Companies here have an increasingly diversified range of overseas markets on their radar for expansion, according to the latest BT-UniSIM Business Climate Survey. Seven in 10 of the 147 firms polled plan to expand business activity abroad in the next six months. Of these, 68 per cent have plans in more than one overseas market, up from 59 per cent a year ago. This proportion fluctuates but appears to be on an upward path, said survey director Chow Kit Boey.

“More companies are undertaking multiple-country expansion in 2014 and are more diversified in their expansion destinations,” she said. Countries cited by the respondents range from Myanmar to Switzerland, Papua New Guinea to Kenya. But Indonesia has kept its spot as the most frequently cited destination for businesses looking to expand out of Singapore. South-east Asia’s largest economy and the fourth most populous country in the world has risen in popularity over the last two years. It is now on the cards as a growth destination for 50 per cent of firms, up from 48 per cent last year and 45 per cent in 2012.

Indonesia is especially favoured by the transport and communications sector – 70 per cent of respondents in that sector intend to grow in Indonesia – and the financial and business services sector (63 per cent). But construction and manufacturing players prefer Malaysia, which is also the second most popular choice overall. 50 per cent of respondents from the construction sector plan to expand business activity in Malaysia in the next six months. It is also preferred by manufacturers – 36 per cent will be heading for Malaysia, more than the 24 per cent that picked Indonesia.

But China – the third most popular choice overall – remains the most favoured among manufacturers, with 44 per cent of respondents planning to expand in China this year. The report notes that the transport and communications sector, but construction and manufacturing players prefer Malaysia.