>Employees relocating internationally</td>
<td>- mobility management to Germany, Austria and Switzerland - deployment guiding - management of Group Moves - language training - intercultural training</td>
<td>Sachsentor 48, 21029 Hamburg +49 4080600250 <a href="http://www.atlasrelocation.de/de/">http://www.atlasrelocation.de/de/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auslands- und Messe Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft e.V.</td>
<td>Association</td>
<td>All firms</td>
<td>- foreign trade fair assistance</td>
<td>Littenstraße 9, 10179 Berlin +49 3024000124 <a href="http://www.auma.de">www.auma.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baden-Württemberg International</td>
<td>Governmental institution</td>
<td>all firms</td>
<td>- international cooperation &amp; networking - marketing - financing</td>
<td>Gesellschaft für international wirtschaftliche und wissenschaftliche Zusammenarbeit GmbH Willi-Bleicher-Str. 19, 70174 Stuttgart +49 711227870 <a href="http://www.bw-i.de">www.bw-i.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayern International</td>
<td>Governmental institution</td>
<td>Bavarian SMEs and firms wanting to expand to Bavaria</td>
<td>- complete export assistance from planning to implementation</td>
<td>Bayerische Bureau for International Business Relations Landsberger Str. 300, 80687 Munich +49 896605660 <a href="http://www.bayer-international.de/en/about-us/">http://www.bayer-international.de/en/about-us/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Contact information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| BPW Germany (Business and Professional Women) | Governmental network | Female business owners, employees and entrepreneurs in Germany but also worldwide | - international lobbying  
- partnership with the international trade center (ITC)  
- connecting women networks (local and internationally)  
- mentoring  
- seminars  
goal: develop potential of females in business | BPW Germany e.V.  
Bundesgeschäftsstelle  
Schloßstraße 25, 12163 Berlin  
+49 3055075209  
http://www.bpw-germany.de/ueber-uns/  
http://www.bpw-international.org/business-registration |
| Bundesamt für Wirtschaft und Ausfuhrkontrolle (BAFA) | Governmental organization | German SMEs | - market information  
- consulting on export strategies and risks  
- network abroad  
- marketing | Referat 414, Frankfurter Str. 29-32, 65760 Eschborn  
+49 6196908670  
http://www.bafa.de/DE/Wirtschafts_Mittelstandsfoerderung/Auslandsmarkterschliessung/Markterschliessungsprogramm_KMU/markterschliessungsprogramm_kmu_node.html |
| Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft (BMELV) | Governmental organization | German agricultural businesses | - Agricultural export promotion/marketing  
- market research travel  
- contact matchmaking | Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, Referat 424 – Absatzförderung, Qualitätspolitik  
Wilhelmstraße 54, 10117 Berlin  
+49 2289952930705  
www.agrelexportfoerderung.de |
| Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie | Governmental institution | German export oriented firms | Euler Hermes Credit Cover against financial and political risks | Referat Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Schornhorstr. 34-37, 10115 Berlin  
+49 30186156141  
| DEG (Deutsche Entwicklungsgesellschaft) | Financial institution | German firms | - financing solutions for firms in developing countries | DEG, Kämmergasse 22, 50676 Köln  
+49 22149861474  
https://www.deginvest.de/Internationale_Finanierung/DEG/%C3%9Cber_uns/ |
| Enterprise Europe Network | Private network | all firms | - EU market information  
- setup international network  
- innovation management check  
- EU financial support examination | They have multiple locations in each country. Please find the contact information of your location here: http://een.ec.europa.eu/about/branches |
| Export Initiative for Energies | Governmental organization | German firms from the renewable energy sector | - market analysis  
- risk analysis  
- organize contacts abroad  
- strategic cost and time plan  
- marketing | Exportinitiative Erneuerbare Energien im BMWi, Scharnhorststr. 34-37, 10115 Berlin  
+49 30186156141  
| FBN Deutschland – The Family Business Network | Registered association | Family companies worldwide | - Knowledge exchange of family firms  
- exclusive events  
- educational offers  
- case studies based on member companies | FBN Deutschland e.V.  
Kronprinzenstraße 46, 53173 Bonn  
+49 2283678097  
info@fbn-deutschland.de  
http://www.fbn-deutschland.de/content/ |
| German American Business Association | Non-profit organization | Germans and Americans, or firms wanting to conduct business in the other country | - networking mixers  
- talks with expert panels  
- internationalization assistance into the US market | German American Business Association of California, Inc.  
775 Glenborough Dr., Suite 101, Mountain View, CA 94041  
+1 (650) 3865015  
ad and at Rüter und Partner Steuerberatungsgesellschaft, Prielmayerstr. 3, 80335 München  
munich@gaba-network.org  
http://www.gaba-network.org/ |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Contact information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German Australian Business Council</td>
<td>Business network</td>
<td>Germans and Australians, or firms wanting to conduct business in the other country</td>
<td>- catalyst for business opportunities and relationships</td>
<td>German Australian Business Council e.V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- high quality, industry specific networking events</td>
<td>Postfach 120143, 60114 Frankfurt am Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- connect to industry and business chambers in Germany and Australia</td>
<td>+49 6927272621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- policy updates</td>
<td><a href="http://gabc.eu/">http://gabc.eu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Chamber of Commerce Abroad</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>All German firms internationalizing, especially SMEs for networking and large corporations as</td>
<td>- market entry support</td>
<td>Deutsche Industrie und Handelskammertag, International Economic Affairs, Breite Straße 29, 10178 Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- legal, tax advice</td>
<td>+49-30203082310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- marketing</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ahk.de">www.ahk.de</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- language assistance</td>
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<td>- international accounting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- mobility support (visa)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- member network events</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany Trade and Invest</td>
<td>Governmental institution</td>
<td>German medium enterprises going abroad and international investors coming to Germany</td>
<td>- market analysis</td>
<td>Friedrichstraße 60, 10117 Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- marketing</td>
<td>+49 302000990</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- investor relations</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gtai.de">www.gtai.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go International</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>German SMEs</td>
<td>- Financial support up to 40.000€ for SME internationalization</td>
<td>BIHK Service GmbH, Außenwirtschaftszentrum Bayer, Lorenzer Plat 27, 90402 Nürnberg</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+49-911-23886 44</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.go-international.de">www.go-international.de</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.auwi-bayern.de/ap/foren/go-international/index.html">http://www.auwi-bayern.de/ap/foren/go-international/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHK Exportakademie (IHK Export Academy)</td>
<td>Chamber of commerce</td>
<td>skilled employees and executives</td>
<td>- legal advice on exporting (tax, customs)</td>
<td>IHK Exportakademie GmbH, Jägerstr. 30, 70174 Stuttgart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- financing advice</td>
<td>+49 7112051313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- market information</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ihek-exportakademie.de">www.ihek-exportakademie.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- networking during business travel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investitionsbank Berlin</td>
<td>Financial Institution</td>
<td>SMEs with headquarters or subsidiary in Berlin</td>
<td>- financial loan</td>
<td>Investitionsbank Berlin, Bundesallee 210, 1719 Berlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+49 3021254747</td>
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<td><a href="https://www.ibb.de/de/foerderprogramm/programm-fuer-internationalisierung-kmu-projekte.html">https://www.ibb.de/de/foerderprogramm/programm-fuer-internationalisierung-kmu-projekte.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iXPOS – Das Außenwirtschaftsportal</td>
<td>Governmental institution</td>
<td>all SMEs</td>
<td>- market knowledge provision</td>
<td>see Germany Trade and Invest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- market entry</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ixpos.de/IXPOS/Navigation/">http://www.ixpos.de/IXPOS/Navigation/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- network of contacts</td>
<td>DE/ihr-geschaeft-im-ausland.html</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KfW IPEX Bank</td>
<td>Financial institution</td>
<td>Firms worldwide</td>
<td>- financing for small exports</td>
<td>KfW IPEX-Bank GmbH, Palmengartenstr. 5-9, 60352 Frankfurt am Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- market analysis</td>
<td>+49 69 74310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRW Bank</td>
<td>Financial institution</td>
<td>medium-sized firms</td>
<td>- financial support</td>
<td>NRW.BANK, Kavalleriestraße 22, 40213 Düsseldorf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- internationalization consultancy</td>
<td>+49 211917410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- partner matchmaking</td>
<td><a href="https://www.nrwbank.de">https://www.nrwbank.de</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Contact information</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRW International</td>
<td>Governmental institution (public private partnership)</td>
<td>SMEs in North Rhine Westphalia</td>
<td>- international trade fair participation - delegation trips with networking - industry information session</td>
<td>NRW. International GmbH, RWI 4, Hochhaus, Völklinger Str. 4, 40219 Düsseldorf +49 21171067111 <a href="https://www.nrw-international.de/ueber-uns/">https://www.nrw-international.de/ueber-uns/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PwC (Price Waterhouse Coopers)</td>
<td>Financial institution</td>
<td>all firms</td>
<td>- market analysis - financial support assistance - strategic planning and execution - taxes and legal advice - accounting, auditing</td>
<td>PwC, New-York-Ring 13, 22297 Hamburg +49 4088349455 <a href="http://www.pwc.de">www.pwc.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rödl &amp; Partner</td>
<td>Private consulting and auditing firm</td>
<td>all, but mainly German international operating family companies</td>
<td>- Export support - business process outsourcing - compliance management - corporate social responsibility - financing - international auditing - global tax consultancy - Real Estate Management support - international expatriate consulting - innovation and technology consulting</td>
<td>Rödl &amp; Partner GmbH Wirtschaftsprüfungsgesellschaft/ Steuerberatungsgesellschaft Äußere Sulzbacher Straße 100, 90491 Nürnberg +49 91191930 <a href="http://www.roedl.de">www.roedl.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saaris</td>
<td>Governmental institution</td>
<td>all firms in Saarland (Germany)</td>
<td>- strategic business development consulting - networking - trade fairs and events - innovation management</td>
<td>Saarland. Innovation &amp; Standort e.V. Franz-Josef-Röder-Straße 9, 66119 Saarbrücken +496819520470 <a href="http://www.saaris.de/saaris/ueber-saaris/">http://www.saaris.de/saaris/ueber-saaris/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-German Business Network (SGBN)</td>
<td>Business network</td>
<td>Chinese and Germans, or firms wanting to conduct business in the other country</td>
<td>- marketing and promotion - business match making in Germany and China - expert recommendations (consultants, lawyers, …)</td>
<td>Holsteinische Straße 6, 10717 Berlin +49 3025560477 <a href="http://sgb-net.de/de/ueber-uns.html">http://sgb-net.de/de/ueber-uns.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirtschaftsförderung Brandenburg</td>
<td>Governmental institution</td>
<td>Firms in Brandenburg</td>
<td>- market knowledge - contact matchmaking - financial support - innovation advice - network cluster</td>
<td>Wirtschaftsförderung Land Brandenburg GmbH (WFBB) Babelsberger Str. 21, 14473 Potsdam +49 331730610 <a href="https://www.wfbb.de/de/Unsere-Services/%C3%BCber-Internationalisierung">https://www.wfbb.de/de/Unsere-Services/%C3%BCber-Internationalisierung</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirtschaftsförderung Sachsen</td>
<td>Governmental institution</td>
<td>Firms and organizations in Saxony with focus on electronics and technology</td>
<td>- marketing - strategic business development consulting - contact matchmaking - member networking</td>
<td>Wirtschaftsförderung Sachsen GmbH, Bertolt-Brecht-Allee 22, 01309 Dresden +49 35121380 <a href="http://www.silicon-saxony.de">www.silicon-saxony.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTSH</td>
<td>Governmental organization</td>
<td>all firms, however mainly SMEs</td>
<td>- market and risk analysis - marketing (trade fairs) - cooperation partner matchmaking - strategic business development consulting - innovation promotion</td>
<td>WT.SH Wirtschaftsförderung und Technologietransfer Schleswig-Holstein GmbH, Lorentzendamm 24, 24103 Kiel +49 431666660 <a href="https://wtsh.de/aussenwirtschaftsberatung/">https://wtsh.de/aussenwirtschaftsberatung/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZENIT GmbH (Zentrum für Innovation und Technik in NRW)</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>All German businesses</td>
<td>- EU market, country, legal etc. analysis - customized strategy - implementation support of foreign trade activities - examination of EU financial support</td>
<td>ZENIT GmbH, Zentrum für Innovation und Technik in NRW, Bismarckstraße 28, 45470 Mülheim and der Ruhr +49 208/30004-0 <a href="http://www.zenit.de/beratung/europa/internationalisierung/">http://www.zenit.de/beratung/europa/internationalisierung/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B – Testimonials Germany

The following testimonials and feedbacks (table B.1) are not a complete representation of all comments available but rather a summary of the most recent ones per service provider. Moreover, the researcher was not able to find reviews from all service providers wherefore not all firms and organizations are included in this table.

Table B.1: Testimonials Germany

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Service provider</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Testimonial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>ZENIT GmbH, Enterprise Europe Network</td>
<td>Novihum</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>“We were looking for investment to develop, so we contacted ZENIT, a German Member of the Enterprise Europe Network, and asked them how we could finance such a pilot plant. They helped us lay out a programme that outlined the staff, what type of facility and location we needed,” said Peter. (European Commission, 2016b)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2016 | ZENIT GmbH, Enterprise Europe Network | Auaibion GmbH | International partnership | “We helped Marc draw up his company profile and put it into the database. Shortly after that we received many expressions of interest from different potential partners.”, Sabrina Wodrich from ZENIT GmbH
“The partnership was such a success because there was a good match between the companies,” said Clemens Kozmich from Business Upper Austria, the Austrian Member of the Network, who helped facilitate the partnership. “Without support, finding relevant cooperation partners can be challenging and costly. Therefore it requires tools like the Network’s profile database to provide companies with high-quality cooperation opportunities in their business field. In the end, it does require two ambitious companies that are willing to take the next step together.”
“It’s very difficult to grow by yourself, PR and advertising is very expensive so whatever help we can get with the Enterprise Europe Network is very much appreciated.” (European Commission, 2016a) |
| 2015 | Enterprise Europe Network | Hortyński Zakład Usług Elektrycznych | Market entry Germany | "We became the first Polish company certified in Germany"
"The services of Enterprise Europe Network were very useful."
"Through our Network connections, we were able to find a quick and effective solution." (European Commission, 2015j) |
| 2015 | Enterprise Europe Network, IHK | Dieters | International supplier | "Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network, we easily found a partner that helps us to enhance our competitiveness."
"With help from the Enterprise Europe Network, we easily came in contact with the German company and expanded our business.” (European Commission, 2015m) |
| 2015 | Enterprise Europe Network | FOR AGE & MD-PART | International partnership | "Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network, I was given the perfect opportunity to find a reliable partner," FOR AGE
"MD-PART is mainly active in the German speaking countries but it aims to expand its business into other European regions. Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network, I met French company FOR AGE during the brokerage event conhIT 2013 and created this partnership agreement.” MD-PART (European Commission, 2015i) |
| 2015 | Enterprise Europe Network | Naumann & Richter GbR | Trade partner | "Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network for the professional organisation and the exhausting but great product testing,” says Jan Richter of Naumann & Richter. "Without the business event in the Rioja
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Company/Project</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2015 | ZENIT GmbH, Enterprise Europe Network | Germany | Foreign market entry | Touristik Büro für Medienarbeit, Text und Marketing (TMTM) | “ZENIT organised TMTM's participation in the Mission for Growth brokerage event in Athens in 2013[...] it resulted in three Partnership Agreements.”
| 2015 | Enterprise Europe Network | Germany | International consortia partners | Landesgesellschaft Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (LGMV) GmbH | "When you start with the Network", says Skor, "one contact often leads to several others."
| 2015 | Enterprise Europe Network | Germany | Partners from different branches | Poul A. Jessen Systemtechnik A/S | "Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network, we formed a consortium for ground-breaking stem-cell research at European level."
| 2015 | Enterprise Europe Network | Germany | Trade fair training seminar | Novaetech | "Thanks to the practical seminars, we have improved how we approach and communicate with potential clients,” says company spokesman Tom Heyner.
| 2015 | IHK, Enterprise Europe Network | Germany | International trade fairs in Germany | Alca Mobile auto accessories GmbH | "The 2011 Europe-Market was a starter for Mr Berousek and proved the popularity of his products among German people. The Network’s involvement was instrumental to his success. “We greatly appreciated the Network’s help and advice,” says Berousek. “The collaboration between the Czech and German partners was excellent. I didn’t have to do anything except turn up at the market and sell my goods.”
| 2015 | ZENIT GmbH, Enterprise Europe Network | Germany | Foreign representative | Bio-Circle | "We never found such a reliable business partner in such a short time. The Network is outstanding at generating successful business contacts - we couldn't have done it without them.”
| 2015 | IHK, Enterprise Europe Network | Germany | International cooperation partner | audiobots | "The full range of services provided by the Enterprise Europe Network include assistance in technology transfer, business cooperation and commercial partnerships, organising company missions/ conference visits, matchmaking and brokerage events, support for innovation centres and networks or for clusters, as well as providing advice on funding and IPR.”
| 2015 | Enterprise Europe Network, ZENIT GmbH | Germany | Foreign market entry | Isoperla | "We had developed an interesting product," says Haley, "but needed help taking it to the next level and expanding overseas.”

Stephanie Abel, export area manager of Finca de Los Arandinos, was equally enthusiastic. "Thanks to the trade mission organised by the Network," she said, "we met 11 importers from different countries in a single day, and in a short time we closed a business agreement with a German importer. We encourage more events like these to be organised." (European Commission, 2015d)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Company/Institution</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Enterprise Europe Network</td>
<td>NeuroProof</td>
<td>Research funding</td>
<td>Besides giving NeuroProof advice on EU funding opportunities and helping it prepare applications, Network experts hooked it up with the right research partners across Europe. It also invited the SME to Network information events and workshops on EU funding programmes. &quot;The Network's support made the whole process more manageable,&quot; says NeuroProof founder and CEO Olaf Schröder. (European Commission, 2015b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Enterprise Europe Network</td>
<td>Martin Dufresne (entrepreneur)</td>
<td>Supplier</td>
<td>&quot;We immediately hit it off,&quot; says Dufresne, &quot;since they were not just seeking a distributor, but a real collaborator with technical know-how. Now I represent them in Denmark.&quot; (European Commission, 2015a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Enterprise Europe Network</td>
<td>Weitsprung GmbH</td>
<td>Foreign market entry</td>
<td>&quot;Thanks to the Network, a trip of a lifetime is now possible for many individuals,&quot; says Weitpsprung's co-founder, Birgit Glöckner. (European Commission, 2015o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Enterprise Europe Network</td>
<td>Scheller Systemtechnik GmbH</td>
<td>Consortium</td>
<td>&quot;The Network helped us assemble the perfect consortium.&quot; (European Commission, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Enterprise Europe Network</td>
<td>Glanta Tld.</td>
<td>Distributor</td>
<td>&quot;Thanks to the Network, we found an international business partner for the long term,&quot; says Ralf Oestreich, Kreienbaum's key account manager for hygiene. (European Commission, 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>GABA</td>
<td>Jörg Kemkes Steuerberater, Managing Partner, BridgehouseTax</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>We hosted our first event with the GABA together with the Comerica Bank in Palo Alto, regarding “Doing Business in Germany”. This presentation is also on this website. For us it was a huge success. Thanks to the sophisticated distribution channels, more people than expected signed up and to our surprise, even more attended. This has shown us, that GABA really has penetrated the circles in the Bay Area. Once the event started, we could see, that the entire team was very experienced in actually running this event, the food was fresh and in the perfect amount. Caroline and her team were very friendly and knew how to create a hospitable and relaxing atmosphere, which was very important for the networking which followed the official part. (GABA - German American Business Association, 2017c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>GABA</td>
<td>Patricia Sauerbrey Colton Research Director, rheingold USA</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>I worked with GABA to promote the opening celebration of rheingold’s US office in San Francisco. As we are a company with German heritage, I particularly enjoy the cross-cultural &quot;flair&quot; GABA emits in everything they do. The whole process of partnering for our event went very smoothly and was perfectly organized. Caroline Raynaud and her team are extremely professional and handle projects with a great sense of needs of their partners. I am looking forward to upcoming events and will certainly take advantage of future opportunities to partner with GABA. (GABA - German American Business Association, 2017c)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2013 | GABA | Cecile Thirion | Marketing | I had the opportunity to attend several networking events with the GABA and it was always worth it! All the events are well organized, with good content and high level invited guests. The events are not only for the GABA community but for all professionals in San Francisco and Bay Area that would like to increase their knowledge on current topics and network with open minded
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<tr>
<th><strong>GABA</strong></th>
<th><strong>GABA</strong></th>
<th><strong>GABA</strong></th>
<th><strong>GABA</strong></th>
<th><strong>WTSH</strong></th>
<th><strong>WTSH</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ulli Kohl</td>
<td>Johannes Ziegler</td>
<td>Martin Doettling</td>
<td>Bianca Lautenschlaeger</td>
<td>Ronald Hoppmann, Geschäftsführer WISKA Hoppmann &amp; Mulsow GmbH</td>
<td>Christian Ueberle, Vertrieb, Gebr. Schröder GmbH - Original LÖWE-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTO and Co-Founder Questico</td>
<td>CEO miaplaza</td>
<td>VP WW Marketing, CollabNet, Inc.</td>
<td>GABA Volunteer</td>
<td>Geschäftsführer WISKA</td>
<td>Market entry China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding partners</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Conference speaker</td>
<td>Clients &amp; employees</td>
<td>Market entry Brazil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wir Questico-Gruender (2 Deutsche, 1 Oesterreicher, 1 Amerikaner) lernten uns im Valley ueber GABA kennen, beschlossen dort, zusammen eine Firma zu gruenden, schrieben einen Businessplan, gingen dann nach Deutschland zurueck und erhielten Venture Capital, machten letztes Jahr knapp 60MEUR Umsatz. (GABA - German American Business Association, 2017c)</td>
<td>Ich hatte auf einem GABA event jemanden kennenengelernt, den wir daraufhin anstellten und der dann als Entwicklungleiter unsere Entwicklung aus der Schweiz in die USA geholt hat. Weil er eben sowohl den amerikanisichen als auch den dt. Markt kannte, war er fuer miaplaza besonders wertvoll – und weil er Deutscher war, war er naturlich auch beim GABA event... Interessant war, dass wir durch andere Kanaele (LinkedIn, etc.) relativ grosses Recruiting betrieben haben, viele Leute interviewed haben, aber uns dann fuer die Person entschieden, die ich auf dem GABA event getroffen hatte. (GABA - German American Business Association, 2017c)</td>
<td>In 2004 PSD is Premium Member at GABA. Through the network based in Munich PSD made a couple of placements through people I met at the events or through referrals from people who attend the GABA events. For example in one case I placed the CTO of a Semiconductor company.In addition GABA offers me a professional and open environment to meet and to get know clients (established and new ones) and also candidates on a regular basis. (GABA - German American Business Association, 2017c)</td>
<td>Since 2004, WISKA has been expanding into the Chinese market, and the company has been successful in penetrating this market. They have set up a branch in Shanghai and are now looking to expand their operations to other parts of China. (WTSH, no date b)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanks to Caroline Raynaud and her team for offering such a quality of events. (GABA - German American Business Association, 2017c)</td>
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Um all diesen vielfältigen Gegebenheiten gerecht zu werden, haben wir uns relativ schnell dazu entschlossen, in Kooperation mit der WTSH und AHK Brasilien das Angebot des Firmengemeinschaftsbüros in Sao Paulo wahrzunehmen. Ein weiterer Aspekt war, dass die Kontaktaufnahme und die Marktrecherche potentieller brasilianischer Partner direkt aus Deutschland nur sehr mühsam und unzureichend erfolgen konnte. Da wir mit dem Konzept des Gemeinschaftsbüros der WTSH bereits sehr positive Erfahrungen in Ländern wie Russland oder China gemacht haben, mussten wir auch nicht lange Kosten und Nutzen abwägen, sondern waren uns über die Erfolgsaussichten im Klaren.

Letztendlich ist es uns mit Hilfe der WTSH gelungen, den passenden Partner für die Markterschließung in Brasilien zu finden und wir sind mit unserer Auswahl sehr zufrieden. Auch im Zuge der Bereisung vor Ort war uns die WTSH als Organisator und Übersetzer eine große Hilfe. Insofern würden wir jederzeit wieder auf die Dienste der WTSH zurückgreifen und die Hilfe dankend in Anspruch nehmen.“ (WTSH, no date b)

<p>| <strong>atlas relocation GmbH</strong> | <strong>Johan &amp; Karin L.</strong>, (Sweden) CEO US American FMCG Company | Relocation | “atlas relocation made our move to Germany really easy. The persons we encountered are extremely professional, accurate and very friendly. I warmly and highly recommend atlas relocation to everybody, moving to or from Germany, as well as when living there. First they helped us to look for housing, including first choice selection by them, according to our needs and wishes. When found, they helped us to go through the contract, adding and rewriting anything that was needed for us. In addition, they took care of all government agencies, handling all official paperwork, physically attending the agencies (Meldesamt), organizing child benefit etc. Finally they also helped and advised us regarding insurance, schools, as well as healthcare. When we had to leave Hamburg quickly a few years later, they organized everything with the move, starting by shortlisting moving companies so we just had to pick one. They also physically attended and supervised, when the moving company packed everything. In addition they took care of all paperwork to sign out from schools, government agencies as well as canceling contracts with everything ranging from utility companies to the children's sports clubs. All the best for your team.“ (atlas relocation GmbH, 2016b) |
| <strong>atlas relocation GmbH</strong> | <strong>Krishna &amp; Niharika I.</strong> (India), IT Developer | Relocation | It has been a wonderful experience working with the team at atlas relocation. The team helped us move from India to Hamburg seamlessly. The timeliness, assistance with documentation, follow-ups on our behalf, integration into the Hamburg life and culture as well as the initial setting up formalities were all handled impeccably by the team. A big thank you to the whole atlas relocation consultant team for “truly” being there when we needed. I would certainly recommend their services |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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<th>Relocation Services</th>
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<tr>
<td>atlas relocation GmbH</td>
<td>Dimitry B. (Russia)</td>
<td>Senior Operations Engineer Game Industry</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“I am very satisfied with the relocation assistance provided by the atlas relocation team when moving to Berlin - they are really masters of their job. When you're a newcomer in another country, nothing is clear or understandable - where should you go, what should you do? With the help of atlas relocation everything is going as smooth and fast as possible. This company is a key to successful relocation.” (atlas relocation GmbH, 2016b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atlas relocation GmbH</td>
<td>Marleen S. (Netherlands)</td>
<td>Retail Marketing Manager Europe US American MFCG Company</td>
<td>relocation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>“atlas relocation has made my first international move a very smooth &amp; pleasant one. With their professional and personal attitude they soon became my trusted partner before, during and even after my relocation. Their timely and adequate service made me feel very confident and relax about the numerous things that needed to be arranged. A big thank you to the team!” (atlas relocation GmbH, 2016b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atlas relocation GmbH</td>
<td>Shawn &amp; Amanda L. (USA)</td>
<td>Senior Live Producer Game Industry</td>
<td>relocation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>“We've settled in nicely, thanks to your assistance, and the year has flown by. I mentioned to many of my peers in the industry how much your service eased our transition. Despite the fact that we were moving from across the world, to a completely new country, the move was easier than some of my past transitions to other cities in the US. We appreciate the help and the quality of service you provided. Everything was always taken care of, prepared in advance and ready for us to sign. Given all of the other factors (moving pets, finding an apartment, etc.), it was a great relief that you made your portion so easy for us. I've talked to colleagues that made the move prior to having your service available, and our experiences couldn't have been more different. I'm glad we had a chance to work with you.” (atlas relocation GmbH, 2016b)</td>
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2016 Go international

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nina Balzhäuser, Regalraum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Sicherlich ist so ein Förderantrag erst einmal viel Papierkram, aber es lohnt sich!”, so Balzhäuser. Das erhaltene Geld des Förderprogramms muss nicht zurückgezahlt werden. Auch anderen Unternehmen, die an einem Auslandsgang interessiert sind, empfiehlt Balzhäuser die Teilnahme an Go International. Daneben sei jedoch die Zusammenarbeit mit Experten für den Erfolg unerlässlich. &quot;Ein Unternehmen muss immer erst ausloten, in welchen Ländern es tätig werden will und ob die Produkte und das Geschäftsmodeell zum jeweiligen Zielmarkt passen. Reichen die vorhandenen Ressourcen; gibt es Mitarbeiter, die die jeweilige Sprache sprechen? Auch die Themen Steuern, Recht und Zoll sollten im Voraus ausreichend abgeklärt worden sein.” (Außenwirtschaftsportal Bayern, 2016a)</td>
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</table>

2016 Go international

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wolf Bavaria</td>
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<td></td>
<td>„Wir sind absolute Befürworter und Fans dieses Projekts“ (Außenwirtschaftsportal Bayern, 2016b)</td>
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2008 Go international

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Calpada</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„Von den IHK-Mitarbeitern haben wir vom Förderprogramm , Go International“ gehört“ „Wir hatten zwar schon etwas Erfahrung, aber der Coach konnte uns gute Tipps geben, wo man aufpassen muss oder wie wir gefördert werden können.“ (Außenwirtschaftsportal Bayern, 2009)</td>
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2007 Go international

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tatjana Warneck, Artist</td>
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2005 Go international

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Andreas Weichelt GmbH</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>„Besonders hilfreich im Rahmen von „Go International“ war die Beratung unseres Coachs und die Übersetzung unserer Internetseiten und anderer Werbemittel ins Englische.“ Deshalb empfiehlt Michael Weichelt mittelständischen Unternehmern aus Bayern die Teilnahme an diesem Projekt und rät generell zum Auslandsgeschäft: „Auf jeden Fall - man kann nur dazu lernen!“ (Außenwirtschaftsportal Bayern, 2005)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Appendix C – Offering in Germany

The following two tables display the internationalization activities offered by networks in Germany (see table C.1) and by governmental organizations and private companies (see table C.2). The tables use a color coding scheme marking a box yellow when a certain activity described in the top row is provided by the company named in the first column. In case of non-recognition of the yellow boxes due to black and white printing, they are marked with an X as well. The activities provided are abbreviated in the table but a full description can be found in the following key.

Key: MR – Market research
      LA – Legal advice
      FSO – Financial support organization
      MA – Marketing assistance
      INS – International network setup
      BOG – Business opportunity generation
      IMC – Innovation management check
      SP – Strategic planning
      MM – Mobility management
      LIT – Language and/ or intercultural training
      TAI – Trade activity implementation

Table C.1: Internationalization support activities per network in Germany (own elaboration)

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Table C.2: Internationalization support activities per other provider in Germany (own elaboration)

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</table>
Appendix D – Service provider Sweden

For table D.1 the same guidelines apply as to the German counterpart in appendix A.

Table D.1: Service provider Sweden

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<th>Company</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Contact information</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almi</td>
<td>Governmental organization</td>
<td>All Swedish firms</td>
<td>- consulting on firm internationalization, growth and innovation</td>
<td>Box 70394, 10724 Stockholm +46 87098950 <a href="http://www.almi.se">www.almi.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- financial support</td>
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<td>- mentoring program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- seminars</td>
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<tr>
<td>BNI Sverige</td>
<td>Private network</td>
<td>All Swedish firms</td>
<td>- networking</td>
<td>BNI Sverige, Vädursgatan 5, 41250 Göteborg +46 317780620 <a href="http://www.bni.nu/">http://www.bni.nu/</a></td>
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<td>- business opportunity generation/ innovation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- marketing assistance</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- legal advice</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- financial advice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPW Sweden</td>
<td>Private network</td>
<td>Female business owners, employees and entrepreneurs in Sweden but also worldwide</td>
<td>- international lobbying</td>
<td>Please have a look here for contact information of your local BPW club: <a href="http://bpw.se/bpw-klubbar-3/">http://bpw.se/bpw-klubbar-3/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- connecting women networks (local and internationally)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- mentoring</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- seminars</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>goal: develop potential of females in business</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- business opportunity identification</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- matchmaking support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- legal, taxation advice</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- network access</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- location management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber Business Networks (CBN)</td>
<td>Private network</td>
<td>Business leaders and upper management</td>
<td>- networking</td>
<td>Chamber Business Networks AB Waterfront Building – United Spaces, Klarabergsviadukten 63, 2tr., P.O. Box 190, 10123 Stockholm +46 31105350 <a href="http://www.cbn.se/">http://www.cbn.se/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- idea generation in think-tanks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- industry specific expert talks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce of Central Sweden</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Swedish companies, mainly SMEs</td>
<td>- start-up and business growth support</td>
<td>Mellansvenska Handelskammaren Linnévägen 1, Box 296, 80104 Gävle or Ölandsgatan 6, Box 1958, 79119 Falun +46 26662080 <a href="http://www.mellansvenskahandelskammaren.se/">http://www.mellansvenskahandelskammaren.se/</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>- skill training</td>
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<td>- internationalization and innovation assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce of East Sweden</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Swedish companies, mainly SMEs</td>
<td>- start-up and business growth support</td>
<td>Dalsgatan 13, Box 214, 60104 Norrköping +46 11285030 <a href="http://ostsvenskahandelskammaren.se/">http://ostsvenskahandelskammaren.se/</a></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- skill training</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- internationalization and innovation assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Southern Sweden</td>
<td>Private member driven business organization</td>
<td>all companies from the south of Sweden</td>
<td>- international trade support</td>
<td>Multiple offices available. Please check this website for further information: <a href="http://www.handelskammaren.com/en/">http://www.handelskammaren.com/en/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- networking events, networks, lobbying</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- seminars, training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Contact information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Chamber of Commerce of Mälardalen           | Chamber of Commerce         | Swedish companies, mainly SMEs      | - start-up and business growth support  
- skill training  
- internationalization and innovation assistance                                                                 | Handelskammaren Örebro, Rudbecksgatan 7, Box 8044, 700 08 Örebro  
+46 196893500  
http://www.handelskammarenmalardalen.se/malardalen/index.asp? |
| Chamber of Commerce in Narbotten            | Chamber of Commerce         | Swedish companies, mainly SMEs      | - start-up and business growth support  
- skill training  
- internationalization and innovation assistance                                                                 | Kyrkogatan 13, 97232 Luleå  
+46 920455660  
http://www.norrbottenshandelskammare.se/ |
| Chamber Trade Sweden                        | Private member driven business organization | firms internationalizing into developing markets, mainly SMEs | - market research  
- matchmaking with experts in field of question  
- network                                                                                                           | United Space Business Center, Klarabergsviadukten 63, Stockholm  
http://chambertradesweden.se/ |
| Connect Sverige                             | Private business network    | Entrepreneurs and all businesses    | - business development  
- financial support  
- networking (events)  
- skill development seminars                                                                                           | There are multiple offices. Please check  
http://connectsverige.se/ for further information. |
| Enterprise Europe Network Sweden            | EU network                  | Swedish SMEs                        | - business partner matchmaking  
- networking  
- financial assistance  
- innovation assistance  
- information                                                                                                           | Contact persons:  
Tony Backer-Meurke +46 86819410  
Kristin Signemark +46 86819159  
www.enterpriseeurope.se |
| Eurochambres                                | Chamber of Commerce         | European companies, mainly SMEs     | - start-up and business growth support  
- skill training  
- internationalization and innovation assistance                                                                 | Eurochambres  
Avenue des Arts, 19 A/D, 1000 Brussels  
+32 22820850  
http://www.eurochambres.eu/Content/Default.asp?# |
| FBN Sweden                                  | Network                     | Family businesses                   | - networking  
- expert contact  
- seminars on family business management  
- advancement of the next generation                                                                                   | FBN Sweden Service AB  
Birger Jarlsgatan 2, 11434 Stockholm  
+46 8234220  
http://www.fbn-sweden.se/ |
| Företagsakademien                           | Governmental institution    | Mainly SMEs                         | - Business development and growth support                                                                                                         | Mäster Samuelsgatan 60, 11121 Stockholm  
+46765438872  
http://www.företagsakademien.se/ |
| Innovatum AB                                | Private firm                | All local business owners and entrepreneurs | - business research and development projects  
- networking and experience exchange                                                                                         | Nohabgata 18A, Byggnad 73, 46153 Trollhättan  
Box 902, 46129 Trollhättan  
+46 520289400  
http://www.innovatum.se |
| Jonkoping Chamber of Commerce               | Chamber of Commerce         | Swedish companies, mainly SMEs      | - start-up and business growth support  
- skill training  
- internationalization and innovation assistance                                                                 | Elmiavägen 13, 554 54 Jönköping  
+46 36 301430  
http://www.handelskammarenjonkoping.se/english |
| Mid Sweden Chamber of Commerce              | Chamber of Commerce         | Swedish companies, mainly SMEs      | - start-up and business growth support  
- skill training  
- internationalization and innovation assistance                                                                 | Huvudkontor Sundsvall  
Storgatan 23, 852 30 Sundsvall  
+46 60171880  
http://midchamber.se/english/ |
| National Board of Trade (Kommerskollegiet)  | Governmental organization   | Swedish firms willing to go abroad or foreign firms coming | - problem-solving services for SMEs both outside and inside the EU market                                                                     | Drottninggatan 89, P.O. Box 6803, 11386 Stockholm  
+46 734244800  
http://www.kommers.se/In-English/ |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Contact information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nyföretagarcentrum</td>
<td>Business association</td>
<td>All businesses</td>
<td>- business development consulting through regional entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Skeppsbron 22, 11130 Stockholm +46 8144400</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.nyf%C3%B6retagarcentrum.com">www.nyföretagarcentrum.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (SEK)</td>
<td>Governmental organization</td>
<td>All Swedish firms</td>
<td>- matchmaking facilitator regarding internationalization experts</td>
<td>Box 4044, 10261 Stockholm +46 86819100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.tillvaxtverket.se">www.tillvaxtverket.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish Export Credit Corporation (SEK)</td>
<td>Financial institution</td>
<td>All Swedish firms wanting to export</td>
<td>- financial export assistance - Market knowledge - International trade problem solving</td>
<td>Klarabergsviadukten 61-63, P.O. Box 194, 10123 Stockholm +46 86138300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.sek.se">www.sek.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden-India Business Council (SIBC)</td>
<td>Private Network</td>
<td>Swedish and Indian companies wanting to conduct business in the other country</td>
<td>- focused meetings and round tables - intercultural training - legal advice</td>
<td>Sweden-India Business Council, Box 27, 131 06, Nacka, Sweden <a href="http://sibc.se/">http://sibc.se/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish Turkish Business Network (SWETURK)</td>
<td>Private network</td>
<td>Swedish and Turkish firms wanting to conduct business in the other country</td>
<td>- networking business trips and conferences - financial assistance for international trade</td>
<td>Sundbybergsvägen 1A, 17173 Solna Stockholm +46 87355010 <a href="http://www.sweturk.org/kontakt.html">http://www.sweturk.org/kontakt.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedfund</td>
<td>Financial institution</td>
<td>prosperous private firms, especially Swedish SMEs wanting to expand to emerging markets Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe</td>
<td>- financial support - connections to other experts through network and strategic partnerships</td>
<td>Swedfund International AB Drottninggatan 92-94, P.O. Box 3286, 10365 Stockholm +46 87259400 <a href="http://www.swedfund.se/en/about-swedfund/#">http://www.swedfund.se/en/about-swedfund/#</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Stockholm Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Companies wanting to internationalize</td>
<td>- market research - international trading assistance (documents, knowledge - networking</td>
<td>Brunnsgatan 2/ Box 16050, 10321 Stockholm +46 855510000 <a href="http://www.chamber.se">www.chamber.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Swedish Export Credits Guarantee Board (ekn)</td>
<td>Financial institution</td>
<td>All Swedish companies</td>
<td>- insurance to secure international business transactions</td>
<td>Kungsgatan 36, P.O. Box 3064, 10361 Stockholm +46 87880000 <a href="http://www.ekn.se">www.ekn.se</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Värmland Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Swedish companies, mainly SMEs</td>
<td>- start-up and business growth support - skill training - internationalization and innovation assistance</td>
<td>Växnäsgatan 4, 65340 Karlstad Box 6004, 65128 Karlstad +46 54221480 <a href="http://www.handelskammarenvarmland.se/">http://www.handelskammarenvarmland.se/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Swedish companies, mainly SMEs</td>
<td>- start-up and business growth support - skill training - internationalization and innovation assistance</td>
<td>Västerbotten Commerce Expolaris Zentrum, 93178 Skellefteå +46 10993630 <a href="http://www.ac.cci.se/om-oss/">http://www.ac.cci.se/om-oss/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sweden Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Swedish companies, mainly SMEs</td>
<td>- start-up and business growth support - skill training - internationalization and innovation assistance</td>
<td>Parkgatan 49, Box 5253, 40225 Göteborg +46 31835900 <a href="http://handelskammaren.net">http://handelskammaren.net</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E – Testimonials Sweden

The following testimonials and feedbacks (table E.1) are not a complete representation of all comments available but rather a summary of the most recent ones per service provider. Moreover, the researcher was not able to find reviews from all service providers wherefore not all firms and organizations are included in this table.

Table E.1: Testimonials Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Service provider</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Testimonial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BEN</td>
<td>Zana Zgog, SJ, SJ</td>
<td>Business contacts</td>
<td>&quot;SJ har deltagit i flera olika nätverksforum och Business Event Network är ett av de bästa. Nätverket levererar en blandning av häftiga upplevelser i trevliga miljöer och många nya affärskontakter. Det är en bra mix av företagare och vi ser väldigt goda affärsmöjligheter.&quot; (BEN, no date a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BEN</td>
<td>Robert Hallgren, The Generation</td>
<td>Business contacts</td>
<td>&quot;Rätt deltagare och sköna omständigheter ger nätverkande som är både lönsamt och kul. Det är förutsättningar som BEN skapar och det är därför vi har valt att vara medlemmar i nätverket.&quot; (BEN, no date a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BEN</td>
<td>Stefan Sarin, Mabi Car Hire</td>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>&quot;Bra premiumaktiviteter blandas med härligt mingel. Dessutom är BEN väldigt duktiga på att lyfta Mabi både under och mellan nätverksträffarna. Det dyker upp nytt folk ibland och jag får träffa många potentiella slutkunder i fantastiska miljöer för kundmöten.&quot; (BEN, no date a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connect Sverige</td>
<td>Lotta Wikman Öman, Advokat/ Ahlförd Advokatbyrå</td>
<td>Network</td>
<td>&quot;För oss är det viktigt med innovation och entreprenörskap och vi vill vara med och bidra till att tillväxten ökar här i regionen. Därför är vi med som partner i Connect som också är en väl uppbyggd verksamhet med bra resultat. Det är också väldigt positivt att få vara med från början när ett bolag byggs upp.&quot; (Connect Sverige, no date a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connect Sverige</td>
<td>Sofia Ekström, Ekström Invest i Umeå</td>
<td>Network</td>
<td>&quot;Jag drivs av att se människor och företag utvecklas! Genom Connects nätverk träffar jag många duktiga och inspirerande entreprenörer och får ofta lära mig nya spännande saker.&quot; (Connect Sverige, no date b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connect Sverige</td>
<td>Johan Dahlberg, PwC</td>
<td>Network</td>
<td>&quot;Att vi träffas hos varandra i olika aktiviteter tror jag stärker tanken om nätverkande och relationsskapande – vi gör som vi säger&quot; (Connect Sverige, no date c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Företagsakademin</td>
<td>Michael Klintmark, Naprapat</td>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>&quot;Utbildningarna hos Företagsakademin gav oss fantastiska redskap att utveckla vår klinik. Det var nyttagt att få det på ett så tydligt sätt. Tack Företagsakademin!&quot; (Företagsakademin FA AB, no date a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Enterprise Europe Network</td>
<td>TriROOM</td>
<td>Product tester and development partner</td>
<td>&quot;We contacted the Enterprise Europe Network and through its members we started a partnership with the University of Verona who were willing to test our prototype.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We share knowledge of local skills and that really helps this type of cooperation,&quot; said Marco. &quot;The added value is we can find new market applications of businesses that aren’t award of such possibilities.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Stefan added that &quot;the partnership was a success as it...&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2016  Enterprise Europe Network  Medins  International partnership  "This is a story of true network spirit and it proves how the network, through its knowledge of local companies and circumstances, can enhance international growth," said Maria. Valerie acknowledges that her "local knowledge at the Network really gives me access to a lot of information which I think is key to helping foreign companies find a partner in the UK." (Enterprise Europe Network, 2016a)

2015  Enterprise Europe Network  HP Tronic  Internationalization expert guidance  "We have only good things to say about the Enterprise Europe Network. Thanks to excellent service and support, we now have a subsidiary in a new country." (Enterprise Europe Network, 2015b)

2015  Enterprise Europe Network  Wattguard  International business partner  "Finding a trustworthy international partner is never easy, but with the help of the Enterprise Europe Network, we immediately found the right personal and professional chemistry in order to proceed to a tangible cooperation," says Arnoldas Vasiliauskas of Vacys ir Vacys. Finn Christensen of Wattguard International is equally enthusiastic, saying, "The Enterprise Europe Network has been a contributing partner of ours and we hope to continue working with them as our company grows." (Enterprise Europe Network, 2015c)

2015  Enterprise Europe Network  Dala Tekniska  International distributors  "Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network, I finally found a reseller in Iceland," says Åsa Magnusson, CEO of Dala Tekniska. Guðmundur Hardarson, Director of Aqua Sport, points to the significant role played by the Network: "The participation and involvement of ICI was crucial to give weight to the sales meeting and to establish trust and collaboration between both companies." (Enterprise Europe Network, 2015d)

2015  Enterprise Europe Network  Designer Lisa Hilland  International partnership  "When you're starting out," Lisa Hilland says, "the Network is a brilliant resource." (Enterprise Europe Network, 2015e)

2015  Enterprise Europe Network  Sirje  Business partner  "Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network," he notes, "we found a partner in an unexpected but promising new business area." (Enterprise Europe Network, 2015f)
Appendix F – Offering in Sweden

The following two tables display the internationalization activities offered by networks in Germany (see table F.1) and by governmental organizations and private companies (see table F.2). The tables use a color coding scheme marking a box yellow when a certain activity described in the top row is provided by the company named in the first column. In case of non-recognition of the yellow boxes due to black and white printing, they are marked with an X as well. The activities provided are abbreviated in the table but a full description can be found in the following key.

Key: MR – Market research
LA – Legal advice
FSO – Financial support organization
MA – Marketing assistance
INS – International network setup
BOG – Business opportunity generation
IMC – Innovation management check
SP – Strategic planning
MM – Mobility management
LIT – Language and/or intercultural training
TAI – Trade activity implementation

Table F.1: Internationalization support activities per network in Sweden (own elaboration)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MR</th>
<th>LA</th>
<th>FSO</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>INS</th>
<th>BOG</th>
<th>IMC</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>MM</th>
<th>LIT</th>
<th>TAI</th>
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<tr>
<td>BEN</td>
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<td>BNI Sverige</td>
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<td>BPW Sweden</td>
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<td>Chamber Business Networks (CBN)</td>
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<td>Connect Sverige</td>
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<td>FBN Sweden</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>SWETURK</td>
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Table F.2: Internationalization support activities per other provider in Sweden (own elaboration)

<table>
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<th>MR</th>
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<th>INS</th>
<th>BOG</th>
<th>IMC</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Sweden</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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