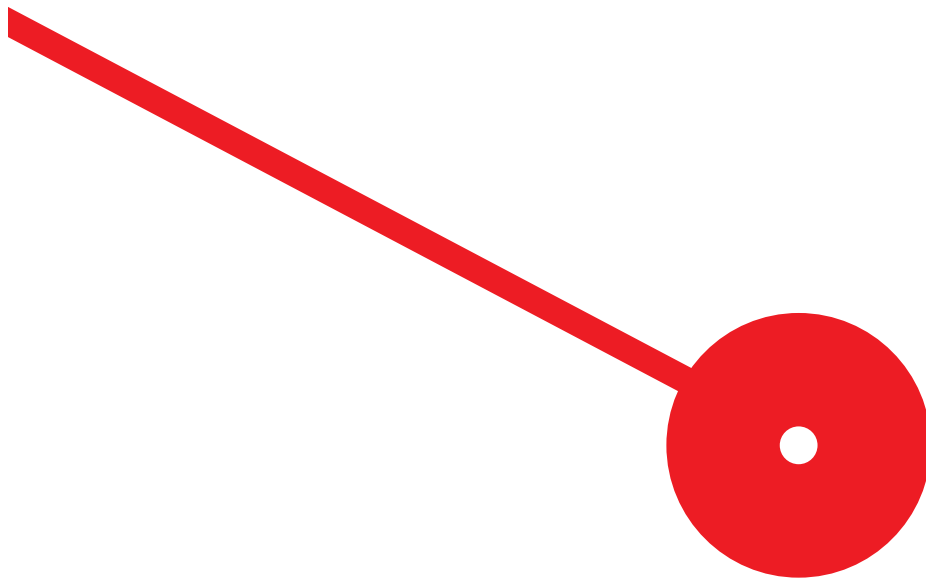




Cultural and Commercial Bridges between Portugal and China: Historical Evolution and CCILC's Role in Bilateral Relations

Mariana Pimenta

09/2024



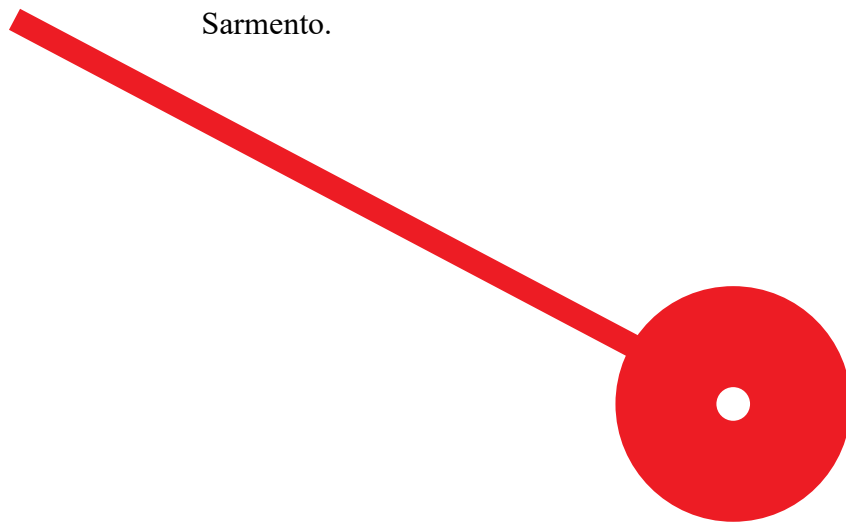
M MASTER IN
INTERCULTURAL STUDIES FOR BUSINESS

Cultural and Commercial Bridges between Portugal and China: Historical Evolution and CCILC's Role in Bilateral Relations

Mariana Pimenta

Internship Report

Presented to Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e
Administração do Porto to obtain the Master's degree in
Intercultural Studies for Business, under the supervision of Prof.
Doctor Sara Costa, co-supervised by Prof. Doctor Clara
Sarmiento.



Abstract:

This report, the culmination of my Master's in Intercultural Studies for Business at the Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto (ISCAP), explores and reflects on my transformative internship at the Luso-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry from January to June 2024. By examining the historical context and other social and cultural aspects, this study unveils the vital role of understanding the key elements of Chinese culture for successful business with China. The report also comprehensively describes the host organization, its mission, vision, objectives, and mode of operation. Lastly, it presents the activities undertaken during the internship and a brief analysis, underscoring the profound impact of this experience on my understanding of Portuguese-Chinese business interactions.

Key words: Chamber; China; Portugal; Business; Chinese culture; Internship

Resumo:

Este relatório, o culminar do meu Mestrado em Estudos Interculturais para Negócios no Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto (ISCAP), explora e reflete sobre o meu estágio transformador na Câmara de Comércio e Indústria Luso-Chinesa de janeiro a junho de 2024. Ao explorar o contexto histórico e outros aspectos sociais e culturais, este estudo revela o papel vital da compreensão dos elementos chave da cultura chinesa para o sucesso dos negócios com a China. O relatório oferece também uma descrição exaustiva da organização na qual estagiei, da sua missão, visão, objectivos e o modo de funcionamento. Por fim, apresenta as atividades realizadas durante o estágio e uma breve análise, sublinhando o profundo impacto desta experiência na minha compreensão das interações comerciais luso-chinesas.

Palavras chave: Câmara; China; Portugal; Negócios; Cultura chinesa; Estágio

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List of Abbreviations

CCILC- Portuguese-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry

INTRODUCTION

The history of relations between Portugal and China is long and complex, dating back to the 16th century when the Portuguese became the first Europeans to establish direct contact with the Middle Kingdom. This initial encounter was guided by curiosity and commercial interests, but it began a relationship that has since evolved significantly, with moments of harmony and tension. Macau gradually assumed a central place in this dyad, which is one of the most emblematic episodes of the relationship, as it not only represented a meeting point between the West and the East but also witnessed their intertwined destinies. It is, therefore, necessary to analyze the relationship between Portugal and China in some historical periods and the long-term impact that Macau has had on the collective memory, diplomatic relations, and trade between the two nations to understand the current state of Portuguese-Chinese cooperation. In this way, Chapter I analyses the historical overview of Portugal and China relations, from Portugal's first contact with China in 1513, the deterioration of the relationship between the two countries in 1519 due to the presence of Portuguese traders along the Pearl River, and the emergence of Macau, the first agreement between Portugal and China. This chapter also deals with the legacy of relations between Portugal and China.

Chapter II underscores the practical implications of understanding the cultural aspects of Chinese culture for business success. Whether it is a company or an individual aiming to thrive in the Chinese business arena, gaining insight into Chinese culture is the key to success. Western ideologies starkly contrast with the principles on which Chinese society is based. The West values independence, while Chinese society values harmony in relationships and between collectives. The terms “Guanxi” (关系), “hierarchy,” and “Mianzi” (面子) are key to understanding Chinese Culture—the dynamics of influence, both in business and in general social engagements in China. Moreover, understanding the main Chinese celebrations and their impact on commercial activities is fundamental for the planning and programming of companies in the country.

The final chapter is dedicated to a detailed description of the institution where my internship occurred. It covers the company's mission, values, services, and alliances with various other institutions. The Portuguese-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCILC) is at the heart of trade relations between Portugal and China, providing various services to help Portuguese companies enter the Chinese market and vice versa. These services include market research, business matchmaking, and cultural training. It

disseminates relevant information through its website and is very active on social media, providing continuous information on business opportunities and network events such as fairs (for example, the Canton Fair). In this chapter, I also describe the internship and some of the most critical work and tasks that were carried out. My internship at CCILC enabled me to play an active role in several events that solidified my knowledge regarding commercial dynamics between both countries. I managed the official chamber's websites and social networks while also helping during some events, like the Canton Fair, where I was involved in Business Matching processes. I also participated in informal networking moments between various chambers of commerce and international companies.

CHAPTER I– HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PORTUGAL-CHINA RELATIONS

Portugal and the Republic of China share 510 years of relations marked by a history that spans different eras and regimes. To understand the enduring link between the two countries, it is essential to delve deeper into their establishment and apply this knowledge to improve business with China.

1.1 Portugal's First Contact With China

Through their maritime explorations and after discovering the sea route to India, the Portuguese continued their journey eastwards.

In the 15th century, China was a mythical place for Europeans. Trade had to pass through long and remote overland routes, and the Silk Road expresses this reality well. Under these circumstances, the King of Portugal wanted to open a maritime route that would be more advantageous than the Silk Road. The occupation of Macau was part of this plan (Baihui, 2016, p.36, my translation).

In 1513, Jorge Álvares left Malacca and arrived in Guangzhou, on the island of Lintin in the Pearl River estuary, marking Portugal's first contact with China.

After China was discovered, new Portuguese voyages followed, and an embassy was sent to the emperor, approved by the King of Portugal, King Dom Manuel I, through letters (Ramos, 2014). In 1517, Tomé Pires arrived in Canton to establish diplomatic relations with the Chinese authorities and reach China.

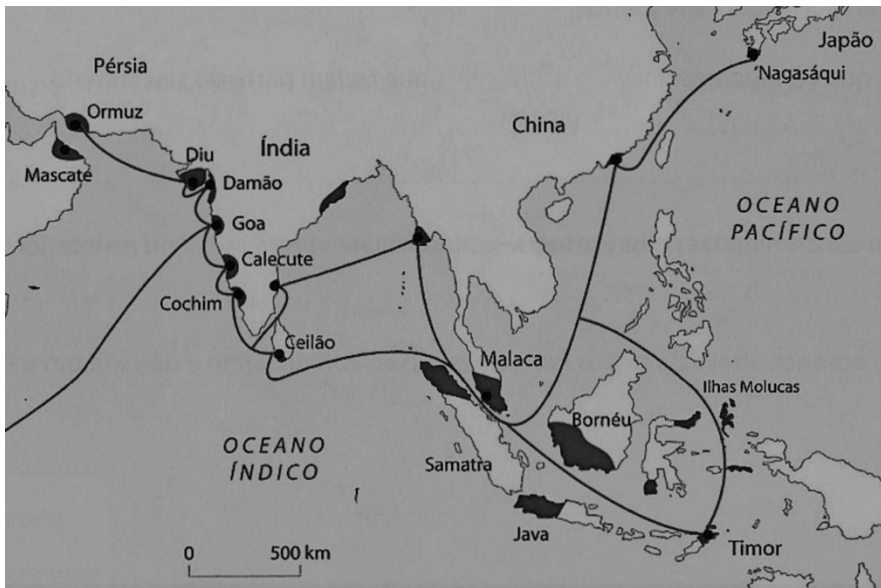


Figure 1. Engraving depicting the Portuguese presence in the Orient. In de Sousa (2023).
 Source: *Revista Portuguesa de História Militar*, (5), 127–145.



Figure 2. Map of the Pearl River Delta with rollover descriptions related to the Canton Trade System (1700–1860). Source: BURSTEIN (2023)

1.2 Deterioration in relations between Portugal and China

In 1519, relations between Portugal and China deteriorated, caused above all by the presence of Portuguese traders along the Pearl River. These traders jeopardized the trade routes for Chinese products to the Indian Ocean and decreased China's regional power.

As a result, during the years 1521 and 1522, a conflict arose on the southern coast of China between the Portuguese and Chinese due to the clash between King Manuel I and his expansionist policy and the protectionism of the Ming Dynasty: "For four years, due to a lack of understanding of Chinese culture and customs and the language barrier, serious disputes took place between the two countries, which led to a battle in 1521" (Liang, 2020, p.5, my translation).

The Chinese authorities refused agreements with the Portuguese and expelled them from Canton, ending the harmony of the Ming. The Portuguese were excluded from the tax trade system once they proved their non-confrontational intentions (Saraiva, 2004).

Qiu Daolong and He Ao, imperial chroniclers, accused the Portuguese of being excessively cruel and cunning, harassing the local inhabitants. They called for the Portuguese to be expelled, to which the emperor agreed, who ordered the Portuguese ambassador to be hanged and gave orders to the Guangdong authorities to expel those who remained in the provincial capital. Wang Hong, Deputy Commissioner of Central Defence, took command of the troops. The Portuguese, relying on places that were difficult to access, used firearms to resist. (Conjian, 1930, cited in Abreu, 1988, my translation)

This negatively impacted the international operations of Canton's ports, leading to a severe economic decline in the region. The solution found was illegal trade that lasted 30 years, which China ignored, as it was advantageous for the country: The Portuguese "avoided the Canton route and sailed directly from Malacca to the Chinese provinces of Zhejiang (浙江省, Zhèjiāng shěng) and Fujian (福建省, Fújiàn shěng), where Chinese smugglers took them." (Liang, 2020, pp. 5-6, my translation).

1.3 Emergence of Macau

In 1554, after the ban on maritime trade was lifted, the Portuguese returned to the Guangdong coast, and "the first Portuguese-Chinese agreement was signed, negotiated by Leonel de Sousa, Captain Major of the Voyage of Japan, which legalized trade through the payment of taxes." (Branco, 2019, p.8, my translation). Leonel de Sousa was thus authorized to settle the Portuguese in Canton and Macau.

Gaspar da Cruz, the friar of the Portuguese Preachers' Order, wrote in 1556:

From 1554 to the present, Captain Major Leonel de Souza, a native of the Algarve and married in Chaul [India], agreed with the Chinese that they would pay their duties and allow them to make their goods in their harbors. Since then, they have made them in Canton, the first port of China, and there, the Chinese came with their silks. (Morais, 2019, my translation)

In 1555, Macau became an operational port and a center for Portuguese travel to and from Guangzhou, facilitating regular trade between China and Portugal.

The first document in which Macau's name appears is the letter from Mendes Pinto, dated 20 November 1555. (Figure 3)

1.4 Legacy of relations between Portugal and China- Macau

Macau's population grew significantly over several decades. In 1561, it consisted of just five hundred individuals, but by 1621, it had grown to twenty-five thousand. Finally, in 1640, the population reached forty thousand, of which six thousand were Portuguese and five thousand Westerners (Tang & Sheng, 2009).

Portugal's presence in Macau reinforced the legacy of relations between Portugal and China. Until 1999, Portugal maintained a presence in Macau, where Portuguese and Chinese commercial interests converged.

Despite the differences and political conflicts, relations continue to this day. As an active protagonist, Portugal played a key role in expanding Europe's influence worldwide.

Macau has been an indispensable part of preserving Portugal's enduring ties with China for five centuries. Its distinctive status as a Chinese territory under Portuguese governance has served as tangible proof, rather than mere symbolism, of the relationship of cooperation and mutual opportunity between the two nations and their peoples. Macau was one of the unusual stories of a city jointly owned by two countries. (Alves, 2015)

A significant milestone in Portugal and China's history occurred on 8 February 1979, when both nations reached an agreement to re-establish diplomatic relations. This critical event signified the start of a new chapter characterized by mutual recognition and the search for a better understanding. Afterwards, commercial ties between these two countries flourished, driven by a foundation of trust and a mutual aspiration to cultivate robust alliances.



Figure 4. Signing of the agreement between Portugal and China in 1979 in Paris. In Um pequeno “capítulo” numa história com quase cinco séculos centrada em Macau (2019, fev 10)

The Portuguese's lasting impact on the region has left an indelible mark on its history and culture. Macau has emerged as a vital cultural bridge between Portugal and China, preserving a unique blend of traditions, architecture, gastronomy, and language. This fusion of influences has strengthened the prosperous commercial ties between the two nations. However, it has also fuelled the search for new opportunities that have shaped their economic growth.

With its rich historical heritage, expanding population, and booming economy, China remains a major strategic ally for Portugal and vice versa.

CHAPTER II – CULTURE AND BUSINESS

2.1 The importance of understanding Chinese Culture in the business world

In today's booming era of global trade, gaining a comprehensive understanding of different international cultures is very important. This knowledge is of immense significance, especially when starting a business abroad, as it helps to minimize the risk of failure. This principle is particularly applicable to the economic ties between Portugal and China.

The connection between culture and business in China is strong, with culture molding conduct and business practices influenced by cultural standards. By investigating the historical context and cultural values that shape the nation, we can lay solid foundations for lasting business collaborations. Gaining a deeper understanding of Chinese cultural and social norms improves communication and fosters a deep mutual understanding vital to achieving business success.

Business success in Asia requires an in-depth understanding of their unique business environments and cultures; hence, understanding culture is regarded as critical to success in management. It is also significant for businesses and foreign investors who can, in addition, gain a competitive edge by understanding and incorporating this cultural distinction within a given business. (D'Souza, 2003, p.28)

According to Ghemawat and Reiche (2011), companies can achieve favorable results in different cultural contexts by effectively adjusting their strategies. They can also expand their main strengths beyond national borders and, in some instances, use cultural diversity to their advantage (Ghemawat & Reiche, 2011). So even though China has its own values and particular ways of doing things, it should be seen as an opportunity to strengthen business rather than making this a barrier.

To do this, studying some concepts and particularities before starting any business with China is essential.

2.2 Chinese “individualist” society vs Western “collectivist” society

China's concept of culture is different from the concept of culture in the West.

In 1982, UNESCO made an effort to establish an almost universal definition, inspired by the principles of Paul Schafer, in response to the global phenomenon of globalization that has been developing in recent years. Thus, according to UNESCO, culture is "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses not only art and literature but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs" (UNESCO, 2001).

The Chinese term for "culture, "wénhuà" (文化), is a condensed version of the phrase "rén wén huà chéng" (人文化成), which can be understood as "the process of civilization/cultivation." In China, the traditional understanding of "culture" encompasses moral and civic education, including ritual institutions and social norms (Manlin, 2013).

A significant difference between the two societies is culture. As a Western country, Portugal is characterized by its individualist culture, and China by its collectivist culture.

Individualistic cultures are defined by detachment from relationships and community. The individual views himself or herself as relatively independent from others. In contrast, collectivist cultures stress the importance of relationships, roles and status within the social system. Individualism-collectivism is a vast dimension used to differentiate cultures. (Guess, 2004, p.6)

In this way, individualistic cultures promote the individual's self-interest, with individual rights being put first rather than group responsibilities. These cultures value personal characteristics over collective ones. The concept of personal identity is seen as the combination of individual attributes with less emphasis on the needs and interests of others. By contrast, collectivist societies prioritize loyalty and trust in the group. They believe in the superiority of group decisions over individual decisions, with reciprocal concern for the individual's well-being.

Individualistic cultures, such as those in North America or Europe, emphasize the private self more than collectivistic cultures in East Asia, the Middle East, or Arabia. However, the collective self is more stressed in collectivist and individualist cultures. (Hofstede, 1980, and Hsu, 1981, 1983, 1985, as cited in Darwish, A. F. E., & Huber, G. L. 2003).

Chinese culture is more collectivist, and Western culture is more individualistic; according to Fang (1999), Chinese managers focus more on the mutual benefits of their partners, unlike Western managers. Chinese managers must trust their partners to carry out a business successfully. They are also more willing to discuss new issues that may arise. (Fang, 1999)

A relationship frame will be more salient for negotiators in Eastern cultures, while a resource distribution frame will be more salient for negotiators in Western cultures. This implies that negotiators in Eastern cultures are more likely to think about negotiation in terms of relationships and that this frame should influence their negotiation goals. (Brett, 2000, p.160)

In contemporary society, culture is often perceived in a narrower context, mainly when it refers to what is commonly known as 'high culture' in Western societies. However, this does not rule out the importance of popular, urban, or marginalized cultures. Chinese society today tends to discuss culture in this context, potentially influenced by Western ideals. (Manlin, 2013)

For negotiations to be successful, a lot depends on knowing each other's culture.

2.3 Critical concepts in Chinese culture

Realizing that central concepts must be addressed to do business with China is crucial. Not knowing certain concepts can lead to a business's failure, as they are interconnected with other cultural aspects. It is imperative to study them before any interpersonal communication. Merely knowing what they mean in a superficial way is not enough. An in-depth understanding is required.

These concepts are sometimes difficult to define, as they are consolidated in Chinese culture and implicit in communication and relationships between Chinese people. In Portugal, there are also concepts rooted in the culture itself, but their meaning could be more demanding, and not knowing them does not necessarily result in a business's failure (Carvalho, 2016).

In preparing for a business trip to China, most Westerners like to arm themselves with a handy, one-page list of etiquette how-tos. "Carry a boatload of business cards," tipsters say. "Bring your interpreter." "Speak in short sentences." "Wear a conservative suit." Such advice can help get you in the door, even through the first series of business transactions. However, it will not sustain the pro-longed, year-in, year-out associations that Chinese and Western businesses can now achieve. (Graham and Lam, 2003, p. 2)

For a company and a business to be successful, identifying potential partners, establishing trust and forming alliances, it is fundamental to study the following three concepts: Guanxi 关系, Mianzi 面子, and hierarchy.

2.3.1 Guanxi 关系

Chinese culture differs from Western culture in several ways, including the approach to conducting business.

Unlike the West, the Chinese prioritize contact with individuals with whom they have established relationships and trust. Portuguese entrepreneurs must realize and be made aware that Chinese society is very much based on interpersonal connections (Manlin, 2013).

The word Guanxi (关系) refers to relationships and networking. It relates to using specific vital contacts to make interpersonal relationships easier. Guanxi is about creating relationships with contacts with whom you can ask for favors, and at the same time, that contact can also ask for favors. This network of intrinsic relationships is cultivated and built up throughout their lives. The whole of Chinese society is governed by this concept, from the family, school, and business groups.

“Constructing and maintaining guanxi is a common preoccupation for entrepreneurs, managers, officials, and even college students.” (Luo, 2007, p.2). It contains specific mutual commitments that are implicit, guiding Chinese society when it comes to long-term personal and business relationships. Loyalty and trust are key elements in the long term. In Chinese culture, personal growth and development occur in groups and depend mainly on sound, stable, and well-structured hierarchical relationships.

Although interpersonal relationships are significant in Portuguese society, this aspect is even more prominent and deeply rooted in Chinese culture, even when business endeavors fail to meet expectations. A well-known Portuguese proverb establishes the difference between Portuguese and Chinese interpersonal relationships: “Amigos, amigos, negócios à parte,” which in English means ‘Friends, friends, business aside!’ (Manlin, 2013). This proverb suggests separating Portuguese personal friendships from professional decisions involving money.

For most Chinese, personal connections are more important than institutional priorities; in situations where the system and the individual come into conflict, the

tendency is usually to find ways around the strict rules of the organizational structure to safeguard those in their inner circle. (Manlin, 2013).

2.3.2 Mianzi 面子

Mianzi, “face” in English, is the acknowledgment by others of an individual's social position and status (Lockett, 1988). In social settings, mianzi encompasses an individual's social standing and integrity. While honor, prestige, and respect are universal, they are significant in Chinese culture, especially in business. Mianzi, or “face,” has been described as the most valuable asset of Chinese entrepreneurs (Brunner & Wang, 1988).

Promoting trust and respect through Mianzi is central to gradually establishing guanxi, a concept discussed above, which serves as the driving force behind the Chinese economy.

Each person is assigned specific obligations and accountabilities based on their societal positions (such as adult, wife, employer, employee, etc.). Consequently, individuals have multiple social roles, which results in varying degrees of mianzi depending on the particular social role and the given context or circumstance.

Thus, mianzi plays a crucial role in building guanxi with others. In Chinese culture, cultivating good relationships is vital, but preserving a person's mianzi, or status of dignity and honor, is fundamental. Trust must be built and preserved to minimize risks and enable companies to control themselves better in unstable environmental conditions (Xin & Pearce, 1996).

Knowing how to save mianzi and give mianzi in business settings can help strengthen business partnerships. If a person saves and gives mianzi to his business partners, he or she would be considered well-mannered and courteous. His impressions may be boosted, and others would find him or her a pleasant partner. (Zhang, 2023, pp 56-57)

Therefore, the concept of Mianzi plays a key role in trade with China. This concept reflects the importance of reputation and respect in business transactions. In Chinese culture, face is vital to building strong relationships and business success. Understanding and respecting this concept can open doors to business opportunities and strengthen relationships. Companies that value face adjust their strategies to create an environment of trust and mutual respect and build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships.

2.3.3 Hierarchy

Hierarchy has long been regarded as a fundamental aspect of Traditional Chinese philosophy. It strongly prioritizes ranking individuals and positions based on status and authority, and seniority and age are highly respected.

A prominent Chinese philosopher, Confucius, stressed the importance of hierarchy in achieving societal harmony. For centuries, this philosophy has profoundly impacted the dynamics between rulers and their subjects, parents and children, and older and younger generations. In this way, Chinese culture, which values collectivism and the interconnectedness of individuals, establishes a social structure grounded in hierarchy (Tong & Mitra, 2009).

The business world also holds this philosophy as well in high regard, as it emphasizes hierarchy in Chinese business relationships. The success or failure of a business deal can hinge on the importance placed on this hierarchical structure. Chinese workers clearly understand their position within the hierarchical structure and adhere rigorously to the established rules.

Chinese individuals experience hierarchies in their professional and personal lives, which shape how they navigate their daily routines.

It is imperative to understand the consequences of Hierarchy for a successful business:

Small events that might be irrelevant in another culture can become significant. For example, when taking a group photograph, the most visible position should be assigned to the highest-ranking person in the group. Any infringement of this rule could offend the group leader and prevent business opportunities from being lost. (Jacobs et al., 1995, p.30)

Chinese business management is characterized by a strong sense of hierarchy, which has various implications. One of the detrimental effects is the suppression of active participation, a crucial element for business advancement. Due to the expectation of adhering to rank, individuals hesitate to put forward ideas to improve the business. This phenomenon largely accounts for the stagnancy observed in Chinese businesses,

especially those owned by the state. The absence of worker initiative is a primary factor hampering business efficiency in China. (Jacobs et al., 1995)

The various positions within the networks can either enable or limit how organizational members can communicate, including the how, what, when, where, and with whom. (Liu, 2011)

Hierarchy has a powerful influence on decision-making, communication, and business relations, as it is necessary to understand and respect authority and organizational structure. By recognizing and accommodating these cultural dynamics, companies have a better chance of successfully closing deals.

2.4 Gift Economy

The gift economy consists of the personal exchange and circulation of gifts, favors, and banquets, and the art in guanxi exchange lies in the skillful mobilization of moral and cultural imperatives such as obligation and reciprocity in pursuit of both diffuse social ends and calculated instrumental ends. (Yang, 1989, p.35)

Giving gifts in Chinese culture has much meaning, embodying values such as reciprocity, respect, and building relationships. This practice, deeply rooted in ancient traditions and Confucian principles, is fundamental for strengthening guanxi and facilitating successful business interactions: “A gift is more than the material object. It establishes, strengthens, or weakens relationships between people, organizations, and institutions”. (Benabdallah, 2022, p.3)

The absence of separation between the person and the thing in the exchange of gifts means that the giver, the gift, and the recipient share a similar essence, a connection made possible through the intermediary of the gift. (Yang, 1989)

Giving a gift develops in three stages: receiving, giving, and reciprocating. (Joy, 2001). In the field of exchanging gifts, the Chinese proverb "礼尚往来" (lǐ shàng wǎng lái), which means "courtesy demands reciprocity," is of significant importance.

By carefully selecting gifts, companies can convey sincerity, express gratitude, and demonstrate humility, thus strengthening ties with partners and increasing the potential for long-term collaboration. However, suppose the person does not reciprocate a gift. In that case, this can hurt business: “In Indian business relationships, like Chinese, to accept a gift and not reciprocate is perceived as immoral” (D’Souza, 2003, p.33).

Anyone visiting China for business reasons can benefit significantly from understanding and appreciating this custom.

The difficult aspects of gift giving have more to do with assessing the proper proportionality between persons and the implied sense of obligation or reciprocity that is entailed in giving or receiving a particular gift. For example, in dealing with a Chinese delegation, the leader should receive a better gift than subordinates (Steidlmeier,1999, p.124)

In Portugal, the tradition of giving gifts is not deeply rooted. Nevertheless, it is expected to offer regional products such as Port wine, traditional sweets, and handcrafted items as a gesture of Portuguese hospitality and admiration. These gifts serve as a way of sharing Portuguese culture and recognizing the quality and significance of national products globally. (Carvalho,2016)

For all these reasons, navigating the ethical realm of gift-giving represents a significant challenge since determining the right moment, the appropriate gift and the social responsibilities it entails can be highly complex. (De Mente, 2013).

2.4.1 What not to give a Chinese person as a present

Recognizing the appropriate gifts for a Chinese person and being aware of what to avoid goes beyond mere etiquette and serves as a meaningful expression of respect. In a society that places great importance on symbolism and cultural significance, gifts carry meanings beyond their material value, often incorporating feelings of goodwill, harmony, and mutual understanding.

For this practice to become more accessible, knowing which gifts are appropriate and which are not is very important. There are several concrete objects whose meaning is not favorable for Chinese culture and so are best avoided, for example:

2.4.1.1 Sharp objects

Offering sharp objects like scissors or knives implies a desire to cut ties or end a friendship.

2.4.1.2 Watches

Watches serve as instruments for controlling time, generally used by people who value discipline. However, in the Chinese gift-giving tradition, these items have different meanings.

In the Chinese language, the word for the watch, "钟zhōng," sounds similar to the word "终zhōng," which means "end, ending or termination." Hence, offering a clock to an older person implies a wish for them to depart from this world rather than a wish for a long life. As a result, wall clocks and watches are considered taboo gifts among the Chinese.

2.4.1.3 Gifts with the Number 4

In Chinese culture, the number four (四 sì) bears a striking resemblance in pronunciation to the word for death (死 sǐ). This connection has led to a strong association between anything related to the number four and bad luck. Refraining from giving gifts in sets or multiples of four is advised. Moreover, numbers like 73, which symbolizes 'the funeral,' and 84, which signifies 'having accidents,' should be avoided.

2.4.1.4 Chrysanthemum flowers

Chrysanthemum flowers, known as 菊花 (júhuā) in Chinese, are widely seen across the globe in various settings. Whether it be an official inauguration or a casual gathering, these flowers add a touch of elegance. While presenting a lovely bouquet of chrysanthemums may be appropriate for a keynote speaker or a patient in many cultures, it is essential to note that this gesture should be avoided in China. Chrysanthemum flowers hold significant meaning in Chinese culture, often associated with commemorating the deceased. As such, they have become a symbol of funerals, making them unsuitable as a gift.

2.4.1.5 Shoes

In Chinese, the word for 'shoes' (鞋 xié) sounds similar to the word for 'evil' (邪 xié). It is advised not to purchase them.

2.4.1.6 Pear

In Chinese, the morpheme for pears is "梨lí". This word sounds identical to the word "离lí," which translates to "leave" or "separated from others." Due to this linguistic similarity, when Chinese individuals consume pears, they avoid using knives to cut them. The reason behind this is that the phrase "分梨fēnlí," meaning "cut pears," sounds remarkably similar to "分离fēnlí" which signifies "separate."

Chinese individuals typically refrain from cutting pears when consuming them to prevent associations with separation or being left behind. Then, it is advisable to avoid giving pears as souvenirs or gifts.

2.4.1.7 Green Hats

Cuckold is a Chinese trope meaning a man's wife is unfaithful and vice versa. In Chinese mythology, green means "adultery, infidelity, lowness or inferiority." During the Qin and Han Dynasties, criminals were required to wear green clothes. In the eyes of people of the Tang and Song Dynasties, people wearing green clothes were the lowest.

In addition, during the Yuan Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang ordered men working in prostitutes families wear green scarves, red waists, and pigskin shoes. As soon as people saw a man wearing a green hat, they knew someone in his family was a prostitute.

Wearing it has also become a common name for the wives of men who engage in prostitution. For this reason, if someone gives a green hat to a Chinese person, especially a man, he will not be happy.

2.4.1.8 Glasses

While glass can be aesthetically pleasing in its design, it is not considered an appropriate souvenir in China due to linguistic associations.

In Chinese, the word for "glass" sounds similar to the word for "sadness." Additionally, the term for a collection of glasses is pronounced the same as the word for "tragedy." Presenting someone with a glass as a gift may evoke sadness and tragedy. These linguistic and cultural factors contribute to the taboos surrounding gift-giving in Chinese society.

2.4.1.9 Candles

Candles commemorate the deceased and are used in rituals to honor them. Therefore, they are not suitable as gifts.

Because of all this, carefully choosing what to give as a gift is essential to increase the likelihood of business going well. Next, we will look at what to offer the Chinese when doing business with them.

2.4.2 What to give a Chinese person as a present

Consider souvenirs, books, wine, liquor, local specialties, or chocolates from your country for personal gift-giving. For business, appropriate gift options include items featuring the company, pens, wine, liquor, or specialty products originating from the recipient's country.

Under no circumstances should intimate products, such as lingerie, clothes, perfumes, or beauty products, be offered except by companies that give gifts with the products produced, and these products are itemized. It would help if you opted for wine, traditional products, concert or theatre play tickets, or flowers.
(Carvalho, 2016, p.85, my translation)

When it comes to companies that have established a lasting partnership, presenting a framed image showcasing the picturesque scenery of your nation is regarded as a thoughtful and unforgettable gift. Moreover, offering small tokens of appreciation to the senior or prominent individuals within the delegation you will be engaging with serves as an additional gesture to foster stronger connections.

Gifts can be presented on any occasion. However, in the business sphere, it is essential to follow specific guidelines. These guidelines state that gifts should be given before the event, such as a meeting or dinner, presented by the guest during the event or sent the following day. It is important to emphasize that the ideal time to exchange gifts is after negotiations have been concluded. This ensures that everything is understood. However, it would help if you were careful. It is important to avoid sending too expensive or big gifts, as these can be seen as bribery or ostentation. (Carvalho,2016)

2.5 Business meeting etiquette

A thorough knowledge of Chinese etiquette is vital when participating in business meetings, as it serves as the basis for effective communication and establishing mutual trust.

Several aspects of Chinese business meeting etiquette differ from those of the West. It is necessary to recognize and respect them. By embracing these customs, Western professionals avoid miscommunication and inadvertent transgressions and demonstrate a sincere willingness to understand and embrace Chinese traditions. This gesture can unlock opportunities and strengthen lasting business alliances, especially if the meetings are successful.

The Chinese tend to control every aspect of a meeting - and indeed the entire duration of a guest's stay in China - from greetings to introductions to the order in which people should be seated to the content of discussions and their conduct. (Trigo, 2006, p.88, my translation)

Business etiquette starts immediately with presentations. Conversations are usually started with banal questions, but these differ from the West in that the initial question is not usually "How are you?" but rather "Have you eaten today?" or "Where were you?".

Arriving late for meetings or formal or informal gatherings is considered impolite. In Chinese culture, arriving approximately five to ten minutes before the designated time is customary as a general practice. The person with the highest position should first enter the meeting. (Morrison and Conaway, 2007).

When meeting your Chinese partners, the first step is to exchange business cards. It is recommended that enough cards be printed with Portuguese on one side and Chinese on the other. Introductions should follow a hierarchical order, with the person in the highest position going first. Usually, the interpreter on the host's side will take care of the introductions. It is important to note that when members hand over their business cards, they should hold them by the corners, using both hands as a sign of etiquette. This gesture symbolizes openness and goodwill, indicating no hidden agendas. When presenting your

card, it should be offered similarly, with the Chinese side facing the recipient. (Trigo, 2006)

During meetings, the guest of honor sits at the head of the table, opposite the host. The host sits with his back to the front door, unlike in the West, where the owner's seat faces the front door. (Luz, 2017)

The meeting usually begins with a serving of unsweetened tea, with the option of adding sugar as the discussion progresses. It is advisable to avoid attending meetings in China or going on business trips alone, as the Chinese prefer to negotiate in groups, putting individual participants at a distinct disadvantage. Unlike other Asian cultures, the Chinese have no reservations about dealing with women and consider it acceptable (Trigo, 2006).

Avoiding exaggerated gestures or dramatic facial expressions is advisable during meetings, as they do not usually use their hands while talking. When they do, they find it distracting. In addition, it is essential to note that Chinese people generally prefer not to be touched by strangers, especially older people or those in positions of importance. (Morrison and Conaway, 2007) Chinese society places great importance on emotional restraint and subtle non-verbal communication, incorporating a reserved and dignified demeanor in professional environments. As a consequence, a composed posture and serene facial expressions can foster mutual respect and understanding, thus promoting smoother negotiations and cultivating stronger business connections.

Once the meeting is over, the Chinese individuals will usually remain in their seats and wait for you to leave the room first.

2.5.1 Dress code for Chinese business meetings

In China, business attire is characterized by its conservative and modest nature.

In formal settings, men typically opt for traditional suits in dark colors. Men can also wear shirts or jackets as part of their business attire. In more formal situations, it is customary for men to complete their ensemble with a tie. (Morrison and Conaway, 2007)

Women must also adhere to a conservative dress code regarding business attire. This typically involves wearing business suits or blouses with a high neckline. It is unacceptable to wear short-sleeved blouses or revealing clothing as part of business attire in China. In Chinese business culture, clothing that exposes the back or has low necklines is discouraged. Long dresses may also be included as part of the business ensemble for women. (Morrison and Conaway, 2007)

Avoid flashy and vibrant colors, as they are not considered appropriate for professional settings in China. Instead, opt for more subdued and neutral colors. Shorts or jeans are not suitable attire for formal occasions or business meetings. Revealing clothing is seen as disrespectful to Chinese business people.

Summarizing:

Business professional attire should be worn when interacting with the Chinese. That includes a shirt, tie, trousers and jacket for men; and for women, a suit consisting of a jacket, blouse, and skirt, or a business dress. What Westerners consider business casual attire should not be worn, because this type of dress is not common at Chinese business gatherings. (Sabath, 2002, p.34)

The inclusion of jewelry is a significant aspect of business attire. However, extravagant or ostentatious pieces should be avoided. Opting for understated gold jewelry, accompanied by a modest watch, can significantly contribute to leaving a positive impression.

2.6 Main Chinese Celebrations

Understanding China's main celebrations, such as Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival, is fundamental for successful business in the Chinese context. These events not only influence local culture and traditions but also significantly impact the market, working hours, and the availability of business partners. Being unaware of these dates can result in communication difficulties, operational delays, and even business relationship breakdowns. Therefore, foreign entrepreneurs and professionals must be aware of these festive periods and adapt their strategies according to China's cultural and temporal particularities, ensuring effective and respectful collaboration.

2.6.1 Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year - also known as Lunar New Year or Spring Festival - marks the beginning of the Chinese lunar calendar, an ancient traditional calendar system. As such, the date of this festival changes every year. The country's most important conventional celebration is held over 15 days (or occasionally longer). A Chinese proverb poetically summarises the significance of this event: 'In the spring, you make plans for the year; in the morning, you make plans for the day.' (一年之计在于春，一日之计在于晨). (Jiaqi, 2021)

The Spring Festival tradition is believed to be almost 4,000 years old. Chinese New Year means happiness, family reunion, and joy. The new year is associated with one of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac, influencing celebrations and traditions that vary regionally. During Chinese New Year, businesses, schools, and government offices are closed.

The Chinese start their preparations long before the event. The 23rd day of the last lunar month is known as the small New Year's Festival. People start buying food and decorative items and clean their homes a week before the day.

Chinese New Year's Eve usually has a special meaning in the hearts of the Chinese people, as it falls on the evening of the 30th day of the last lunar month. The symbolism behind this term is rooted in its characters: '除' meaning 'remove' and '夕' meaning 'night,' signifying the end of the old year and the beginning of the new. (Jiaqi, 2021)

Almost all Chinese individuals return to their hometowns for a family reunion where various traditional customs are observed - such as adorning the streets with vibrant red lanterns. The big New Year's dinner (年夜饭, nián yè fàn) is of immense importance in Chinese family life. This dinner is served abundantly to unite the whole family, symbolizing the hope of a prosperous and joyful life for everyone at the table. (Jiaqi, 2021)



Figure 5. Dragon and lion dance performances are rife during Lunar New Year festivities to attract good luck. Source: Reuters Benoit Tessier

2.6.1.1 Impact on commercial activities

Because of its importance and the contrasts, it creates on a business level, companies need to take the time to understand the significance of the Chinese New Year holiday and plan strategically. This will minimize disruption and build stronger relationships with Chinese partners.

During the Lunar New Year, businesses in China commonly close temporarily, which significantly impacts the regular business cycle. Most companies shut down their offices a week or more before the festival and only resume operations at least two weeks later. This disruption often makes certain services being unavailable, even for large international businesses that may have some staff working during the holiday. Many individuals take advantage of this time to travel, disruption the usual business rhythm in the week leading up to and following the Lunar New Year.

During the holiday season, numerous factories in China either cease operations or function with a reduced workforce. As a result, there is a risk of production delays and disruptions in the supply chain. To mitigate these challenges, companies must establish proactive communication with their Chinese suppliers, allowing them to adequately prepare for any potential disruptions.

The Spring Festival travel rush, known as the most significant yearly migration globally, involves millions of Chinese individuals returning to their hometowns from major urban areas where they reside or attend school. The massive movement of people during this festival presents logistical obstacles that impact transportation and delivery timetables. Numerous businesses only organize events during this period if they are directly related to the Lunar New Year.

During the Lunar New Year, Chinese consumers prefer to allocate funds towards gifts, travel, and festive activities. When introducing new products, it is very important to consider and respect their traditions and cultural values. Being mindful of New Year customs and taboos is vital. For instance, it is deemed inappropriate to demand debt repayment during this joyous occasion.

2.6.2 Mid-Autumn Festival

The Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Mooncake Festival or Moon Festival, takes place on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month when the moon is full at night—typically September or early October according to the Gregorian calendar. It ranks China’s second most significant festival after the Lunar New Year.

The festivities may stretch over three days, with grand festivals held nationwide to venerate the Moon as the ultimate symbol and welcome the harvest. It signifies more than just a celestial event; it serves as an occasion that upholds Chinese values. The fact that the family is the nucleus of society reinforces its cultural importance.

The festival encompasses a variety of celebrations that differ depending on the region, with each region even having its unique ways of celebrating. For instance, they partake in the mesmerizing Tai Hang fire dragon dance in Hong Kong. However, one tradition that unifies the entire nation - the renowned Moon cakes. These delectable treats are a staple dessert/snack throughout the region and serve as a symbolic element of the festival. Families come together to prepare and share these cakes made from flour, golden syrup, alkaline water, and cooking oil, and covered with an elaborate pattern that symbolizes feelings of good luck such as ‘longevity’ or ‘harmony.’ (Castrillón,2021)



Figure 6. SofiaWorld. Moon cakes and Tea. Shutterstock in Britannica

As with Chinese New Year, business measures are necessary during this festival, as most factories and businesses are closed.

**CHAPTER III – PORTUGUESE-CHINESE CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

The establishment of formal diplomatic relations between Portugal and the People's Republic of China began in 1974, after April 25, and ended in 1979. It went through several stages influenced by Portugal's decolonization. Despite this delay, in 1978, the Portuguese-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCILC) was created.

CCILC is a private, non-profit organization that promotes economic and commercial ties between Portugal and China. Based in Lisbon, it has a presence in Guimarães and a representative office in Macau.



Figure 7. CCILC logo. Source: CCILC Website (2024)

The founders of the CCILC—Ferreira da Cunha, António Nolasco, Rogério de Matos, Henrique de Jesus, and Azevedo Botelho—were a group of Portuguese merchants and industrialists who aimed to promote commercial and industrial relations between the two nations.

In this way, CCILC is the “oldest Portuguese platform for supporting relations with the Chinese market, which has systematically helped to develop the economic and commercial relationship between Portugal and China” (CCILC website, my translation).

Fidelidade currently chairs the CCILC. Some fundamental member companies are Haitong Bank, REN/State Grid, Huawei, China Three Gorges, Caixa Geral de Depósitos, EDP, Millennium BCP, Estoril Sol, and Novo Banco. It also includes other multinationals, leading companies, and SMEs from various economic sectors.

CCILC has around 200 members. According to the organization, it forms “a platform to support business development between Portugal and China” (CCILC website, my translation).

3.1 CCILC's Mission

Promotion and protection of members' interests, dissemination of information likely to affect their activities and constant and committed action with official authorities with a view to creating better conditions for resolving problems that help the development of bilateral business. (CCILC Website)

CCILC promotes agreements with companies, institutions, academies..., and all kinds of economics/politics related to China with programs that cover training/events in various areas, such as those linked to the Chinese language and culture. Through its services, CCILC enables member companies to develop ‘their business activities in China in a more efficient, informed and secure manner’ (CCILC website, my translation).

3.2 Services provided by CCILC and listed on the website

Foreign Trade

- Research and listing of company contacts;
- Establishing commercial and business contacts;
- Export support plans;
- Inspection services and pre-shipment checks;
- Market research;
- Trade relations mediation;
- Consultancy and support for participation in trade fairs;
- Support in commercial disputes and litigation;
- Logistics support and goods transport services.

Investment

- Attracting Direct Investment and Promoting Business Opportunities;
- Investor support;
- Support in transactions;
- Support for internationalisation.

Consultancy

- Checking the existence and legal registration of companies;
- Support in contacts with official authorities;
- Establishing academic and scientific partnerships;
- Personalised support for companies on international trips/meetings;
- Issuing Letters of Reference and Representation;
- Advising on Municipal Twinning Agreements;
- Processing visa applications;

- Recruitment of specialized professionals;
- Obtaining Credit Reports.

Legal and Tax Consultancy

- Company Registration;
- Protecting Intellectual Property, Trademarks and Patents;
- Support in concluding commercial and investment contracts;
- Tax Consultancy and Accounting and Financial Consultancy.

Networking events and business missions

- Conferences, seminars, forums, themed workshops, and other events with official organizations and companies;
- Personalised business missions with a dedicated program;
- Reception of official delegations and business groups;
- Access to Partner Events;
- Access to transnational business networks with China.

Communication and Information

- Consultancy and communication plans adapted to the Chinese and Portuguese markets;
- Presenting the company to other associates and official organizations;
- Publication of company information within the scope of its activity;
- Advertising Corporate Events within the scope of Bilateral Relations;
- Publication of the Weekly E-newsletter on Bilateral Economic Affairs;
- Advertising and Communication Services;
- Publicising business and employment opportunities;
- Periodic reports and reviews of dedicated information.

Translation and Interpreting

- Consecutive and simultaneous interpreting at business, academic, and institutional meetings and events;
- Translation of generic and technical documentation;
- Personalised support for tour groups and official and business delegations in Portugal and China.

Language and Culture Training

- Mandarin/Portuguese for Professionals, Students, and Children;
- Personalised courses for companies and executives;
- Preparation for Mandarin Certification Exams;
- Calligraphy Workshops and Chinese Culture Courses;
- Tourism training courses aimed at the Chinese and Portuguese markets;
- Portuguese Language and Culture Training for Chinese Executives;
- Intensive training programs for managers, executives, SMEs, and start-ups in China;
- Training programs on China's business culture and economy for managers and executives;
- Other training programs.

3.3 CCILC established partnerships

Over the last few decades, CCILC has solidified its position as a leading organization for economic ties between Portugal and the People's Republic of China. Its efforts have earned the recognition and trust of a wide range of companies from different countries, mainly Portuguese and Chinese companies.

CCILC has formed collaborative alliances with various institutions to improve the quality of its services. Through these partnerships, CCILC participates in the development of projects and activities and the exchange of information. Here are some examples of Portuguese and Chinese institutions with which CCILC has established partnerships:

- Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Portugal;
- China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT);
- China Chamber of International Commerce (CCOIC);
- Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM);
- Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Forum Macau);
- EU-China Business Association (EUCBA);
- European Union Chamber of Commerce in China (ECU);
- EU SME Center;
- China Foreign Trade Center (CFTC);
- All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC).

CHAPTER IV – CCILC INTERNSHIP

As CCILC's head office is located on Avenida da Liberdade in Lisbon, and I live in the north of Portugal, I could do my internship remotely. As a result, I was able to fulfill my duties entirely online. My internship lasted five months, from 15 January 2024 to 15 June 2024.

The main focus of my internship was communication, and I worked under the guidance of Vítor Costa. However, I also received tasks from other advisors with varying degrees of involvement. Vítor Costa, my mentor, was responsible for assigning me tasks, guiding me, and giving me feedback. He encouraged me to solve problems independently and, at the same time, was available to help me whenever necessary, ensuring that no task was left unfinished due to a lack of knowledge.

This chapter briefly overviews some of the most critical work and tasks carried out during the internship.

4.1 Website and Social Media

I managed news and events on various platforms during my internship, mostly the CCILC website.

The news was sourced from websites covering Portuguese, English, and Chinese. It was imperative to ensure that the news was updated daily whenever possible. To achieve this, I turned to renowned Portuguese newspapers such as *Diário de Notícias*, *Expresso*, *Observador*, and *Público*. In addition, I consulted renowned English-language news sites such as *The Times*, *BBC News*, *EL PAÍS*, *The Guardian*, and *Yicai*. I also turned to some news sites that offer news coverage in several languages, such as *People's Daily* and *Chinadaily*.

The news centered mainly on political and economic issues, including new agreements and partnerships, Chinese investments in Portugal and vice versa, cultural and language promotions, and updates on the economies of both countries.

For the events, I created the news for the events and published it on the website and social networks.

Another task I was left to manage was improving the website itself. In particular, I kept an eye out for new official documents to put on the site or replace old ones with new ones, improved the content of the site's sections to make them more appealing, and deleted content that I found less interesting. This task was done daily, involving a lot of research and time.

4.2 Canton Fair - Business Matching

One of my jobs was organizing the Canton Fair's online Business Matching, a collaboration between the Canton Fair and CCILC on 27 March 2024. As the Canton Fair is one of China's oldest and most renowned multi-sector fairs, Business Matching was initiated by collaborating with the Fair and CCILC to identify and schedule meetings with Chinese suppliers without leaving home.

Participation was completely free of charge and consisted of the following process:

- Buyers submitted the characteristics of the desired product;
- The Canton Fair identified the list of suppliers with the most suitable profile;
- The buyers selected the suppliers;
- Meetings were scheduled via Zoom.

To realize all the above, my work was divided into stages:

In the first stage, I did an exhaustive job of creating personalized emails to various Portuguese companies from a list designed by CCILC to invite them to Business Matching. The companies that showed interest responded to a form sent to them via email. I also answered their questions, trying to clear up any doubts and make their experience more positive.

In the second stage, I contacted the companies again by email and phone call, this time the ones that had filled in the registration form, to send them the list of suppliers identified by the Canton Fair with the most suitable profile, considering the desired product. The companies chose the suppliers they most identified with from the list and contacted me again.

In the third stage, I contacted the companies again to remind them of the Business Matching date and confirm their participation.

In the final stage, after the Business Matching, I contacted the companies again, sending an email with a form created by the Canton fair to get feedback from the participating companies. Once they had filled in the form, I collated all the forms so that CCILC could send them to the Canton fair.

4.3 Events

During the internship, I had the opportunity to attend two face-to-face events: the "Food and Beverage Exporting to the Chinese Market" workshop organized by the Portuguese Society of Innovation (SPI) and the EU SME Centre and Informal Business Networking organized by various Chambers of Commerce and other organizations.

4.3.1 Workshop "Food and Beverage Exporting to the Chinese Market"

The first event I enjoyed attending was the "Food and Beverage Exporting to the Chinese Market" workshop organized by SPI and the EU SME Centre, held on April 10, 2024, in Porto. The workshop took place in the morning and featured several speakers.

An SPI Board of Directors member, Sara Medina, delivered the opening remarks. Then, a presentation on the Portugal-China Young Entrepreneurs Association followed.

Deolinda Silva, Executive Director of Portugal Foods, presented on the company and its activities. Later, Daniel Pedroso, Project Director at EIBENS, presented "Understanding China's Food and Beverage Market: Opportunities and Challenges."

Participants had the opportunity to network during the coffee break following the first round of presentations. This break was vital for establishing valuable connections, exchanging ideas and experiences, and discussing potential collaborations with industry professionals.

After the break, Daniel Pedroso proceeded with a series of presentations, starting with "Solutions for Food and Beverage Exports to China: Navigating the Regulatory Landscape." He then transitioned to "Digitalisation as the Key to Success: Strategies for Entering the Chinese Market" and concluded with an enlightening talk on "The Fundamentals of Collaborative Innovation in China's Food and Beverage Industry."

To close the event, António Gaspar, Country Manager for China at Super Bock Group, shared his valuable insights and experiences in a presentation entitled "China Market: Learnings & Experience Sharing."

Participating in this event was crucial for improving my knowledge of exporting food and beverages to the Chinese market and broadening my professional network.



Figure 8- Workshop Food & Beverage exporting to the Chinese market on Porto on April 10, 2024. Source: SPI

4.3.2 Informal Business Networking

On the same day as the workshop, but now in the evening, I attended the informal Business Networking event at the Renaissance Porto Lapa Hotel. This event brought together a vast network of business people and representatives from various markets for a networking session in a relaxed atmosphere conducive to making contact and identifying opportunities for cooperation/business. These sessions are essential for increasing contact networks and creating lasting relationships, significantly benefiting companies.

This Business Networking was an initiative of the following organizations: Luso-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Luso-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, British-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce, Luso-Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Luso-South African Chamber of Commerce, Dutch Portuguese Chamber of Commerce, Path of Democracy, National Association of Young Entrepreneurs and CCILC itself.

I enjoyed participating in this event, as it allowed me to observe the inner workings of a business networking session up close. I gained a deep understanding of the dynamics of these interactions, the importance of creating a relaxed atmosphere to promote successful conversations, and the value that can be derived from establishing meaningful connections for professional development and business expansion. This experience proved incredibly enriching and offered a new perspective to my internship.

4.4 Email to join CCILC

One of the tasks I also carried out was to create a new membership email to invite Portuguese companies that have started or have some partnership with China to join CCILC.

In addition to creating the email, it was important to be on the lookout for sources of information that mentioned new partnerships between Portuguese and Chinese companies, so that we could send an email inviting them to join and congratulating them on the new partnership. This was a daily job of consulting and looking for possible new members

The preparation of this internship report allowed for an in-depth analysis of relations between Portugal and China, discussing the main historical, cultural, and commercial milestones that have shaped this relationship over the centuries. From the first contacts established by Portugal with China in the 16th century, through some disagreements and with Macau as the final point in the way it helped shape strategic and cultural bridges between these two countries, it is clear that the current dynamic is significantly influenced by shared history. Macau's heritage stands out as an enduring symbol of these relations because, despite being under Portuguese administration for centuries, it has always been seen as a fusion of two worlds with its own distinct identity. The handover of Macau to China in 1999 had a significant impact. It began a new phase in Sino-Portuguese relations, where the focus shifted from politics to economics, driven by Chinese economic growth.

In business, as part of the trade agreement between the two nations, it is advisable to have a basic knowledge of Chinese culture and how people relate to each other. For example, Chinese society is characterized by specific features, such as “Guanxi” (loosely translated as a network of relationships between people), and by social hierarchy and the preservation of “Mianzi” (face), which provide challenges and opportunities that are quite different from Western practices. The contrast between “collectivist” Chinese society and “individualist” Western societies, analyzed in Chapter II, revealed that business and communication approaches must be adjusted according to the societies to make them more appropriate. In addition, the leading Chinese festivals, such as Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival, and their impact on business operations are a clear example of how culture is strongly intertwined with the rhythm of business in China.

The Luso-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCILC) is a pivotal facilitator for Portuguese and Chinese companies seeking to explore commercial opportunities in both markets. During my 5-month internship at CCILC, I gained invaluable knowledge about Portuguese-Chinese business interactions, actively participating in various activities. This ranged from managing CCILC's website and social media to coordinating events such as the Canton Fair's Business Matching and participating in other informal networking initiatives and workshops. These experiences gave me a profound understanding of how cultural differences and country-specific business practices influence business relationships. They also underscored the vital role

of CCILC in facilitating these transactions, making it a key player in the Portuguese-Chinese business landscape.

This work emphasizes the importance of in-depth knowledge of the historical, cultural, and business roots of relations between Portugal and China. The work analysis proves that the success of relations with Portugal and China depends heavily on respect for cultural traditions and values, with CCILC also playing an important mediating role.

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