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**Cultural Factors in Post-Pandemic Negotiations: A
Case Study of Luna Pazmiño's Imports from
China (2021–2025)**

Project prior to obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in
International Studies

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To God, because without Him, none of this would be possible.
Because He was my guide, my refuge, and the One who sustained me when I no longer had the strength. This achievement reflects Your grace in my life.

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Because with your own hands you built everything for me, alone, without giving up. Your dreams also live on in me, and today I understand that every step I take carries your story.

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Because with you I learned that true love is not only felt, but also built, nurtured, and chosen every day. Because a threefold cord is not easily broken.

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My companion of so many years, for being there on those long nights, when exhaustion weighed heavily and yet you kept going, always by my side, in silence, but present. You are also part of this journey and of my life.

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Cultural Factors in Post-Pandemic Negotiations: A Case Study of Luna Pazmiño's Imports from China (2021–2025)

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the impact of cultural factors on the international negotiations of the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño with Chinese suppliers during the post-pandemic period (2021–2025). The main objective is to understand how cultural differences influence communication, trust-building, decision-making, and the execution of commercial agreements in intercultural contexts. The research is grounded in classical and contemporary theoretical approaches to intercultural negotiation, including the models of Hofstede and Trompenaars and the relational perspectives of Gelfand and Brett, as well as the concepts of cultural intelligence and *guanxi*. Methodologically, a qualitative approach is adopted with a non-experimental design and a case study strategy, using semi-structured interviews with key actors in international trade and document analysis as the primary data collection techniques. The findings show that culture has a structural impact on negotiations, particularly regarding the need for communicative precision, the progressive building of trust, differences in time orientation, and adaptation to digital environments. It is identified that negotiation is not limited to the trade agreement but extends to the operational and documentary phases, where cultural differences also manifest. It is concluded that strategically understanding and managing these factors is essential for strengthening international trade relations and improving the competitiveness of Ecuadorian companies in the global context.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Negotiation, Post-Pandemic, China, Ecuador

Factores Culturales en las Negociaciones Postpandemia: Estudio de Caso de la Empresa Luna Pazmiño en sus Importaciones desde China (2021–2025)

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo de titulación analiza la incidencia de los factores culturales en las negociaciones internacionales de la empresa Comercial Luna Pazmiño con proveedores chinos durante el periodo postpandemia (2021–2025). El objetivo principal es comprender cómo las diferencias culturales influyen en la comunicación, la construcción de confianza, la toma de decisiones y la ejecución de acuerdos comerciales en contextos interculturales. La investigación se sustenta en enfoques teóricos clásicos y contemporáneos de la negociación intercultural, incluyendo los modelos de Hofstede, Trompenaars y las perspectivas relacionales de Gelfand y Brett, así como los conceptos de inteligencia cultural y *guanxi*. Metodológicamente, se adopta un enfoque cualitativo con diseño no experimental y estrategia de estudio de caso, utilizando entrevistas semiestructuradas a actores clave del comercio internacional y análisis documental como técnicas principales de recolección de datos. Los hallazgos evidencian que la cultura incide de manera estructural en las negociaciones, especialmente en la necesidad de precisión comunicativa, la construcción progresiva de confianza, las diferencias en la orientación temporal y la adaptación a entornos digitales. Se identifica que la negociación no se limita al acuerdo comercial, sino que se extiende a la fase operativa y documental, donde también se manifiestan diferencias culturales. Se concluye que comprender y gestionar estratégicamente estos factores resulta fundamental para fortalecer las relaciones comerciales internacionales y mejorar la competitividad de las empresas ecuatorianas en el contexto global.

Palabras clave: Comunicación Intercultural, Negociación Intercultural, Postpandemia, China, Ecuador.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of a globalized world, economic and trade relations between countries have experienced sustained growth, driven by market interdependence, technological advancement, and the expansion of international trade. This scenario has led to a significant increase in interactions among actors from different cultural backgrounds, where international negotiations have become a key element for business development. However, these interactions are not limited to economic or technical aspects; rather, they are deeply influenced by cultural factors that shape how parties communicate, build trust, make decisions, and manage agreements.

Culture, understood as the set of values, beliefs, norms, and practices shared by a society, plays a fundamental role in international negotiation processes. Cultural differences can generate both opportunities and challenges, as they influence communication styles, perceptions of time, the management of uncertainty, and the structure of business relationships. Various theoretical approaches, such as the models of Hofstede and Trompenaars, have made it possible to identify cultural patterns that explain the behavior of actors in intercultural contexts, highlighting the need to understand culture as a strategic element in international business.

This study is structured around three main components: first, the influence of cultural factors on the dynamics of international negotiation; second, the impact of the post-pandemic context, characterized by the digitization of processes, the virtualization of business relationships, and increased uncertainty; and third, the empirical analysis of the case study, which allows us to understand how these elements manifest in a real-world context.

The post-COVID-19 pandemic landscape has redefined the dynamics of international trade, creating new challenges for businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which must adapt to digital environments, manage relationships remotely, and face higher levels of uncertainty. In this context, cultural differences take on even greater relevance, as they influence how trust is built in virtual environments, how messages are interpreted, and how commercial agreements are established.

In the case of Ecuador, SMEs play a fundamental role in international trade, although they face limitations in terms of resources, access to information, and the development of intercultural competencies. The company Luna Pazmiño, which imports products from China, serves as a representative case study that allows for a specific analysis of how cultural

factors influence international negotiations in the post-pandemic context. Through this case study, the aim is not only to understand the intercultural dynamics affecting commercial relations but also to propose strategies applicable to other Ecuadorian companies operating in international markets.

Despite the theoretical development in the field of intercultural negotiation, there is limited academic research focused on empirical studies applied to Ecuadorian SMEs that negotiate with China, especially in the post-pandemic context; this academic gap justifies the importance of the present study, which seeks to provide situated evidence on the relationship between culture, negotiation, and the transformation of commercial dynamics in globalized environments.

The research is intended as both an academic and practical contribution, comprehensively analyzing the influence of cultural factors on international negotiations and proposing strategies that contribute to improving intercultural communication, strengthening commercial relationships, and enhancing the competitiveness of Ecuadorian SMEs in the international context.

Background and Rationale

The study of intercultural negotiation has been extensively addressed from various theoretical perspectives that recognize the influence of culture on international interaction processes; models such as those proposed by Hofstede and Trompenaars have made it possible to identify cultural dimensions that explain differences in communication styles, decision-making, and the building of commercial relationships. Likewise, contemporary approaches have incorporated concepts such as cultural intelligence and adaptability as essential competencies for navigating globalized environments.

In the empirical realm, various studies have analyzed commercial relations between China and Latin America, revealing significant cultural differences in aspects such as hierarchy, communication, trust-building, and time orientation. However, much of this research has focused on large corporations, neglecting the reality of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which face particular constraints in their internationalization processes.

In the Ecuadorian context, SMEs are a key player in foreign trade, although they face challenges in developing intercultural strategies that allow them to efficiently manage their international negotiations. Added to this is the transformation of trade dynamics resulting

from the COVID-19 pandemic, which introduced significant changes in negotiation processes, such as the virtualization of interactions and increased uncertainty.

There is a limited body of academic research focused on analyzing cultural factors in international negotiations between Ecuadorian SMEs and Chinese suppliers in the post-pandemic context. This gap justifies the relevance of the present study, which analyzes the case of the company Luna Pazmiño intending to generate applied knowledge that contributes to improving intercultural negotiation practices; in this way, the research not only contributes to academic development but also offers practical tools that can be used by other Ecuadorian companies operating in international trade.

Research Question

How do cultural factors influence the international negotiations of the Luna Pazmiño company in its import processes from China during the 2021–2025 period, in the post-pandemic context?

General Objective

To analyze the influence of cultural factors on the international negotiations of the Luna Pazmiño company in its import processes from China during the 2021–2025 period, in the post-pandemic context.

Specific Objectives

Review the main theories and approaches related to cultural factors applied to international negotiation processes.

To analyze the commercial interactions of the Luna Pazmiño company in its import processes from China in the post-COVID-19 pandemic context.

Propose intercultural communication strategies that contribute to improving the company's relationships and negotiation outcomes with its Chinese suppliers.

Activities and Expected Outcomes

Based on the objectives set forth, activities will be carried out focused on theoretical review, empirical analysis, and strategy formulation. First, a review and systematization of the theoretical framework will be conducted to establish a solid conceptual foundation

regarding culture and intercultural negotiation. As a result, a coherent theoretical basis is expected to be established to support the research analysis.

Second, the commercial interactions of the Luna Pazmiño company will be analyzed through interviews and document analysis, which will allow for the identification of the main cultural factors that influence negotiation processes. As a result, we expect to gain a detailed understanding of the intercultural dynamics present in the case study. Intercultural communication strategies will be formulated based on the findings, aimed at strengthening commercial relationships and improving negotiation outcomes. These strategies will not only apply to the company under study but may also serve as a reference for other Ecuadorian SMEs engaged in international trade.

CHAPTER 1

STATE-OF-THE-ART

1.1 Evolution of Studies on Culture and International Negotiation

Academic research on international negotiation has progressively incorporated the analysis of culture as a central axis for explaining economic interactions among actors from different countries. In its early stages, the literature focused primarily on identifying cultural differences at the national level and analyzing how these influenced negotiation styles, based on the assumption that shared values within a society relatively stable condition communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution; Culture was conceptualized as a set of norms, values, and beliefs that guide individuals' negotiating behavior, an approach that was consolidated by the contributions of Hofstede (2011); Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002).

By structuring cultural patterns that can be compared across nations, these pioneering studies made an essential contribution to the field, enabling international business experts and researchers to anticipate potential discrepancies in negotiating styles. However, this initial approach also tends to favor an essentialist and static view of culture, in which negotiating behaviors are explained primarily by national affiliations, downplaying the dynamic nature of actual interactions. With the advance of globalization and the intensification of trade, the literature began to highlight the limitations of these initial approaches; subsequent research demonstrated that international negotiations cannot be understood solely through a rational or economic lens, nor explained exclusively by national cultural differences.

In this regard, authors such as Adair and Brett (2005) expand the analysis by showing that negotiation processes are deeply intertwined with symbolic, relational, and cultural elements; these influence the perception of the other party, the interpretation of the rules of exchange, and the willingness to cooperate or compete. This paradigm shift in the specialized literature allowed for a critical shift in the focus of analysis, moving away from viewing cultural differences as independent and static variables toward understanding negotiation as a complex and multidimensional social process. Under this approach, negotiation transcends the simple, pursuit of immediate material benefits, becoming a space where actors strategically manage their identities, mutual expectations, and the sustainability of their long-term relationships.

Fundamental empirical research has demonstrated that critical dimensions such as trust-building, perception of time, tolerance for ambiguity, and communication patterns do not function as silos. On the contrary, authors such as Lewicki et al. (2014) argue that these variables are essentially contingent upon implicit cultural frameworks—underlying structures that operate as cognitive maps dictating and shaping the behavior of negotiators at the table.

In recent years, scholarly debate has refined this perspective by challenging and deconstructing the conventional view of culture, which was traditionally understood as a static, one-dimensional, or predetermined structure; contemporary literature, led by authors such as Gelfand and Brett (2004), proposes a much more fluid view in which culture manifests itself in situational and relational ways. This implies that behavior does not depend solely on the actors' origins, but on the confluence of the specific context of the encounter, the historical trajectory of previous interactions, and the particular psychology of the individuals involved.

Consequently, intercultural negotiation is now redefined as a phenomenon in a state of constant construction. In this interactive flow, meanings and norms are not fixed givens, but rather emerge, are contested, and are reconfigured during the dialogue itself. This perspective is particularly relevant today, especially when examining international negotiations in environments of high uncertainty and digital transformation stemming from the post-pandemic landscape, where conventional protocols have given way to hybrid dynamics that demand much greater cultural flexibility on the part of researchers and practitioners.

1.2 The Use and Critique of Cultural Models in Empirical Studies of Negotiation

The cultural models developed by Hofstede (2011) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002) have occupied a central place in empirical studies on intercultural negotiation, particularly in comparative research across countries and regions. These models made it possible to operationalize culture through analytical dimensions that facilitated the study of differences in leadership styles, communication, decision-making, and power management in international business contexts, establishing themselves as classic references within the field of international business (Venaik and Brewer, 2008).

In the Asian context, and especially in China, numerous studies based on Hofstede's model highlighted the relevance of dimensions such as long-term orientation, high power distance, and a preference for social harmony. These studies agreed that negotiations with Chinese partners are typically characterized by a clearly defined hierarchical structure, an emphasis on the relationship over the formal contract, and a gradual building of trust prior to the formalization of commercial agreements (Fang, 2012; Hofstede Insights, 2022). These contributions significantly helped explain why negotiation processes in China tend to be more protracted and relational compared to more contractual Western approaches.

However, as these models became widely adopted, a critical perspective emerged that questioned their uncritical application. Various authors warned that using national cultural indices as direct predictors of negotiating behavior can lead to cultural stereotypes and simplified interpretations of complex dynamics. Kirkman et al. (2006) argue that cultural dimensions should not be automatically extrapolated to the individual level or used as rigid determinants of behavior in specific negotiations, as this obscures the influence of contextual, organizational, and relational factors.

In response to these criticisms, contemporary literature has proposed integrative approaches that combine classical cultural models with process-oriented and relational perspectives. Furthermore, culture is viewed not as a deterministic variable, but as an interpretive framework that interacts with the actors' experience, relationship history, and strategies for intercultural adaptation. Authors such as Gelfand & Brett (2004) emphasize that understanding negotiation outcomes requires analyzing how actors negotiate in practice, continuously adjusting their behaviors and expectations. This trend is particularly relevant for qualitative case studies, as it allows for capturing the complexity and dynamism of intercultural interactions without reducing them to rigid categories.

1.3 Comparative Studies on Negotiation between China and Latin America

The strengthening of economic relations between China and Latin America has spurred growing interest in analyzing the cultural differences that influence negotiation processes between the two regions. Various studies agree that Chinese negotiation culture is characterized by the centrality of *guanxi*, understood as a network of personal relationships based on trust, reciprocity, and long-term commitment (Gangyi et al., 2018). This relational approach has been identified as a structural element that shapes how trade agreements are established and maintained in the Chinese context.

Empirical research indicates that, within this framework, negotiations with Chinese actors tend to avoid confrontation, prioritize social harmony, and unfold progressively, allowing trust to be built over time through consistency and the fulfillment of commitments. Buckley et al. (2018) highlight that this relational logic explains why the formal contract is often considered a stage following the consolidation of the interpersonal bond, rather than a starting point of the negotiation process.

In contrast, studies in Latin America describe cultural patterns characterized by greater flexibility, informality, and the centrality of interpersonal relationships. Research conducted in the region shows that Latin American negotiators tend to prioritize interpersonal closeness, direct communication, and adaptability to changing contexts, even in formal business settings; while these characteristics may facilitate the rapid building of relationships, they can also generate different expectations regarding the timing and forms of negotiation (Lopez Duarte & Vidal Suárez, 2012; Ogliastrri, 2008).

The comparative literature warns that these cultural differences can create significant tensions in cross-cultural negotiations when there is a lack of adequate understanding of the other party's relational logic; recent studies emphasize that such tensions intensify in asymmetric negotiation contexts, where there are imbalances in economic power, access to information, and institutional capacity—a situation frequently observed in commercial relations between Latin American SMEs and Chinese suppliers (Ji et al., 2024). This research highlights the need to analyze Ecuador-China negotiations from a perspective that considers both cultural differences and the structural conditions in which they take place.

1.4 Cultural Identity and Trust-Building in Intercultural Negotiations

Trust-building has consistently been identified as one of the most critical elements in intercultural negotiation, where contemporary approaches no longer view trust solely as a rational cost-benefit calculation but rather conceptualize it as a social construct influenced by cultural perceptions, shared identities, and accumulated relational experiences (Lewicki et al., 2014).

Drawing on social identity theory, Adair & Brett (2005) argue that actors tend to trust those perceived as members of their own group more, while cultural differences can generate uncertainty and initial mistrust. In this sense, intercultural negotiation is not limited to economic exchange but involves a process of managing cultural identities and mutual

expectations, where interpreting the other's intentions is fundamental. Comparative empirical studies show that trust is built differently depending on the cultural context.

In Latin America, it typically develops through interpersonal communication, empathy, and reciprocity, whereas in the Chinese context, it is built more gradually through hierarchical respect, consistency in behavior, and the progressive fulfillment of commitments (Dinh & Hilmarsson, 2020). These differences can create friction when one party expects immediate results and the other prioritizes the long-term relationship, a situation that poses a particular challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises with limited resources.

1.5 International Negotiation, Digitalization, and the Post-Pandemic Context

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point in the dynamics of international trade and in intercultural negotiation processes. The accelerated virtualization of commercial interactions has significantly reduced in-person contact and transformed traditional communication channels, affecting the way in which international commercial relationships are built and maintained (Verbeke & Hutzschenreuter, 2021).

Recent studies warn that technology-mediated negotiation limits nonverbal communication and the informal spaces where intercultural trust was traditionally built, introducing new challenges for the management of international relations (Ji et al., 2024). This gives rise to the notion of digital trust, understood as the ability to generate credibility and legitimacy through informational transparency, process traceability, and consistent compliance with agreements in virtual environments.

In the case of China, recent research shows that digital trust has become a new cultural criterion for evaluating business partners in electronic negotiations, reshaping traditional practices such as *guanxi* in digital environments. On the other hand, in Latin America, various studies show that SMEs have adopted resilience strategies based on accelerated digitalization and the intensive use of virtual platforms, although they face significant gaps in intercultural competencies (ECLAC, 2020).

Despite the sustained growth of research on intercultural negotiation, digitalization, and China-Latin America relations, a significant gap persists in the empirical analysis of how cultural factors interact with digitalization in international negotiations involving small

businesses. Most studies focus on large corporations or macroeconomic analyses, leaving the micro-cultural dynamics that characterize post-pandemic negotiations between Ecuadorian SMEs and Chinese suppliers largely unexplored. This academic gap justifies the relevance of the present study and reinforces its contribution to the field of international studies.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 International Negotiation and Intercultural Negotiation: Deepening the Processual and Relational Approach

International negotiation has traditionally been approached in the literature on international business as a mechanism through which actors from different countries seek to reach agreements that regulate economic, commercial, or institutional exchanges. In its early formulations, this process was conceived from a primarily rational perspective, which assumed that participants negotiated based on well-established interests, analyzed costs and benefits, and chose actions aimed at optimizing outcomes. However, when attempting to explain real-world negotiations between people from different cultures, this approach quickly revealed its limitations, as the results did not always align with objective economic calculations (Varner & Bearner, 2011).

Based on this observation, the literature began to incorporate social and cultural variables to explain the complexity of the negotiation process. Lewicki et al. (2014) represent a turning point in this theoretical development by defining negotiation as a structured social process, composed of multiple interdependent phases that unfold over time. From their perspective, negotiation is not a one-off event, but a sequence of interactions influenced by the relationship's history, perceptions of legitimacy, accumulated trust, and cultural interpretations of the counterpart's behavior. This conceptualization helps explain why negotiations that are similar in economic terms can lead to radically different outcomes.

Gelfand & Brett (2004) explore this perspective by explicitly including the intercultural element: if the actors come from different cultures, negotiation acquires an additional level of complexity, as the implicit norms regarding how to negotiate, which tactics are legitimate, and how others' behavior is interpreted differ considerably across different cultural contexts. Under this logic, culture functions as an interpretive filter that determines both the process and the outcome of the negotiation.

Salacuse (1998) argues that international negotiation is organized around various cultural dimensions, including a preference for contracts or relationships, communication style, power management, and time orientation. These dimensions do not operate independently but are interconnected and take on particular importance in situations of uncertainty, such as those arising after a pandemic. In this vein, intercultural negotiation is

established as an essential analytical framework for understanding contemporary negotiation processes, particularly in contexts where interactions are virtualized and traditional communication channels are fragmented.

2.2 Culture and Cultural Identity in the Structuring of International Negotiation

Culture has been conceptualized as a central element for understanding human and organizational behavior in international contexts. Hofstede (2011) defines culture as a system of shared values that distinguishes members of a society and influences the way individuals perceive authority, manage uncertainty, prioritize collective or individual goals, and establish relationships with other actors. This approach made it possible to operationalize culture into comparable analytical dimensions, facilitating the empirical study of cultural differences in international negotiation contexts.

This approach has been questioned for its tendency to conceive of culture as a homogeneous and relatively stable system. In response to these limitations, Geertz (1973) proposes an interpretive perspective that redefines culture as a “web of meanings” constructed by the social actors themselves. From this perspective, culture does not mechanically determine behavior, but rather offers symbolic frameworks that individuals use to interpret reality and guide their actions. This conception is particularly relevant for the analysis of intercultural negotiations, where meanings are not given in advance but are constructed and reconstructed throughout the negotiation process.

Schein (2020) expands this discussion by presenting the relationship between national culture and organizational culture: organizations create unique cultural patterns that are in constant interaction with national values, resulting in hybrid practices that adapt depending on the context and prior experience. In global negotiation situations, this interaction means that participants not only embody national cultures but also possess organizational identities that influence their approaches to negotiation, decision-making, and conflict resolution.

The notion of cultural identity, developed by Hall (1989), complements this theoretical framework by linking culture not only to shared value systems but also to a sense of belonging and the social construction of individuals’ identities in contexts of intercultural interaction. From this perspective, cultural identity is not a fixed or essential attribute, but rather a dynamic process that is shaped and reaffirmed through interaction with other actors, especially in settings where distinct cultural frameworks converge. In international

negotiations, this identity construction is particularly intense, as actors constantly interpret the behavior of the counterpart through cultural categories that allow them to assign meanings, intentions, and levels of legitimacy to the observed actions.

Hall (1989) argues that cultural identity shapes how individuals assess the credibility, legitimacy, and trustworthiness of the other party—elements that are central to decision-making in negotiation contexts. These evaluations are not based solely on objective or contractual criteria, but are mediated by implicit cultural perceptions, such as the degree of closeness, the consistency between discourse and behavior, and the other party's conformity to expected cultural norms. In this sense, cultural identity directly influences the actors' willingness to cooperate, make concessions, or, conversely, maintain rigid positions toward the counterpart.

In the realm of international negotiation, these perceptions play a structural role in building trust, since trust is not established solely based on immediate results, but rather through the gradual validation of the other party's identity as a legitimate and trustworthy actor within one's own cultural framework; where cultural identity becomes a key component for the sustainability of the agreements reached, as it determines the continuity of the negotiating relationship, the willingness to engage in future exchanges, and the stability of commercial ties in the long term.

2.3 Cultural Models as Analytical Pillars of Intercultural Negotiation

For the systematic analysis of culture in negotiation processes, this study adopts the dimensions proposed by Hofstede (2011) and Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (2002) as primary frameworks. These typologies provide an analytical framework for understanding how cultural differences influence dispute resolution. Their application is critical for identifying specific behavioral patterns—ranging from perceptions of authority to time orientation—that determine the effectiveness of interactions in international markets.

The main contribution of these approaches lies in having transformed culture into an operational analytical variable, facilitating the transition from general descriptions to comparative empirical analyses. However, the literature has questioned the internal logic of these models, noting that their deterministic application can lead to cultural stereotypes. Buckley et al. (2018) challenge the automatic extrapolation of national cultural dimensions to individual behavior, cautioning that culture does not operate as a closed or homogeneous system.

The proposal by Gelfand & Brett (2004) and Lewicki et al. (2014) represents an evolution toward hybrid models where culture acts as an interpretive lens rather than a behavioral determinant. This approach recognizes that prior experience and situational context allow negotiators to adjust their strategies dynamically. For case studies such as this one, this perspective is crucial, as it allows for documenting the complexity of actual negotiation practice, avoiding the excessive generalizations of purely dimensional models.

2.4 Cultural Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence as Mediating Capacities in Negotiation

The concept of cultural intelligence emerges as a theoretical response to the need to explain why some negotiators manage to function effectively in intercultural contexts, even when facing significant cultural differences.

Earley & Mosakowski (2004) define cultural intelligence as a multidimensional capacity that enables individuals to function effectively in contexts characterized by cultural diversity. This capacity is structured into three interrelated components. First, the cognitive component, which refers to the individual's knowledge of norms, values, practices, and cultural systems different from their own, and which allows them to adequately interpret intercultural behaviors and situations. Second, the motivational component, linked to the individual's interest, willingness, and confidence to interact with people from other cultures, even in situations of uncertainty or ambiguity. The behavioral component— —manifests itself in the ability to adapt verbal and nonverbal behavior to the demands of the specific cultural context.

This approach represents a significant shift in the analysis of culture within the field of intercultural negotiation studies, as it shifts the focus from culture understood as an external and determinative structure toward the individual competencies that enable active management of cultural diversity in negotiation practice. Here, cultural intelligence acts as a mediating mechanism between structural cultural differences and the specific interactions that occur during negotiation, enabling actors to interpret implicit cultural signals, adjust their communication strategies, and flexibly regulate their behavior in response to changing contexts. This mediation is particularly relevant in international negotiations, where ambiguity, incomplete information, and divergent cultural expectations are recurring elements.

Complementarily, Goleman (1999) introduces the concept of emotional intelligence from a general perspective of competencies oriented toward managing one's own and others' emotions, highlighting dimensions such as self-awareness, emotional self-regulation, and empathy. These capabilities allow individuals to recognize their own emotional reactions, control impulses, and understand the emotions of the counterpart—fundamental aspects for the stability of social interactions in negotiation contexts.

Thomas et al. (2008) articulate both approaches by arguing that effectiveness in intercultural negotiation does not depend exclusively on cultural knowledge, but on the ability to integrate cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence into practice. From this perspective, the most effective negotiators are those who manage to combine a cognitive understanding of cultural differences with the emotional management of tensions, frustrations, and divergent expectations. This integration allows for the interpretation of implicit messages, an empathetic response to culturally distinct behaviors, and the strengthening of mutual trust, especially in contexts of high uncertainty such as post-pandemic international trade, where the virtualization of interactions and the reduction of in-person contact have intensified the complexity of negotiating relationships.

2.5 Cultural Logistics in Latin America and China: A Comparative Deep Dive

Research on intercultural negotiation in Latin America and China highlights the coexistence of cultural systems with distinct logics that shape negotiation processes. In Latin America, Ogliastri (2008) identifies a strong relational orientation characterized by flexibility, informality, and the centrality of interpersonal trust. These characteristics influence how agreements are built, prioritizing interpersonal closeness and adaptability in the face of changing contexts.

Dinh & Hilmarsson (2020) have argued that business culture in China is strongly influenced by values linked to Confucianism. Among these values, the pursuit of social harmony, respect for hierarchy, reciprocity, and a marked inclination toward the long term stand out. These concepts do not operate independently but form a relational system that guides business conduct and negotiation dynamics in the Chinese context. From this perspective, negotiation is understood not as a battleground of conflicting interests but as a gradual process of developing strong, mutually beneficial relationships.

Fang (2012) expands on this idea by arguing that Chinese culture possesses a dialectic of reality, where opposites do not reject one another but coexist and balance each other. From this perspective on negotiation, this view suggests that the pursuit of harmony does not imply the absence of conflict, but rather its indirect and strategic management, avoiding confrontation and favoring solutions that preserve the relationship; respect for hierarchy plays an important role in decision-making processes, as the most important decisions tend to be concentrated at high levels of authority, which directly influences negotiation timelines and the communication of agreements.

Dinh and Hilmarsson (2020) complement this analysis by conceptualizing *guanxi* as the relational mechanism that articulates these cultural values in business practice. *Guanxi* manifests as a network of personal ties based on trust, reciprocity, and mutual commitment, functioning as an informal system for regulating commercial relationships. Through this network, actors reduce the uncertainty inherent in negotiation, establish shared expectations, and generate reciprocal obligations that transcend the content of the formal contract; it does not replace the contract, but rather precedes and complements it, granting it social legitimacy within the Chinese cultural framework.

The literature indicates that these cultural logics are compatible with Latin American negotiation styles, which are also characterized by a relational orientation. However, they do generate different expectations regarding time, the formalization of agreements, and reciprocity. While in the Chinese context trust is built gradually and over the long term, through consistent behavior and the progressive fulfillment of commitments, Latin American SMEs tend to expect faster progress and tangible results within relatively short timeframes. These differences can intensify in asymmetric negotiation contexts, where there are imbalances in resources, information, and bargaining power, as frequently occurs in commercial relationships between Latin American SMEs and Chinese suppliers.

In this scenario, a lack of understanding of the structural role of *guanxi* can lead to misinterpretations by Latin American companies, which might perceive the absence of immediate decisions or communicative ambiguity as a lack of commitment, when in reality it stems from a cultural logic aimed at consolidating the relationship. Therefore, an analysis of *guanxi* and the Confucian values that underpin it is essential for understanding the dynamics of intercultural negotiation between China and Latin America, especially in the post-pandemic context, where the virtualization of interactions has reshaped traditional mechanisms for building trust.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This research adopts a qualitative approach, given that its central purpose is to understand and interpret the impact of cultural factors on international negotiations conducted by the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño with suppliers located in China during the post-pandemic period (2021–2025).

A qualitative approach is appropriate when the researcher's interest is focused on exploring meanings, experiences, and relational dynamics within a specific context. Flick & Uwe (2014) note that qualitative research studies phenomena in their natural settings, interpreting the meanings that people attribute to their actions. In this study, cultural factors are not conceived as isolated, quantifiable elements, but rather as symbolic, relational, and contextual dimensions that influence how trust is negotiated, communicated, and built in intercultural contexts.

Taylor et al. (2016) argue that qualitative research allows for an understanding of social reality from the perspective of the actors themselves, emphasizing the interpretation of their experiences, perceptions, and meanings in specific contexts. For these authors, the researcher does not seek to measure variables, but rather to understand social processes in their complexity, considering the context in which they unfold.

The qualitative approach allows for an understanding of reality through the interpretation of the social actors involved, prioritizing interpretive depth over statistical generalization. In this case, it is essential to analyze how the various actors (both internal and external) perceive, interpret, and manage cultural differences in negotiations with Chinese suppliers. Therefore, this approach is justified because it enables a contextualized understanding of the phenomenon, recognizing that intercultural negotiation is a dynamic, relational, and situated process involving cultural, communicational, and organizational factors that cannot be reduced to numerical indicators.

3.2 Scope of the Research

This study is descriptive in scope with an analytical-relational approach. It is descriptive in that it seeks to characterize the cultural factors present in the international negotiations of the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño, such as communication styles, time

management, perceptions of hierarchy, trust-building, documentary formality, and cultural adaptation strategies in the post-pandemic context.

It has a relational-analytical character insofar as it examines how these cultural dimensions relate to international negotiation processes, allowing for an interpretation of their impact on aspects such as decision-making, agreement management, response times, and the sustainability of commercial relationships; the analysis does not aim to establish causal relationships in statistical terms, but rather to understand the interactions and dynamics between culture and negotiation within the case studied. This approach allows for the identification of patterns, tensions, and mechanisms of cultural adaptation that emerge in the context of intercultural negotiation, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from an interpretive perspective.

3.3 Research Design

The research design is non-experimental, as the dimensions of study are not deliberately manipulated but are observed and analyzed as they manifest in organizational reality. Furthermore, it corresponds to a cross-sectional study with a retrospective scope since data collection is conducted at a single point in time.

However, the analysis focuses on negotiations conducted during the 2021–2025 period, corresponding to the post-COVID-19 pandemic scenario. This temporal delimitation allows us to examine how factors such as digitalization, the virtualization of business interactions, and changes in supply chains have influenced the dynamics of intercultural negotiation. In this way, the design enables the analysis of a contemporary phenomenon based on current empirical evidence, integrating a retrospective perspective that facilitates the understanding of changes and continuities in negotiation practices.

3.4 Methodological Strategy: Case Study

The methodological strategy adopted is the case study, centered on the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño as the primary unit of analysis. The case study allows for the examination of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined. According to Yin (2018), this strategy is appropriate when seeking to understand complex processes, such as intercultural negotiations, in specific scenarios.

In this study, while the central unit of analysis is the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño, interviews with external actors specializing in foreign trade—such as consultants, customs brokers, and international suppliers—are also included. These actors are not directly part of the company’s organizational structure, but they provide a technical and experiential perspective that enriches the analysis of the phenomenon from various levels.

The inclusion of these actors follows a methodological logic of analytical expansion, as it allows for a comparison of the company’s internal experience with external perspectives on the negotiation process with Chinese suppliers, thereby strengthening the understanding of the phenomenon from a more comprehensive viewpoint.

The study population consists of:

- The general manager of the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño, who leads the international negotiation processes.
- Specialists in foreign trade and customs management with experience in imports from China
- Stakeholders operationally involved in international negotiation processes

Table 1
Profile of Interviewees

| Interviewees | Profile |
|---------------------|--|
| Osmary Bravo | Leads the company’s international negotiation processes, with direct experience in commercial relations with Chinese suppliers and strategic decision-making |
| Xavier Patiño | I am an economist with a macroeconomic and strategic perspective on international trade, with experience in market analysis and global economic dynamics. |
| Mateo Castillo | A professional with operational experience in foreign trade, focused on document management, logistics processes, and coordination with international suppliers |
| Joy Zhong | Sales representative for a Chinese manufacturing company, responsible for managing international clients, negotiating orders, and coordinating exports. |
| Gabriela Fajardo | Economist with master’s degrees in Business Administration and Applied Mathematics. University professor and doctoral candidate in Business Administration, with research experience on the impact of the pandemic in the academic sphere. |

The sample is purposive and meets criteria of relevance, experience, and direct participation in international negotiation processes with Chinese suppliers.

Similarly, (Sautu et al., 2004) note that the case study is a methodological strategy particularly well-suited for analyzing complex social phenomena, in that it allows for an in-depth understanding of the interactions, meanings, and dynamics that unfold within a specific context. Unlike approaches oriented towards statistical generalization, the case study focuses on the uniqueness of the phenomenon, prioritizing a detailed analysis of social processes in their real-world setting. This is particularly relevant for research such as the present study, where intercultural negotiations cannot be understood as isolated events, but

rather as relational processes shaped by multiple cultural, organizational, and contextual factors.

Furthermore, these authors highlight that the case study enables the integration of diverse sources of information, such as interviews, documents, and the experiences of the actors involved, which allows for the construction of a richer and more multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon under analysis. This capacity for integration contributes to a holistic interpretation, in which the different dimensions influencing international negotiation are recognized, ranging from individual perceptions to broader cultural and economic structures; the use of the case study in this research not only responds to the need to analyze a specific phenomenon but also to the intention of capturing its complexity, depth, and dynamic nature within the real-world context in which it unfolds.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

The primary data collection technique used in this research is the semi-structured interview, applied to both internal company stakeholders and external specialists in international trade. This type of interview is characterized by combining a predefined structure with the flexibility necessary to delve into emerging aspects during interaction with participants.

The interviews were designed based on the specific objectives of the research and organized into thematic blocks aligned with the theoretical framework, including dimensions such as intercultural communication, trust-building, hierarchy, time management, digital negotiation, and cultural adaptation. This structure allowed the conversation to be guided toward the study's relevant topics, without limiting the interviewees' ability to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions freely and contextually.

In this regard, (Denzin et al., 2010) note that the qualitative interview is a fundamental tool for accessing the meanings that social actors attribute to their experiences, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the interpretations, perceptions, and practices that shape social phenomena. From this perspective, the semi-structured interview is not limited to the collection of information but is conceived as a process of joint knowledge construction between the researcher and the interviewee.

Likewise, Flick & Uwe (2014) argue that this type of interview is particularly relevant when seeking to understand complex phenomena from the participants' perspective, as it

balances the comparability of the information obtained with the openness needed to capture nuances, individual experiences, and contextual elements that could not be identified through structured instruments.

The inclusion of external actors allows for expanding the analysis beyond the organizational case, providing a comparative and complementary perspective on negotiation practices with Chinese suppliers. This helps enrich the interpretation of the results and strengthen the study's validity by incorporating different perspectives on the same phenomenon.

The interviews were conducted in person and virtually were recorded with the participants' prior authorization and were subsequently transcribed in full for analysis. This procedure ensured the accuracy of the collected information and facilitated a detailed analysis of the discourse, identifying patterns, categories, and elements relevant to the research.

3.5.1 Document Analysis

Documentary analysis is a complementary technique within the data collection process, aimed at examining secondary information relevant to understanding the phenomenon under study. In this study, this technique was used to analyze documents related to international negotiation processes, such as proformas, commercial communications, customs documents, and records of interactions with international suppliers.

From a theoretical perspective, document analysis aligns with contemporary approaches to international negotiation that conceive of it as a dynamic, relational, and contextual process. Authors such as Lewicki et al. (2014) argue that negotiation is not limited to a single event but unfolds across multiple stages involving factors such as communication, trust, and the interpretation of information. Within this framework, commercial documents not only serve an operational function but also reflect the dynamics of interaction between the parties, revealing patterns of behavior, negotiation styles, and levels of formality.

Likewise, Gelfand and Brett (2004) argue that culture influences how actors interpret information and structure their interactions during the negotiation process. In this context, the analyzed documents are not merely technical records but manifestations of cultural practices that allow us to understand how agreements are constructed in intercultural contexts.

For their part, authors such as Adair & Brett (2005) emphasize that intercultural negotiation involves a constant interpretation of signals, both explicit and implicit, which is also reflected in the documentary exchanges between the parties. In this sense, document analysis allows us to identify how aspects such as clarity in communication, technical precision, response times, and the formalization of agreements are shaped.

Thus, document analysis in this research is not limited to the review of secondary information but is integrated as a key tool for understanding the cultural dynamics present in international negotiations. Its use, in combination with interviews, strengthens the study's validity through the triangulation of sources, facilitating a deeper and more contextualized interpretation of the phenomenon under analysis.

3.5.2 Instruments Used

The following instruments were used to conduct the research:

- Semi-structured interview guide
- Informed consent
- Interview recording form.
- Document analysis matrix.
- Thematic categorization matrix

These tools made it possible to organize, systematize, and analyze the information rigorously, ensuring consistency between the research objectives and the methodological process.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

The information analysis was conducted using a mixed-methods thematic coding approach combining deductive and inductive techniques. Deductive coding was based on theoretical categories previously defined within the conceptual framework, particularly in relation to the cultural models analyzed. Inductive coding, on the other hand, allowed for the identification of emerging categories based on the empirical data obtained from the interviews and documents. The procedure was structured into the following phases:

- Full transcription of interviews
- Comprehensive reading of the material
- Initial coding based on theoretical categories

- Identification of emerging categories
- Grouping of patterns and relationships
- Interpretive integration of empirical evidence and a conceptual framework
- This approach allowed for the construction of an in-depth and contextualized analysis of the cultural dynamics present in international negotiations.

3.7 Triangulation and Validity

To strengthen the rigor of the study, the principle of triangulation was applied, understood as the combination of multiple sources, techniques, and theoretical perspectives. In this research, the following was carried out:

- Triangulation of sources (management and external specialists)
- Triangulation of techniques (interviews and document analysis)
- Theoretical triangulation (comparison between empirical findings and authors within the conceptual framework)

Triangulation allowed us to compare the information obtained in the interviews with documentary evidence and with the theoretical contributions of key authors in culture and negotiation— r intercultural—which helps reduce bias, increase the credibility of the results, and strengthen the interpretive validity of the study.

3.8 Comprehensive Justification of the Methodology

The choice of the qualitative approach, the case study, and the data collection techniques responds to the complex nature of the phenomenon under analysis. Cultural factors in international negotiation operate as symbolic, relational, and contextual processes that cannot be reduced to quantitative indicators.

The incorporation of interviews with internal and external stakeholders, along with documentary analysis and theoretical triangulation, allows for the construction of a deep and multidimensional understanding of the phenomenon, aligned with the research objectives. The methodology adopted meets the study's requirements and enables the generation of well-founded conclusions regarding the impact of cultural factors on the international negotiations of the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño with Chinese suppliers in the post-pandemic context.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Comercial Luna Pazmiño Case Study

The company Comercial Luna Pazmiño is a key player within the business community of southern Ecuador, with a history that combines progressive growth, deep local roots, and adaptation to changes in the national and international economic environment. Founded in 1990 in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, the company began as a family business initially focused on the sale of basic construction materials, in response to a specific need in the local market related to access to home ownership. From its inception, the company has been characterized by a philosophy of empirical learning, customer focus, and constant adaptation to market demands—elements that form the foundation of its organizational culture.

The evolution of Comercial Luna Pazmiño reflects a process of gradual and strategic growth, marked by significant organizational milestones.

The company's formal incorporation as a legal entity in 2000 consolidated its business structure and allowed it to expand its portfolio to include construction finishing products, strengthening its position in the regional market. Subsequently, the opening of branches in Cuenca and Loja was part of a territorial expansion strategy based on identifying commercial opportunities and building loyalty among a customer base that valued quality service and personalized attention.

A central aspect of the company's trajectory is the continuity of female leadership, which has upheld the founding values and driven administrative and technological modernization processes. Beginning in 2022, the generational transition in the company's leadership strengthened the adoption of technological tools, the professionalization of internal processes, and openness to new commercial dynamics, including greater engagement with international suppliers. This context is particularly relevant to the present study, as it coincides with the post-pandemic period (2021–2025), characterized by a reconfiguration of supply chains and international negotiation practices.

In line with its approach to international negotiation, Comercial Luna Pazmiño has developed commercial relationships with foreign suppliers, particularly Chinese ones, in an environment marked by uncertainty, accelerated digitalization, and reduced in-person contact. These negotiations are not limited to the discussion of economic variables such as

prices or import volumes, but also involve managing cultural differences, communication styles, response times, and relational expectations. In this regard, the company engages in intercultural negotiation dynamics where cultural factors play a fundamental role in building trust and ensuring the sustainability of commercial agreements.

Comercial Luna Pazmiño's mission reflects a clear customer-centric approach, viewing the customer not only as the end recipient of products but as the central pillar of the business strategy. The emphasis on empowering customers, offering a personalized shopping experience, and understanding their needs is aligned with an organizational culture based on service, continuous learning, and innovation. This orientation is relevant to the analysis of international negotiation, as it shapes how the company conceives its relationships with suppliers, prioritizing long-term ties over immediate benefits.

In addition, the company's vision positions Comercial Luna Pazmiño as a regional leader in the hardware, finishes, and coatings sector, highlighting service quality, trust, and innovation as its strategic pillars. This vision entails a growing need to build stable international relationships capable of supporting the expansion of the company's product portfolio and maintaining its competitiveness in an increasingly demanding and globalized market.

The company's organizational objectives and motto reinforce this strategic logic by emphasizing excellence, integrity, innovation, and the development of human talent. In particular, the explicit emphasis on the internal customer demonstrates an understanding of the company as a relational system, where external performance depends on internal cohesion, trust, and the commitment of the work team. This vision is particularly relevant for the analysis of intercultural negotiation, as employees' cultural and communicative competencies directly influence the management of relationships with international suppliers.

The organizational context and trajectory of Comercial Luna Pazmiño constitute an empirically relevant case for analyzing how cultural factors influence post-pandemic international negotiations. The combination of a family- e business structure, a relationship-oriented organizational culture, and growing integration into international markets makes the company an ideal setting for examining the micro-cultural dynamics at play in negotiations with Chinese suppliers during the 2021–2025 period.

In this context, it is essential to understand the trade relationship between China and Ecuador as a structural axis that explains the negotiation dynamics of Comercial Luna Pazmiño. China has established itself as one of Ecuador’s main trading partners, particularly in the area of invoiced goods imports, due to its production capacity, competitive prices, and diverse product offerings.

This relationship has intensified in the post-pandemic period (2021–2025), as Ecuadorian companies have increased their reliance on Chinese suppliers to ensure supply and competitiveness in the local market. However, beyond economic factors, this relationship is deeply shaped by cultural differences that directly influence negotiation processes.

From Hofstede Insights’ perspective, the cultural differences between China and Ecuador help shed light on the tensions and necessary adjustments in international negotiations. Below is a comparative summary of the most relevant cultural dimensions:

Table 2

Own elaboration, Adapted from Hofstede Insights (The Culture Factor Group, 2024)

| Dimension | China | Ecuador | Interpretation for Negotiation |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|---|
| Power Distance | 80 | 78 | High hierarchy in both contexts; authority and centralized decision-making are valued |
| Individualism | 43 | 24 | Ecuador is more collectivist; China combines collectivism with relational pragmatism. |
| Masculinity (achievement/success) | 66 | 63 | Both are achievement-oriented, competitive, and results-driven. |
| Uncertainty avoidance | 30 | 97 | China is flexible in the face of uncertainty; Ecuador seeks greater security and clarity. |
| Long-term orientation | 77 | 24 | China prioritizes long-term relationships; Ecuador tends toward more immediate results. |
| Indulgence | 24 | 24 | Both contexts exhibit low indulgence and greater social and normative control. |

4.1.1 Analysis of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions and Their Impact on International Negotiations by Comercial Luna Pazmiño

4.1.2 Power Distance

The power distance dimension refers to the extent to which the less powerful members of a society accept that power is distributed unequally within institutions and organizations. According to Hofstede (2011), this dimension helps us understand how cultures perceive authority, hierarchy, and the legitimacy of leadership. In societies with high power distance, relationships are markedly vertical, decisions are concentrated at higher levels, and there is

widespread acceptance of hierarchical inequalities. Conversely, in societies with low power distance, equity, participation, and decentralization in decision-making are promoted.

In the case of China (80) and Ecuador (78), both countries score high on this dimension, indicating strong acceptance of hierarchical structures. In China, this value is linked to cultural traditions such as Confucianism, which emphasizes respect for authority, social order, and obedience to superiors. The relationship between subordinate and superior is clear and defined by social norms that legitimize the concentration of power. In Ecuador, high power distance is explained by historical and social factors that have shaped an organizational and social structure where hierarchies are accepted as part of the normal functioning of society.

In the case of Comercial Luna Pazmiño, this dimension manifests itself in the way negotiations with Chinese suppliers are conducted. Both the Ecuadorian company and its counterparts operate under hierarchical structures where decision-making does not occur at the initial levels of contact, but rather at higher levels. This implies that negotiations may experience delays or changes, as preliminary agreements require internal validation before being confirmed. In this sense, understanding power distance allows us to interpret these processes not as a lack of coherence but as a cultural expression of the hierarchical organization of power.

4.1.3 Individualism vs. Collectivism

The individualism-collectivism dimension examines the extent to which people view themselves as independent individuals or as part of a group. In individualistic cultures, identity is built around the individual and their personal interests, whereas in collectivist cultures, identity is linked to membership in social groups, where loyalty, reciprocity, and interdependence prevail. This dimension is key to understanding the importance of interpersonal relationships in international negotiation processes.

China (43) and Ecuador (24) fall within collectivist cultures, implying that in both contexts, personal relationships carry significant weight in decision-making. However, Ecuador exhibits a higher level of collectivism, which translates into a greater emphasis on close ties, interpersonal communication, and group cohesion. In China, collectivism manifests itself through more complex relational structures, such as the concept of *guanxi*, where relationships are built progressively through trust, reciprocity, and the sustained fulfillment of commitments.

In the case of Comercial Luna Pazmiño, this dimension is reflected in the importance of building relationships with international suppliers. Negotiation is not limited to economic aspects but involves developing interpersonal bonds that foster trust. However, the difference in the timing of this trust creates a significant gap.

While in the Ecuadorian context trust can be established at relatively early stages, in the Chinese context it is built gradually. This difference can lead to misinterpretations regarding the state of the relationship, highlighting the need to understand cultural particularities in the building of commercial ties.

4.1.4 Motivation for Achievement and Success

The dimension of motivation toward achievement and success measures the extent to which a society values competitiveness, performance, recognition, and results. In cultures with high scores on this dimension, success is defined in terms of concrete achievements, high-, and the ability to outperform others, while in cultures with low scores, quality of life, cooperation, and collective well-being are prioritized.

China (66) and Ecuador (63) score high on this dimension, indicating that both societies share an orientation toward achievement, competitiveness, and success. In the case of China, this characteristic is reflected in a strong work ethic, discipline, and focus on productivity. In Ecuador, although there is also an achievement orientation, it is mediated by collectivism, which implies that competition is typically structured around groups rather than individuals.

In the context of Comercial Luna Pazmiño, this dimension is evident in the negotiation dynamics with Chinese suppliers, where both parties seek to optimize commercial terms, reduce costs, and achieve favorable outcomes. However, this cultural similarity is conditioned by a structural asymmetry, as Chinese suppliers possess greater productive capacities, international experience, and economies of scale. This creates a relationship where, although there is a shared achievement orientation, the actual terms of negotiation are not equivalent.

4.1.5 Uncertainty Avoidance

The uncertainty avoidance dimension refers to the degree to which members of a culture feel uncomfortable in ambiguous or unfamiliar situations and, consequently, develop mechanisms to reduce such uncertainty. In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, there

is a drive to establish norms, rules, and structures that allow for control over the environment, whereas in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, ambiguity is accepted and flexibility is prioritized.

China has a low score (30), indicating a high tolerance for uncertainty and a pragmatic approach to changing situations. In this context, rules can be adapted to circumstances, and ambiguity is not necessarily perceived as a risk. In contrast, Ecuador has a high score (67), reflecting a greater need for control, formalization, and predictability in processes.

In the case of Comercial Luna Pazmiño, this cultural difference is clearly evident in negotiation processes and in the operational execution of agreements. The Ecuadorian company requires detailed specifications, clarity in terms, and strict regulatory compliance, while Chinese suppliers operate with greater flexibility. This divergence leads to issues such as inconsistencies in documentation, errors in technical specifications, and business practices that do not always align with local standards. In this sense, the avoidance of uncertainty helps explain that these conflicts are not merely operational but cultural.

4.1.6 Long-Term Orientation

The long-term orientation dimension analyzes the extent to which a society prioritizes the future over the present or the past. Cultures with a high long-term orientation tend to be pragmatic, focused on perseverance, saving, and building sustainable relationships. Conversely, cultures with a low long-term orientation are prescriptive, value traditions, and focus on immediate results.

China has a high score (77), reflecting a strong long-term orientation characterized by strategic planning, adaptability, and the gradual building of relationships. Ecuador, with a score of 24, exhibits a short-term orientation, where immediate compliance and achieving results in the present are prioritized.

In the case of Comercial Luna Pazmiño, this dimension constitutes one of the main factors explaining the tensions in the negotiation. While Chinese suppliers prioritize the gradual building of the relationship before finalizing commercial agreements, the Ecuadorian company tends to seek more immediate results and clear terms from the initial stages. This difference does not prevent the negotiation, but it does shape its course, leading to constant adjustments in expectations and timelines. Empirical evidence confirms that trust and commercial terms evolve progressively, which aligns with the long-term logic of Chinese culture.

4.1.7 Indulgence

The indulgence dimension refers to the degree to which a society allows for the fulfillment of personal desires and the expression of emotions. Cultures with low indulgence, such as China and Ecuador (24), are characterized by high social control, where behavior is regulated by strict norms and discipline is prioritized.

In the business sphere, this characteristic translates into formality, responsibility, and fulfillment of obligations. In the case of Comercial Luna Pazmiño, this is reflected in the seriousness with which business relationships are managed and in the importance placed on fulfilling agreements. However, its impact on intercultural negotiation is less significant compared to other dimensions, as its influence is mediated by factors such as relational orientation and uncertainty management.

The analysis of these dimensions reveals that negotiations between Comercial Luna Pazmiño and its Chinese suppliers are deeply influenced by cultural factors that shape communication, trust-building, time management, and the execution of agreements. These differences should not be interpreted as obstacles, but rather as structural elements that require strategic understanding and management within the international negotiation process.

It is important to note that these values should not be interpreted as rigid determinants of behavior, but rather as references that allow for the contextualization of the perceptions and experiences gathered through interviews and documentary analysis. In the specific case of Comercial Luna Pazmiño, these cultural differences manifest in aspects such as negotiation timelines, the manner of establishing trust, the handling of indirect communication, and the need for formalizing agreements.

While Chinese suppliers tend to prioritize progressive, long-term relationships characterized by flexibility and the gradual building of trust, the Ecuadorian company shows a greater orientation toward immediate clarity, explicit compliance, and the reduction of uncertainty.

In this regard, the findings of this study demonstrate that Comercial Luna Pazmiño's negotiation dynamics cannot be understood solely through an economic lens but rather stem from an intercultural process where differences in values, perceptions, and practices directly influence interactions with Chinese suppliers. Thus, cultural analysis serves as an

interpretive framework that helps explain the tensions, adaptations, and strategies developed by the company within the context of post-pandemic international negotiations.

4.2 Interviews

4.2.1 Interview: Osmary Bravo - General Manager of Comercial Luna Pazmiño

Profile - Interpretive Introduction

The interview conducted on February 27, 2026, allows for an empirical analysis of the impact of cultural factors within international negotiations between Ecuadorian companies and Chinese suppliers. Through the interviewee's testimony, it is possible to understand how cultural differences, the dynamics of international trade, and the structural characteristics of the market influence the way in which negotiation processes unfold.

The interviewee's account demonstrates that international negotiation is not limited solely to commercial exchange but involves complex processes of cultural adaptation, understanding the business context of the other country, and developing long-term relationships of trust.

Throughout the interview, various elements emerge that help us understand the intercultural dynamics present in this type of negotiation. Among the most relevant aspects are the differences in production scale between Ecuadorian companies and Chinese manufacturers, negotiation styles characterized by speed and efficiency, the cultural perceptions that Chinese businesspeople have of Latin American markets, as well as the importance of technical and detailed communication when negotiating products intended for specific markets.

The interviewee's experience highlights the changes that have occurred in the dynamics of international trade following the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding the digitization of negotiations, the use of virtual tools to contact suppliers, and the transformation of commercial processes on a global scale.

In this regard, the interview serves as a valuable resource for understanding how cultural factors influence the way Ecuadorian companies negotiate with international suppliers and how these dynamics can impact the development of sustainable business relationships.

Main Text

The business relationship between Comercial Luna Pazmiño and Chinese suppliers emerged as part of a business strategy aimed at diversifying its product offering within the construction finishes sector. As the interviewee explains, the search for international suppliers stems from the need to offer innovative and competitive products within the Ecuadorian market.

In this context, the interviewee notes that the company's first engagement with the Chinese market occurred when the company's then-manager decided to explore business opportunities in that country. As she recounts, "in 2016, my mother, Mrs. Lucía Luna, who was the manager at the time, decided to travel to China to seek opportunities for new products and better commercial terms and, of course, to be able to pass those benefits on to our customers" (Bravo Luna, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

Building on this initial experience, the company managed to establish contact with various manufacturers in the bathroom fixtures sector, which allowed it to begin a gradual process of integrating international suppliers into its supply chain.

During this process, the interviewee identifies one of the first structural differences between the Ecuadorian and Chinese markets: the scale of production. While many Ecuadorian companies operate with relatively moderate purchase volumes, Chinese manufacturers typically work with significantly higher minimum order quantities. This poses a significant challenge for local companies when negotiating commercial terms.

From a cultural analysis perspective, the interviewee highlights that one of the most characteristic traits of Chinese suppliers is their ability to adapt to customer needs. However, this flexibility means that buyers must be extremely clear and detailed when specifying the characteristics of the requested product. In this regard, she notes that "they can manufacture whatever you ask for. In other words, if it's about price, they can make it as cheaply as possible, and obviously the cheapest isn't always the best" (Bravo Luna, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

This production capacity means that any omission in the product's technical description can lead to significant errors in the final result. For this reason, the interviewee emphasizes that communication with Chinese suppliers must be highly precise and detailed. In her words, "in negotiations with the Chinese, it's all about detail; you have to explain the

need and everything we want in great detail” (Bravo Luna, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

Another relevant aspect that emerges during the interview is the perception that some Chinese businesspeople have of Latin American markets. The interviewee explains that, during her experience at international trade fairs, Ecuador is often not identified as an individual market, but rather as part of a broader region. As she notes, “when I said I was from South America, many suppliers would immediately shut down and say they didn’t sell to South America, because they categorize us as a low-cost market” (Bravo Luna, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

This perception reflects a structural reality within international trade, in which many Latin American markets are associated with the search for lower-cost products. However, the interviewee notes that this view does not necessarily represent the entirety of the Ecuadorian market, as there is also a growing demand for higher-quality and more innovative products.

Regarding negotiation style, the interviewee describes Chinese businesspeople as highly efficient actors focused on speed in commercial processes. As she explains, Chinese suppliers typically respond very quickly to commercial inquiries, which contrasts with the usual response times within the local market. In this regard, she states that “if you ask them for a pro forma, they send it to you in ten minutes. They are natural negotiators and always want to close the deal immediately” (Bravo Luna, personal communication, February 27, 2026). This speed is largely due to the volume of operations handled by Chinese companies and their business culture focused on productivity and the fulfillment of commercial objectives.

Another relevant aspect identified during the interview is the structure of the Chinese commercial system. The interviewee explains that within this market, there may be different levels of intermediation between the manufacturer and the end buyer. In some cases, a product may pass through several intermediaries before reaching the end customer, which increases marketing costs. For this reason, she emphasizes the importance of carefully verifying the authenticity of suppliers before establishing a business relationship.

Regarding the building of long-term business relationships, the interviewee notes that trust is a fundamental element in international negotiations. As she explains, initial business transactions are typically conducted on a prepayment basis, but over time it is possible to

develop more solid business relationships. In this regard, she states that “the first purchases with them are made in cash, but once trust is established, it is even possible to work on credit” (Bravo Luna, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

The interviewee reflects on the changes that occurred in international trade following the COVID-19 pandemic. As she explain, the pandemic accelerated digitization processes within international negotiations, facilitating contact with international suppliers through virtual tools. In this regard, she states that “before, many things were done in person, but after the pandemic everything went online, and now it is much easier to contact suppliers via the internet” (Bravo Luna, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

Recommendations based on business experience

Drawing on her experience in international negotiations, Osmary Katherine Bravo Luna offers several recommendations for Ecuadorian companies looking to begin importing from Chinese suppliers.

First, she considers it essential to conduct a thorough market analysis before deciding to import products. As she explains, many companies make impulsive decisions based on fleeting trends, which can lead to significant financial risks. Second, she recommends that companies specialize in a specific niche and build expertise within their sector before diversifying their business activities. The interviewee notes that specialization allows for a better understanding of market needs and improves the ability to negotiate with international suppliers.

Third, she highlights the importance of understanding the business culture of the country with which one wishes to negotiate. For the interviewee, understanding the communication methods, negotiation styles, and cultural dynamics of the business partner is a key factor in avoiding mistakes in international negotiations.

Finally, she emphasizes that international business relationships must be built on the foundation of trust, transparency, and compliance with established agreements. The interviewee believes these elements are essential for establishing sustainable business relationships and strengthening the presence of Ecuadorian companies in international trade.

Table 3
Analysis Matrix of the Interview with Osmary Bravo

| Thematic axis | Description | Contribution to the study |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Intercultural communication | Need for detailed technical specifications to avoid production errors | Evidence that clear communication is key in intercultural contexts with high production flexibility |
| Building trust | Evolution of commercial relationships from advance payments to credit | Reinforces trust as a gradual process, aligned with the concept of <i>guanxi</i> |
| Cultural perception | The Latin American market is perceived as “economical” by Chinese suppliers | Contributes to the analysis of cultural identity and asymmetries in negotiation |
| Time orientation | Chinese suppliers prioritize speed and immediate deal closure | Confirms cultural differences in time management (Hofstede) |
| Commercial structure | Presence of intermediaries in the Chinese market | Introducing structural risks and the need for verification during negotiations |

4.2.2 Interview: Mateo Castillo – Foreign Trade Specialist

Profile

Mateo Castillo is a professional in International Studies, having graduated in 2021. His professional career has unfolded within the field of Ecuadorian foreign trade, combining experience in both the public and private sectors.

He began his professional career at the National Customs Service of Ecuador, specifically at the Cuenca District Office, where he worked for approximately three years. During this period, he had the opportunity to familiarize himself with the operational procedures of the Ecuadorian customs system, participating in activities related to document review, customs procedure management, verification of import documentation, and monitoring of logistics processes linked to foreign trade.

Based on his experience, his time at customs represented a key formative stage in his professional development, as it allowed him to understand the regulatory and operational structure of international trade in the country. In his own words, he notes that “customs has been a very important school for me” (M. Castillo, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

Subsequently, she decided to continue her career in the private sector, joining a customs agency where she currently serves as a foreign trade specialist and head of the operations department. In this role, he participates in processes related to advising importing clients, reviewing pre-clearance documents, managing customs declarations, verifying

transport documents such as Bills of Lading (B/L) and Airway Bills, tracking international cargo logistics, and coordinating with various foreign trade stakeholders.

His position within the agency provides him with a broad perspective on international negotiation processes, particularly from the operational and documentary aspects of foreign trade, allowing him to identify how cultural differences between countries can directly influence the execution of import operations.

Interpretive Introduction

The interview conducted on February 27, 2026, introduces a different approach to the analysis of international negotiations between Ecuadorian companies and Chinese suppliers. Unlike the managerial perspective, which focuses on business strategy, Mateo Castillo's testimony helps us understand how cultural factors influence the operational phase of international trade.

Drawing on his professional experience in customs and logistics, the interviewee observes international trade relations from the moment negotiations have been concluded and agreements must be formalized through documents, customs procedures, and organizational processes.

In this context, cultural factors are not only evident during commercial negotiations but also manifest in how suppliers prepare documents, respond to technical requirements, or manage communication with importers.

In fact, the interviewee notes that cultural differences between commercial systems can frequently lead to operational friction within import processes. As he explains, "almost every week we have problems with them" (M. Castillo, personal communication, February 27, 2026), which demonstrates that cultural differences can have practical implications within customs management.

This scenario helps us understand that international negotiation does not end with the commercial agreement between buyer and supplier but rather continues throughout the entire logistical and documentary process that enables the importation of goods.

Main Text

Drawing on his experience within the customs agency, Mateo Castillo explains that there are different types of importing companies in Ecuador. Some larger organizations have internal foreign trade departments responsible for negotiating directly with international

suppliers. In these cases, the customs agency intervenes only when the cargo arrives in the country, handling the clearance process.

However, there are also small and medium-sized enterprises that do not have staff specializing in foreign trade. In these cases, the customs agency assumes a broader role, acting practically as an external international trade department responsible for coordinating directly with foreign suppliers.

According to the interviewee, this second type of client accounts for approximately 15% of the companies the agency works with. However, he notes that the vast majority of the import transactions they handle come from suppliers located in China. In this regard, he states that “I would venture to say that ninety to ninety-five percent of all the transactions we handle are from importers bringing in products from China” (M. Castillo, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

This reality reflects the structural importance of China within Ecuador’s international trade, particularly in sectors related to the import of consumer goods and industrial products.

Regarding communication dynamics with Chinese suppliers, the interviewee explains that interaction takes place primarily through digital platforms. As he notes, most suppliers use messaging apps such as WhatsApp or WeChat to maintain contact with importers and logistics intermediaries.

Based on his experience, email is typically reserved for more formal matters, such as sending approved proformas or proof of international transfers. In this regard, he notes that “the vast majority interact via WhatsApp” (M. Castillo, personal communication, February 27, 2026). A practice that has become common in these operations is the creation of communication groups in which the importer, the customs agency, and the Chinese supplier participate simultaneously. This system allows all parties involved to have visibility into the logistics process, from the approval of the pro forma invoice to the shipment and arrival of the goods.

Culturally speaking, one of the aspects that most strikes the interviewee is the communication style of Chinese businesspeople. As he explains, they tend to be quite direct when expressing their needs or resolving problems. In this regard, he notes that Chinese suppliers usually get straight to the point when requesting information or seeking clarification. This characteristic forces Ecuadorian importers to adapt their communication style. According to the interviewee, in the Ecuadorian context it is common to use more

extensive explanations or roundabout language when raising an issue; however, when interacting with Chinese suppliers, it is preferable to adopt a more direct and concrete style.

Another relevant cultural factor is language. The interviewee explains that most Chinese suppliers use English as their language of international communication. However, he notes that in many cases this is basic English, which can lead to comprehension difficulties. For this reason, he considers proficiency in English to be a fundamental skill for any company wishing to engage in international negotiations with Chinese suppliers.

One of the areas where cultural differences are most clearly evident is in the preparation of commercial documents. As the interviewee explains, in China it is relatively common for commercial invoices to be prepared in simple formats, including Excel spreadsheets or basic documents. This practice contrasts with the Ecuadorian system, where electronic invoicing is regulated by the Internal Revenue Service and must comply with specific formats. Due to this difference, the customs agency often has to reorganize the information contained in invoices sent by Chinese suppliers to adapt them to the requirements of Ecuadorian regulations.

Another recurring problem relates to the inclusion of additional goods within shipments. According to the interviewee, some Chinese suppliers include small “gifts” inside containers as a gesture of commercial courtesy. However, this practice can cause complications during the customs process. In the interviewee’s, “sometimes they send a little gift... and that can bring the entire customs operation to a standstill” (M. Castillo, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

This occurs because any goods entering the country must be declared on the commercial invoice. If an undeclared product is detected during a customs inspection, the importer may face administrative penalties or even the seizure of the goods. Regarding the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviewee believes that negotiation dynamics did not change significantly, as digital communication was already predominant in international trade before the pandemic. As he explains, interaction with international suppliers has been conducted online for several years, so the negotiation process remains relatively similar.

Recommendations Based on Professional Experience

Based on his professional experience in the foreign trade sector, Mateo Castillo identifies several intercultural competencies that he considers essential for Ecuadorian companies wishing to negotiate with Chinese suppliers.

First, he emphasizes the importance of English proficiency. As he explains, this skill is an essential tool for avoiding misunderstandings during negotiations and communication with international suppliers. Second, he recommends adopting a direct and clear communication style when interacting with Chinese businesspeople. In his own words, the main advice would be “to be direct with them... I need this, this is happening” (M. Castillo, personal communication, February 27, 2026). He also believes that training in Chinese culture or international negotiation practices can provide a competitive advantage for Ecuadorian companies engaged in international trade.

Finally, he emphasizes that understanding cultural differences in seemingly minor aspects (such as document preparation or the inclusion of additional goods) can be crucial for avoiding problems during the customs process and ensuring the success of import operations.

Table 4

Analysis matrix of the interview with Mateo Castillo

| Thematic axis | Description | Contribution to the study |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Intercultural communication | Use of direct communication by Chinese suppliers | Evidence of cultural differences in communication style (Hall) |
| Language barriers | Use of basic English leads to misinterpretations | Introducing practical limitations in intercultural negotiation |
| Document formalization | Differences in document formats between China and Ecuador | Reinforces cultural impact on technical negotiation processes |
| Business culture | Inclusion of undeclared products as a cultural practice | Evidence of a conflict between cultural practices and local regulations |
| Operational digitization | Use of WhatsApp and groups for logistics coordination | Confirms the virtualization of processes in international trade |

4.2.3 Interview: Xavier Patiño – Director of Data País

Profile

Xavier Patiño is an economist who graduated from the University of Azuay, with a professional career focused on economic analysis, business management, and the study of international trade. He later supplemented his academic training with a master’s degree in Business Administration, as well as various international training programs at institutions

such as the Tecnológico de Monterrey and the INCAE Business School, where he delved deeper into topics related to competitiveness, business management, and economic development.

His academic background also highlights his international experience in South Korea, specifically in Seoul, where he participated in programs related to investment attraction and economic development strategies. This experience allowed him to gain firsthand insight into the economic and cultural dynamics of Asia, as well as to understand how different countries design strategies to position themselves within international trade.

Professionally, he has held various key positions within Ecuador's business sector. Notably, he served at the Cuenca Chamber of Commerce, first as executive director and later as president. In this role, he had the opportunity to actively participate in analyzing the regional economic landscape and promoting initiatives aimed at strengthening the business sector.

Throughout his career, he has also worked in various private organizations, including his role as a regional manager in the insurance sector and his involvement with local financial institutions such as Mutualista Azuay. These experiences have allowed him to develop a broad understanding of how the Ecuadorian business system operates and the challenges companies face within the national and international economic context.

He currently serves as director of Data País; a digital platform focused on the comparative analysis of economic information among countries and cities in Latin America. As the interviewee himself explains, this platform focuses on collecting, analyzing, and presenting statistical and economic information that helps understand the dynamics of regional economic development.

In his own words, he notes that Data País “promotes everything you can imagine regarding the comparative analysis of data among South American countries and cities,” generating studies and reports that are subsequently used by companies and institutions for strategic decision-making (X. Patiño, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

At the same time, he is also involved in the development of IA Data Negocios, an initiative focused on promoting the use of artificial intelligence within small and medium-sized enterprises. As he explains, this platform aims to guide organizations in the use of technological tools that enable them to improve their business management and strengthen their analytical capabilities within increasingly complex economic environments.

In addition to his business activities, Xavier Patiño has also been active in the academic sphere as a university professor, which has allowed him to combine professional practice with academic reflection on economic, technological, and business issues.

Interpretive Introduction

The interview with economist Xavier Patiño provides a macroeconomic and strategic perspective on the analysis of international negotiations between Ecuadorian companies and foreign suppliers, particularly in the post-COVID-19 pandemic context.

Unlike other interviews with actors directly involved in business management or foreign trade operations, the interviewee's perspective focuses on understanding the structural changes that have occurred in the global economy and how these have transformed Ecuador's trade dynamics.

From this perspective, the interviewee identifies that one of the most significant changes brought about by the pandemic was the acceleration of the digitalization process within economic activities. As he explains, the health crisis forced companies to adopt digital technologies much more rapidly than would have occurred under normal conditions.

In this regard, he notes that “the pandemic brought about what might have been a five- or six-year process in just one year,” highlighting how technological transformation processes accelerated significantly during this period (X. Patiño, personal communication, February 27, 2026). This technological acceleration has had direct implications for the way companies interact within international trade. Currently, tools such as e-commerce, digital platforms, electronic payment systems, and the use of social media are a fundamental part of companies' business strategies.

According to the interviewee, these transformations have created a much more dynamic and competitive economic environment, where access to information and the strategic use of data have become fundamental elements of business decision-making. In this context, data analysis, economic intelligence, and knowledge of the international market are becoming increasingly important in international negotiation processes, as they help reduce uncertainty and improve companies' ability to identify opportunities within global markets.

Main Text

From the interviewee's perspective, one of the most significant changes in Ecuador's foreign trade following the pandemic has been the significant growth in the country's international commercial activity.

As he explains, the value of Ecuadorian exports has increased considerably in recent years. Before the pandemic, the country's exports stood at approximately \$21 billion to \$22 billion, while today they are approaching \$37 billion to \$38 billion representing an increase of approximately \$15 billion over a relatively short period.

According to the interviewee, this growth reflects a combination of various economic factors, notably the country's trade liberalization, the development of new trade agreements, and the growing use of technological tools in business operations. In this regard, he explains that international trade has become increasingly accessible to companies, particularly thanks to the digitization of commercial processes. As he points out, it is now practically essential for companies to have a digital presence in order to compete in international markets.

According to the interviewee, "if you don't have a website where you can sell your products or social media to promote them, it simply doesn't look good" which demonstrates how digitization has become a fundamental requirement in the contemporary business environment (X. Patiño, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

Regarding Ecuadorian imports, the interviewee highlights the sustained growth of China's presence in the country's foreign trade. As he explains, approximately 22% to 23% of Ecuadorian imports currently come from China, demonstrating the country's degree of commercial dependence on this market. This situation is clearly reflected in the Ecuadorian market, where it is increasingly common to find products of Chinese origin in various sectors of the economy. As the interviewee explains, one needs only observe the growing presence of vehicles, household appliances, and technological devices from China to understand the magnitude of this phenomenon.

In the interviewee's words, "it is no longer a one-off or isolated issue; twenty-two percent of our imports come from there," which demonstrates the strategic importance this country has acquired within Ecuador's foreign trade (X. Patiño, personal communication, February 27, 2026). From the perspective of international negotiations, the interviewee believes that one of the main challenges Ecuadorian companies face when negotiating with Chinese suppliers is related to a lack of knowledge about the Asian market.

As he explains, China is an extremely vast and diverse market where products of varying quality and price can be found. In this context, companies that lack sufficient knowledge about suppliers may face risks related to product quality or the reliability of business partners.

In this regard, the interviewee notes that one of the most common problems in the early stages of trade relations with China was “a complete lack of knowledge about what was available,” which created uncertainty among Ecuadorian importers (X. Patiño, personal communication, February 27, 2026). In addition to economic aspects, the interviewee highlights the importance of cultural factors within international negotiation processes. As he explains, business dynamics in Asia can differ considerably from Western or Latin American commercial practices.

During his travels and negotiations in China, the interviewee observed that business relationships are often built on personal trust among the parties involved. On many occasions, before discussing contractual or economic matters, businesspeople seek to establish personal relationships through social gatherings.

In this regard, he explains that within Chinese business culture, it is common for initial meetings to focus on social activities such as meals or informal gatherings, where the parties can get to know each other before beginning formal negotiations. According to the interviewee, within this context, “first I get to know you, and then we negotiate,” which reflects the importance of personal relationships in Asian business practices (X. Patiño, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

These cultural practices may differ for Ecuadorian companies, which in many cases prioritize discussing economic or contractual aspects directly. For this reason, understanding these cultural differences can be essential for developing successful business relationships.

Recommendations Based on Professional Experience

Drawing on his professional experience in economic analysis and international trade, economist Xavier Patiño offers several recommendations for Ecuadorian companies seeking to strengthen their business relationships with international suppliers, particularly Chinese suppliers.

First, he notes that companies should not base their import decisions solely on product prices. As he explains, price differences between suppliers may be attractive in the short term, but they do not always guarantee product quality or business sustainability. In this

regard, he warns that “sometimes price does not determine complete satisfaction or the full picture,” so it is essential to also analyze factors such as product quality, supplier reliability, and the stability of the business relationship (X. Patiño, personal communication, February 27, 2026).

Second, he emphasizes the importance of using information and data in business decision-making. As he explains, access to statistical and economic information allows for a better understanding of the dynamics of international trade and reduces the risks associated with commercial operations. In this regard, he mentions the widely used principle in strategic business analysis that states “what cannot be measured cannot be managed,” highlighting the importance of indicators and information analysis in business management.

Here, the interviewee highlights the importance of understanding cultural factors within international negotiation processes. However, he also notes that adapting to other cultures does not mean abandoning one’s own cultural identity. In this regard, he explains that “one does not have to become Chinese to be able to negotiate... one is Latin American,” so the main objective should be to understand the other party’s culture to avoid misunderstandings and facilitate communication between the parties. According to his analysis, the combination of cultural knowledge, access to economic information, and the strategic use of data can become a key tool for strengthening the negotiating position of Ecuadorian companies in international trade.

Table 5
Analysis matrix of the interview with Xavier Patiño

| Thematic axis | Description | Contribution to the study |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Digitalization | Technological acceleration in post-pandemic international trade | Provides context for the structural transformation of trade |
| Building trust | Prioritizing personal relationships before negotiating | Reinforces the relational approach in Chinese culture |
| Market knowledge | Lack of knowledge about China creates risks in negotiation | Highlights the need for cultural intelligence |
| Trade dependence | China’s high share of Ecuadorian imports | Supports the structural relevance of the case study |
| Use of information | Importance of data for strategic decision-making | Introducing an analytical dimension to international negotiations |

4.2.4 Interview: Joy Zhong (International Supplier at Comercial Luna Pazmiño)

Profile

Joy is a sales representative for a manufacturing company based in China that produces and markets industrial products for the international market. In her professional role, she

manages international clients, negotiates orders, coordinates production, and monitors exports to various markets around the world.

Her work involves constant interaction with clients from various regions, including Latin America, Europe, and other international markets. Her primary responsibilities include direct communication with buyers, sending quotes and pro-forma invoices, negotiating commercial terms, and resolving inquiries related to product quality, delivery times, and after-sales service. During the interview conducted as part of this research, Joy explained that her company maintains business relationships with clients from different countries, which gives her a broad perspective on the cultural differences that arise in international negotiation processes.

In this regard, she notes that her work involves interacting with clients from different business cultures, which requires adapting to different styles of communication, negotiation, and decision-making. As she explains, this constant contact with international clients has allowed her to understand the importance of trust and communication within international business relationships. Likewise, Joy highlights that her company maintains business relationships with some Latin American clients, including Ecuadorian companies, which has allowed her to learn about the particular characteristics of the business negotiation style in this region.

Interpretive Introduction

The interview with Joy allows us to incorporate the perspective of the international supplier into the analysis of intercultural negotiations between Ecuadorian companies and Chinese suppliers. Unlike the interviews conducted with Ecuadorian stakeholders, this conversation provides the perspective of an Asian company that actively participates in international trade processes with clients from different regions of the world. Furthermore, it helps us understand how cultural factors influence the way suppliers perceive their business partners and the manner in which negotiation processes unfold.

During the interview, Joy explained that interaction with Ecuadorian companies has generally been positive and based on cooperative relationships. In her own words, the negotiation process with Ecuadorian companies “is very pleasant, and it is a pleasure to work together,” reflecting a favorable perception of the business relationship established between both parties (J., personal communication, 2026).

In her experience, international negotiations are not based solely on economic factors, but also on building personal relationships that facilitate cooperation between the parties. In this regard, constant communication, trust, and mutual respect become fundamental elements for the development of sustainable commercial relationships over time. Likewise, the interviewee highlights that the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly transformed the way international negotiations are conducted, especially due to the increased use of digital communication tools.

Main Text

Based on Joy's experience, the negotiation process with Ecuadorian companies is characterized by being collaborative and focused on building trusting relationships. As she explains, negotiations typically unfold gradually, beginning with personal interactions that allow both parties to get to know each other before discussing more specific commercial aspects.

In this regard, she notes that Ecuadorian companies typically prioritize building personal relationships and establishing trust before moving toward formalizing commercial agreements. This characteristic aligns with the negotiation styles observed in other Latin American countries, where interpersonal interaction plays an important role in the negotiation process.

In the supplementary document subsequently sent by the interviewee, it is highlighted that the negotiation process with Ecuadorian companies typically includes initial conversations aimed at getting to know each other better and understanding each party's needs. As she explains, these interactions help establish a cooperative atmosphere that facilitates the progress of commercial negotiations. Joy mentions that one of the most important elements in international commercial relations is the building of trust between the parties. As she explains, customers typically decide to place orders when they consider the supplier to be reliable and able to guarantee product quality.

In this regard, she states that "building trust between us and the customers before the order is placed is very important," since trust in the factory and in the product's quality directly influences customers' purchasing decisions (J., personal communication, 2026). To strengthen this trust, the company strives to maintain constant communication with customers and respond promptly to any inquiries or issues that may arise during the production process or after product delivery.

Joy acknowledges that quality issues can sometimes arise within production processes, something she considers normal in the manufacturing industry. However, she notes that when this happens, the company strives to offer solutions that allow it to maintain the business relationship with customers.

In this regard, she explains that “when customers have problems, we try to help them solve them,” for example, by sending replacement parts or providing technical assistance to resolve issues with the products (J. personal communication, 2026). Another relevant aspect mentioned during the interview is the impact of the pandemic on how international negotiations are conducted. According to Joy, before the pandemic, many business interactions took place through in-person meetings or sales visits; however, in recent years, the use of digital tools has increased considerably.

In this context, communication platforms such as WeChat and WhatsApp have become essential tools for maintaining contact with international clients. However, Joy explains that within China, the use of WhatsApp requires additional tools due to technological restrictions, so WeChat is typically the most widely used communication platform. As the interviewee explains, after the pandemic, “we increasingly communicate with clients through apps like WhatsApp or WeChat,” reflecting the growing role of technology in international business relations (J. personal communication, 2026).

Furthermore, Joy notes that the post-pandemic global economic context has created some challenges for international trade. In particular, she mentions that factors such as international conflicts, changes in economic policies, and fluctuations in trade rates have affected the development of commercial activities in various markets. Based on her experience, the global economic situation has become more complex in recent years, which has contributed to a decline in international clients in some sectors.

Recommendations Based on the Supplier’s Experience

Based on her experience working with international clients, Joy identifies several elements she considers fundamental to the success of business negotiations between companies from different countries. First, she highlights the importance of understanding the cultural differences between the parties involved in the negotiation. As she explains, understanding the business culture of the country with which one is negotiating helps avoid misunderstandings and improves communication between the parties.

In this regard, she states that “understanding the culture of the other country directly influences the success of a negotiation,” since culture determines aspects such as communication styles, the pace of decision-making, and expectations within business relationships (J. personal communication, 2026). She also notes that when companies better understand cultural differences, they can adapt how they interact with their business partners, which facilitates the building of trusting relationships and improves cooperation between the parties. For this reason, she believes that cultural awareness, respectful communication, and the building of trusting relationships are key elements for the successful conduct of international negotiations.

Table 6
Analysis matrix of the interview with Joy Zhong

| Thematic axis | Description | Contribution to the study |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Trust-building | Trust prior to the order determines the business relationship | Confirms the centrality of guanxi in Chinese negotiation |
| Interpersonal relationship | Initial interactions aimed at getting to know each other before negotiating | Reinforces a relational approach over a contractual one |
| Intercultural communication | Constant communication and ongoing follow-up | Evidence of active maintenance of business relationships |
| Conflict resolution | Willingness to resolve problems to maintain the relationship | Strengthens long-term thinking in business relationships |
| Digitalization | Use of platforms such as WeChat and WhatsApp | Confirms technological adaptation in post-pandemic negotiations |

4.2.5 Interview: Gabriela Fajardo – Academic and Researcher

Profile

Gabriela Fajardo is an economist with an undergraduate degree from the University of Azuay, where she later earned a master’s degree in Business Administration. Her professional career has unfolded primarily in the academic sphere, serving as a university professor in fields related to economics and mathematics.

She also holds a master’s degree in Applied Mathematics and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Business Administration, with a research focus on labor disparities within the university setting, particularly from a gender perspective.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, she participated in research with the Ecuadorian Network of Women Scientists, analyzing the impact of the health crisis on the professional and emotional lives of female academics in Ecuador; this experience provides her with a relevant analytical perspective on the effects of the pandemic on organizational behavior, decision-making, and professional interaction dynamics.

Interpretive Introduction

The interview conducted allows for the incorporation of an academic and analytical perspective into the study of international negotiations in the post-pandemic context. Unlike testimonies from the business and operational spheres, Gabriela Fajardo's perspective focuses on understanding the structural effects of uncertainty, digitalization, and changes in labor dynamics on negotiation processes.

Drawing on her research experience, the interviewee identifies uncertainty as a determining factor that directly influences decision-making, risk management, and the willingness of actors to establish commercial relationships. In the context of the pandemic, this uncertainty intensified due to the lack of information regarding the duration of the crisis, market behavior, and the stability of the economic environment.

Likewise, the interview shows that the pandemic transformed not only communication and negotiation channels but also the working and emotional conditions of the actors involved. Factors such as work overload, overlapping roles, and und psychological pressure affected the quality of decisions and the way professional interactions unfold.

In this regard, the interviewee's testimony helps us understand that international negotiation in the post-pandemic context cannot be analyzed solely through traditional economic or cultural variables, but must incorporate dimensions such as uncertainty, technological adaptation, and the emotional well-being of the actors.

Main Text

One of the central elements emerging from the interview is the impact of uncertainty on negotiation processes. From the interviewee's perspective, uncertainty constitutes a structural factor that increases business risk, affecting companies' willingness to establish commercial relationships.

During the pandemic, this phenomenon intensified significantly due to the lack of clarity regarding key variables such as the duration of the crisis, market conditions, and consumer behavior. In this context, the interviewee notes that uncertainty "slows down the process of building relationships or doing business," highlighting how this factor limits decision-making and the formation of commercial agreements.

Furthermore, the pandemic brought about significant changes in consumer habits, forcing companies to rethink their business strategies. The prioritization of sectors such as

healthcare and food altered market dynamics, introducing new conditions that indirectly influence international negotiation processes.

Another relevant aspect identified in the interview is the transformation of workplace dynamics. The transition to remote work entailed a structural shift in how people interact, work, and negotiate. The interviewee explains that this change created “a new way of working, a new way of interacting, and a new way of negotiating,” highlighting the interconnection between organizational changes and commercial dynamics.

In this context, digitalization has established itself as one of the main factors redefining international negotiation. The use of digital platforms enabled communication to be maintained between actors located in different countries, facilitating the continuity of business operations. However, this virtualization also introduces significant limitations, especially in terms of cultural interaction.

The interviewee notes that virtual communication allows for constant contact but limits deep understanding of the other party’s culture. Unlike face-to-face interaction, where it is possible to observe behaviors, customs, and communication styles, digital platforms reduce interaction to a more functional level. This creates a paradox in post-pandemic negotiation: greater connectivity, but less cultural depth in interaction.

From an Anglo-intercultural perspective, this finding is particularly relevant, as it demonstrates that digitalization can affect trust-building, a key element in international negotiations, particularly in contexts such as China, where personal relationships (*guanxi*) play a fundamental role.

Additionally, the interview introduces a dimension that has been explored little in international negotiation studies: emotional well-being. Work overload and the overlap of tasks during the pandemic generated high levels of stress and burnout, affecting people’s ability to make decisions efficiently.

The interviewee notes that the lack of separation between work and personal life generated “emotional distress” that directly influences professional performance. This factor is relevant to the analysis of international negotiation, as decisions are not made in a rational vacuum but are mediated by emotional and contextual conditions.

Finally, the interviewee notes that many of the changes brought about during the pandemic have become entrenched in the post-pandemic context. Among these are the permanent use of technological tools, the ability to work remotely, and the increased

flexibility of workspaces. These changes have redefined how companies interact internationally, creating a more dynamic—but also more complex—negotiation environment.

Recommendations Based on Academic Experience

Based on her research and professional experience, Gabriela Fajardo offers a series of relevant recommendations for Ecuadorian companies participating in international negotiations in the post-pandemic context.

First, she highlights the importance of leveraging the technological tools developed during the pandemic, strategically integrating them into international communication and negotiation processes. These tools make it possible to optimize resources, reduce costs, and maintain constant contact with business partners.

However, the interviewee emphasizes that digitalization should not completely replace in-person interaction; direct contact remains essential for understanding the other party’s culture, building trust, and strengthening sustainable business relationships. Second, she recommends that companies develop a constant capacity to adapt to changes in the environment. The pandemic demonstrated that international contexts could shift rapidly, making organizational flexibility a key competency.

Ultimately, she underscores the importance of integrating human factors into business analysis, especially those related to emotional well-being and working conditions. Considering these dimensions improves the quality of decisions and strengthens the long-term sustainability of business relationships.

Table 7
Analysis matrix of the interview with Gabriela Fajardo

| Thematic axis | Description | Contributions to the study |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Uncertainty | Increased risk and hesitation in decision-making during the pandemic | Explains the caution in post-pandemic international negotiations |
| Digitalization | Intensive use of technological tools for negotiation | Evidence of the structural transformation of negotiation processes |
| Intercultural Communication | Limited cultural interaction in virtual environments | Contributes to trust analysis and relationship building |
| Emotional Well-being | Work overload and psychological impact | Introducing a human dimension to international negotiations |
| Organizational Adaptation | Need to adapt to constant change | Reinforces the importance of flexibility in global contexts |

4.3 Triangulation of Results

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a case study strategy, aimed at understanding the impact of cultural factors on the international negotiations of the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño with Chinese suppliers during the post-pandemic period (2021–2025).

To ensure the validity and depth of the analysis, the principle of triangulation was applied, integrating three main sources of information:

- The company case study
- Interviews with key stakeholders (internal and external)
- The theoretical framework is based on authors specializing in intercultural negotiation.

This approach allowed for the comparison of empirical evidence with theoretical contributions, identifying common patterns and interpretive overlaps. Triangulation not only validates the findings but also enables an understanding of the phenomenon within a comprehensive context, acknowledging the interaction between culture, organizational context, and the dynamics of international negotiation.

Table 8*Triangulation matrix between theory, empirical evidence, and interpretation*

| Thematic axis | Theory | Empirical evidence | Interpretation |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Intercultural communication | Hall (1989): Culture influences the interpretation of messages | Interviews highlight the need for direct, clear, and technical communication | It is confirmed that communication differences lead to errors and affect negotiations |
| Trust-building | Lewicki et al. (2014); guanxi (Dinh & Hilmarsson, 2020) | The relationship evolves from upfront payments to credit; the importance of getting to know each other before negotiating | Evidence shows that trust is progressive and relational, not contractual |
| Relationship vs. contract | Adair & Brett (2005); Fang (2012) | Suppliers prioritize the relationship over formal negotiation | The relational approach of Chinese culture is confirmed |
| Time orientation | Hofstede (2011): differences between long-term and short-term perspectives | China seeks long-term relationships; Ecuador seeks immediate results | Cultural tension is evident during negotiations |
| Digitalization | Verbeke & Hutzschenreuter (2021) | Use of WhatsApp, WeChat, and Zoom in negotiations | Shift toward virtual/hybrid negotiations confirmed |
| Limitations of Virtuality | Ji et al. (2024): loss of cultural interaction | Interviews reveal less cultural knowledge in virtual settings | A reduction in the depth of intercultural relationships is confirmed |
| Uncertainty | Gelfand & Brett (2004): negotiation depends on context | The pandemic generated risk, changes in consumption, and decision-making | Evidence shows that uncertainty affects negotiation |
| Organizational culture and adaptation | Schein (2020) | Companies adapt to suppliers, processes, and technology | It is confirmed that cultural adaptation is key |
| Cultural intelligence | Earley & Mosakowski (2004) | Need to understand Chinese culture to negotiate more effectively | It is evident as a strategic competency |
| Structural asymmetry | Ji et al. (2024): inequality in negotiation | Differences in scale, knowledge, and market | Imbalance among actors is confirmed |

4.3.1 Analysis of the Triangulation

The triangulation developed in this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of cultural factors on the international negotiations of the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño with Chinese suppliers during the post-pandemic period of 2021–2025. Its relevance lies not only in cross-checking information from different sources but also in demonstrating that the phenomenon under study cannot be explained from a single dimension. On the contrary, the results obtained show that international negotiation is a complex process in which cultural, relational, organizational, operational, and contextual factors intersect. In this sense, the triangulation between the case study, the interviews, and the theoretical framework allows for the validation of the findings, a deeper interpretation of them, and provides academic coherence to the research.

Based on the case study, Comercial Luna Pazmiño emerges as a company whose organizational trajectory and management style make it a relevant setting for analyzing intercultural negotiations. It is a company with a strong relational orientation, an organizational culture based on customer proximity, and a growing integration into international supply dynamics. This organizational configuration is particularly important because it demonstrates that negotiations with Chinese suppliers do not occur in the abstract, but within a specific business structure, with its own values, operational constraints, and defined strategic objectives. Therefore, the case serves not only as a descriptive context but also as evidence that the Ecuadorian company approaches the negotiation process from a perspective shaped by its organizational identity, its need for competitiveness, and its progressive adaptation to the global environment.

When this evidence is compared with theory, a clear alignment emerges with the approaches of Gelfand and Brett, as well as Lewicki and Hall, in the sense that international negotiation is not a simple rational exchange of interests, but a relational process shaped by cultural meanings, implicit perceptions, and distinct ways of building legitimacy and trust. The empirical findings precisely show that: that the company does not negotiate only prices, timelines, or products, but also modes of communication, behavioral expectations, response rhythms, and distinct logics of building commercial ties. Thus, the triangulation confirms that culture does not appear as a peripheral factor, but as a structuring element of the negotiation process.

Intercultural communication. One of the first themes to emerge in the triangulation is intercultural communication. The theory holds that communication in intercultural contexts depends not only on language, but also on the way in which actors encode and decode messages, interpret silences, prioritize clarity or subtlety, and give meaning to the interaction. The interviews strongly confirm this premise. In the case of Osmar Bravo, it is evident that negotiating with Chinese suppliers requires extreme precision, technical detail, and absolute clarity in the product specification. Furthermore, based on Mateo Castillo's experience, it is observed that communication with Chinese suppliers tends to be more direct, brief, and to the point, while on the Ecuadorian side there may be a tendency to provide more extensive explanations. This difference is significant: it has concrete effects on the negotiation, as it can lead to misinterpretations, delays, rework, or even operational conflicts. Triangulation thus leads to the conclusion that intercultural communication is a decisive

factor in negotiation, as its effectiveness shapes both the relational and operational phases of the agreement.

This finding is further deepened when we incorporate the testimony of Gabriela Fajardo, who offers a perspective from the post-pandemic transformation. Her interview helps us understand that digitalization increased the frequency of contact but did not necessarily improve the depth of cultural understanding. This is particularly important for the thesis, as it highlights a central tension in the post-pandemic landscape: on the one hand, technological tools facilitate interaction, reduce costs, and streamline processes; on the other, they limit access to nonverbal, contextual, and symbolic dimensions that are fundamental to understanding the counterpart. Thus, triangulation allows us to move beyond an optimistic reading of digitalization: technology improves connectivity, but it does not completely replace cultural knowledge or the value of personal contact in long-term negotiations.

Building trust. The second major theme that emerges strongly is the building of trust. From a theoretical perspective, authors such as Lewicki and studies on *guanxi* point out that trust in Asian contexts is built progressively, cumulatively, and relationally, beyond mere contractual formalization. This approach finds solid support in empirical evidence. Osmary Bravo notes that initial transactions are typically conducted on a prepayment basis and that only over time, through fulfillment and a sustained relationship, can credit terms be established. Xavier Patiño reinforces this idea by explaining that in the Chinese context, many negotiations proceed according to the logic of “first I get to know you, then we negotiate.” Joy, from the supplier’s perspective, confirms that pre-order trust is decisive for the customer to finalize the purchase and that maintaining the relationship depends on the supplier’s ability to respond, solve problems, and sustain constant communication. All of this allows us to affirm that trust is not a side effect of negotiation, but its structural core. This triangulation thus validates one of the thesis’s central ideas: that in negotiations with Chinese suppliers, interpersonal bonds and accumulated credibility directly determine the sustainability of commercial agreements.

This point is crucial because it also allows us to distinguish between the cultural expectations of both parties. While in Chinese business culture trust is built gradually and over the long term, Ecuadorian companies have a stronger need for certainty, explicit compliance, and early clarity. Here, the triangulation connects with Hofstede: the difference in uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation helps explain why tensions may arise between a counterpart that hopes to consolidate the relationship gradually and another that

requires more immediate security. The research, therefore, not only confirms the theory but also applies it to the specific case of Luna Pazmiño, demonstrating how these cultural differences translate into real negotiation challenges.

A third highly relevant finding is the influence of the post-pandemic context. The pandemic appears in this research not as a mere backdrop, but as a transformative juncture that reconfigured the channels, rhythms, and conditions of international negotiation. From a theoretical perspective, recent literature had already warned that accelerated virtualization could alter trust-building and reduce direct intercultural contact. The interviews fully confirm this transformation. Osmary Bravo notes that after the pandemic, it became much easier to contact suppliers online; Joy highlights the increased use of WeChat and WhatsApp; Gabriela Fajardo explains that the pandemic cemented new ways of working, relating, and negotiating; Xavier Patiño emphasizes that digitization accelerated much faster than expected. Triangulation thus demonstrates that the post-pandemic landscape gave rise to a more virtual, immediate, and accessible form of negotiation, but one that is also more prone to misunderstandings, shallower relationships, and new forms of uncertainty.

In turn, Gabriela Fajardo's interview enriches the analysis by introducing variables that have been less frequently addressed in classical studies of negotiation, such as emotional well-being, task overlap, and the impact of uncertainty on the quality of decision-making. This contribution broadens the interpretive scope of the thesis, as it demonstrates that the post-pandemic context transformed not only the technological infrastructure of negotiation but also the human conditions under which actors negotiate. In other words, the results suggest that post-pandemic international negotiation cannot be understood exclusively through a traditional economic or cultural lens; it must also incorporate the influence of fatigue, pressure, uncertainty, and the reorganization of work on the ability to decide, adapt, and sustain commercial relationships. This is one of the study's most valuable contributions, as it updates the analysis of intercultural negotiation from a situated and contemporary perspective.

Triangulation also highlights a frequently underestimated dimension: documentary and logistical operations as a space where culture materializes. Through the interview with Mateo Castillo, it is observed that cultural differences do not end when the commercial agreement is closed, but rather continue in the preparation of invoices, in the inclusion of undeclared goods, in the way requests are addressed, and in the daily interaction between supplier, importer, and logistics operator. This finding is particularly significant because it

shows that negotiation does not end with the initial conversation but extends throughout the entire import supply chain. At this point, the triangulation with Lewicki's theory and the documentary analysis proves highly consistent: commercial documents are not merely technical records, but concrete expressions of how the relationship, formality, and compliance are understood in different cultural contexts. Thus, the thesis demonstrates that culture influences not only the negotiating table but also the material execution of the agreement.

Another central element that emerges from the cross-referencing of sources is the existence of a structural asymmetry between the Ecuadorian company and the Chinese suppliers. This asymmetry manifests itself in the scale of production, in bargaining power, in access to information, and in accumulated experience within the international market. Osmar Bravo clearly identifies the difference between the volumes handled by Ecuadorian companies and Chinese manufacturers; Xavier Patiño notes that many Ecuadorian companies negotiate with insufficient knowledge of the Asian market; and the case study itself shows that dependence on China as an international supplier is increasingly important for sustaining local competitiveness. Triangulation allows us to interpret this evidence in light of the theory of asymmetric negotiations: cultural differences are intensified when there are also structural imbalances in information, size, and capacity. This implies that the Ecuadorian company must not only understand the counterparty's culture but also negotiate from a strategically strengthened position, with greater preparation, knowledge, and capacity for validation.

The triangulation analysis supports the argument that the core of this thesis lies in demonstrating that post-pandemic international negotiations between an Ecuadorian SME and Chinese suppliers cannot be explained as a linear process oriented solely toward commercial exchange. What the results actually show is that this is a complex relational dynamic, where cultural differences, diverse ways of building trust, transformations stemming from digitalization, organizational constraints, operational tensions, and uncertainties inherent to the contemporary context converge. It is precisely this comprehensive understanding that lends academic and practical value to the research: it not only identifies cultural factors but also explains how they operate, how they interact with one another, and why they are decisive for the sustainability of commercial relationships.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to understand the impact of cultural factors on the international negotiations of the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño with Chinese suppliers during the post-pandemic period of 2021–2025. Based on the case study, semi-structured interviews, and triangulation with the theoretical framework, it is concluded that cultural factors do indeed exert a direct, profound, and structural influence on the negotiation process, affecting not only the initial interaction between the parties but also trust-building, decision-making, the operational implementation of agreements, and the sustainability of the business relationship over time.

In response to the research question, the findings allow us to affirm that cultural factors influence Comercial Luna Pazmiño's post-pandemic international negotiations primarily through five interrelated dimensions: intercultural communication, trust-building, temporal orientation, adaptation to virtuality, and the management of operational and documentary differences. In other words, culture does not act as an isolated or incidental element, but rather as a framework that shapes how each party interprets the relationship, communicates its expectations, assesses risk, and decides whether or not to proceed with the consolidation of commercial agreements.

A first conclusion is that intercultural communication constitutes one of the most decisive factors in negotiations with Chinese suppliers. The evidence obtained demonstrates that interaction requires a high level of precision, clarity, and adaptation to the counterpart's communication style. Differences in language use, in the way messages are structured, and in the interpretation of technical requirements can result in production errors, misunderstandings, or logistical conflicts. Therefore, this thesis demonstrates that effective negotiation depends not only on speaking with the counterpart, but on understanding how that counterpart interprets, responds, and acts within their own cultural framework. This conclusion validates the theoretical approach adopted, particularly Hall's theories on the cultural dimension of communication.

A second conclusion is that building trust represents the core of negotiations with Chinese suppliers. The results show that the business relationship is gradually consolidated through compliance, consistency, sustained interaction, and accumulated experience between the parties. This is reflected in the evolution from advance payments to relationships with greater flexibility and credit, and in the importance interviewees placed on getting to

know one another before formalizing agreements. In this regard, the research confirms that the relational bond precedes and gives meaning to the contractual bond, which aligns with the concept of *guanxi* and with the literature highlighting the centrality of trust in Asian contexts. Therefore, the thesis clearly supports the idea that negotiation with China cannot be understood from a purely contractual or transactional paradigm.

A third conclusion is that the post-pandemic context significantly transformed negotiation dynamics, particularly through the accelerated digitization of commercial interaction processes. Technological tools expanded contact capacity, reduced distances, and facilitated the continuity of international relations. However, the results also show that this virtualization did not completely replace the value of in-person contact, as it limited the possibility of gaining a deeper understanding of the counterparty's culture, social practices, and implicit codes. Thus, the research concludes that the post-pandemic scenario shaped a hybrid model of negotiation: more efficient and accessible, but also more demanding in terms of cultural adaptation and trust management. This conclusion directly addresses the "post-pandemic" component of the research and shows that the changes during the 2021–2025 period were not merely technological, but also cultural and relational.

A fourth conclusion is that international negotiations between Comercial Luna Pazmiño and its Chinese suppliers take place within a framework of structural cultural differences that generate concrete tensions in practice. The Chinese orientation toward long-term planning, their greater flexibility in the face of uncertainty, and their emphasis on relationships contrast with the Ecuadorian need for greater immediate clarity, security, and formalization. These differences do not prevent negotiation, but they do compel the Ecuadorian company to develop adaptation mechanisms to avoid interpreting behaviors which in reality stem from a different cultural logic—as disinterest, ambiguity, or slowness. Therefore, the research concludes that the success of the negotiation does not depend on eliminating cultural differences, but on strategically understanding them and managing them intelligently.

A fifth conclusion is that culture also influences the operational and documentary phase of the negotiation. The findings show that problems do not end when commercial terms are agreed upon, but rather continue in the documents, logistics, customs declarations, and coordination among stakeholders. This leads to the conclusion that international negotiation is an extended process, in which culture manifests itself both in the initial conversation and in the subsequent implementation of the agreement. This conclusion is

particularly valuable because it broadens the scope of the thesis and demonstrates that cultural factors affect not only the symbolic or relational dimension of negotiation but also its practical and operational consequences.

Likewise, it is concluded that the company Comercial Luna Pazmiño, due to its track record, organizational culture, and accumulated experience, has developed a progressive capacity to adapt to these intercultural dynamics. However, the research also shows that this adaptation still depends largely on empirical experience and practical learning, rather than on formal protocols or systematic cultural intelligence strategies. This suggests that there is significant room for organizational strengthening, where the company could consolidate its international negotiation capabilities through specialized training, the systematization of learning, and more structured tools for cultural analysis.

On a broader level, the research concludes that the study of international negotiations between Ecuadorian SMEs and Chinese suppliers requires moving beyond simplified views of culture as a static set of national traits. The results show that culture operates in a dynamic, relational, and contextual manner, interacting with factors such as uncertainty, technology, business scale, and organizational conditions. Thus, the thesis not only answers the research question but also reaffirms the validity of the theoretical approach adopted and the relevance of the case study as a methodological strategy for understanding complex phenomena in real-world contexts.

In summary, the findings support the research by demonstrating that cultural factors are indeed decisive in Comercial Luna Pazmiño's post-pandemic international negotiations with Chinese suppliers. They influence how the relationship begins, how trust is built, how needs are communicated, how timelines are managed, how agreements are implemented, and how the relationship is sustained over the long term. Consequently, the thesis confirms that understanding the cultural dimension of negotiation is not an optional add-on, but rather an indispensable condition for interpreting and strengthening the processes of international integration for Ecuadorian companies in complex global contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Before presenting the specific recommendations derived from the analysis, it is necessary to highlight the central role that culture plays in international negotiation processes. Throughout the research, it became evident that cultural factors are not merely supplementary elements but directly influence key aspects such as communication, trust-building, decision-making, and the development of business relationships in intercultural contexts. In this sense, culture must be understood as a strategic tool that can facilitate or limit the outcomes of a negotiation, depending on the level of understanding and adaptation of the actors involved.

The findings reveal that many of the difficulties identified in negotiations are not solely due to technical or economic factors, but to cultural differences that are not always adequately understood or managed. This highlights the need to strengthen intercultural competencies not only at the corporate level, but also from a broader perspective that involves society as a whole. In this context, it is considered appropriate for the Ecuadorian government, through institutions such as the Ministry of Education and agencies related to foreign trade, to promote the design and implementation of public policies aimed at training in culture and intercultural intelligence from the early stages of the educational system.

Incorporating these approaches into educational processes would enable the development of key skills in future professionals, such as adaptability, effective communication in diverse contexts, and an understanding of different cultural logics. In this way, it would not only contribute to individual development but also to strengthening the competitiveness of Ecuadorian companies in the international arena, particularly in complex markets such as the Asian market. Consequently, recognizing the importance of culture as a cross-cutting theme in education and business practice is essential for improving the quality of international negotiations and fostering more sustainable commercial relationships over time.

Based on the findings, the dialogue among the reviewed authors, the evidence gathered in the interviews, and the analysis of the case study, the following comprehensive recommendations are proposed.

First, it is recommended that Comercial Luna Pazmiño and, in general, Ecuadorian companies that negotiate with Chinese suppliers develop formal training programs in cultural intelligence. The research demonstrates that understanding the relational logic,

temporal orientation, communication styles, and progressive trust-building characteristics of Chinese business culture constitutes a strategic advantage. This recommendation is supported both by the literature on cultural intelligence and by the interviews, in which several participants highlight the importance of understanding the other party's culture to avoid mistakes and improve negotiations.

Second, it is recommended to strengthen clear and structured technical communication throughout all phases of the negotiation process. This involves improving the formulation of requirements, standardizing product specifications, reducing ambiguities, and strengthening language skills, particularly in business English. Evidence shows that many errors do not stem from bad faith or unwillingness, but rather from differences in communication styles and levels of precision. Therefore, more rigorous communication can reduce risks in both negotiation and the execution of documentation and logistics.

Third, it is recommended to view trust-building as a deliberate, long-term strategy, not as an automatic consequence of the transaction. The company should prioritize stable relationships with validated suppliers, maintain consistency in fulfilling commitments, and promote interactions that strengthen reciprocity and mutual credibility. The results show that trust opens up more favorable negotiation opportunities, reduces uncertainty, and improves the sustainability of the business relationship. On this point, both the theory and the interviews agree that the relational bond is a central asset in negotiations with China.

Fourth, it is recommended to consolidate a hybrid model of international negotiation that combines the advantages of virtual interaction with the strategic importance of in-person contact. The pandemic demonstrated that digital tools are effective for streamlining processes and reducing costs; however, the study also showed that in-person interaction remains important for better understanding the counterparty's culture, reinforcing trust, and deepening the relationship. Therefore, companies should leverage virtual platforms for day-to-day management, but without foregoing in-person opportunities for validation, knowledge-sharing, and strengthening the commercial bond when the strategic relationship warrants it.

Fifth, it is recommended to strengthen supplier validation and selection mechanisms in order to reduce dependence on intermediaries who are not always transparent and to minimize risks associated with information asymmetry. The research showed that the Chinese market offers many opportunities, but also requires constant verification, sector-

specific knowledge, and the ability to distinguish between manufacturers, intermediaries, and sales representatives. Consequently, companies should incorporate more systematic criteria for supplier evaluation, including track record, production capacity, past compliance, product quality, and document reliability.

Sixth, it is recommended that the company institutionalize internal protocols for intercultural negotiation and international document management. Empirical experience has allowed Comercial Luna Pazmiño to adapt progressively, but the study shows that much of this learning still depends on the accumulated knowledge of specific individuals. Converting these lessons into protocols, guidelines, or internal procedures would help reduce errors, facilitate knowledge transfer, and strengthen the company's organizational capacity for future negotiations.

Seventh, it is recommended to incorporate uncertainty management and strategic information analysis more explicitly into import decisions. The interview with Xavier Patiño, along with the findings from the post-pandemic context, shows that negotiating in international markets requires not only commercial intuition and, but also access to data, an understanding of the environment, and the ability to anticipate. In this regard, the company could benefit from tools for market analysis, trend monitoring, tracking logistical risks, and comparative evaluation of suppliers.

Eighth, and as a personal recommendation derived from the entire analysis, I believe it is important for the company to adopt a broader view of international negotiation, understood not merely as a commercial process but as a practice of continuous intercultural learning. This implies recognizing that every interaction with a foreign counterpart provides valuable information on management styles, trust dynamics, responses to uncertainty, and forms of cooperation. Systematizing this learning would not only improve future negotiations but also strengthen the company's international presence in the medium and long term.

Finally, from a strategic academic perspective, it is recommended that future research continue to delve deeper into the study of international negotiations between Ecuadorian SMEs and Asian markets, particularly through qualitative approaches that capture the relational, cultural, and contextual complexity of these processes. This thesis demonstrated that there are under-explored dimensions, such as the impact of emotional well-being,

document management, or technological hybridization, which deserve greater attention within the field of international studies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A *Consent Form*

Fact Sheet: Interview

Cultural Factors in Post-Pandemic Negotiations: Case Study of Luna Pazmiño's Imports from China (2021–2025)

SHEET OF INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

This research project aims to analyze the influence of cultural factors on the international negotiations of the Luna Pazmiño company in its import processes from China during the 2021–2025 period, in the post-pandemic context. The research seeks to understand how cultural differences influence communication, trust-building, decision-making, and the development of business relationships in intercultural settings.

This study is grounded in theoretical approaches to intercultural negotiation, such as the cultural dimensions of Hofstede and Trompenaars, as well as contemporary concepts such as cultural intelligence and relationship building in international contexts. Based on these approaches, the study aims to demonstrate that culture is a determining factor in the conduct of international negotiations, particularly in post-COVID-19 scenarios, where business dynamics have been transformed by the digitization and virtualization of processes.

The research includes a case study of Luna Pazmiño, an Ecuadorian small and medium-sized enterprise that maintains commercial relationships with Chinese suppliers. Through this study, the aim is not only to understand the intercultural dynamics present in the negotiation process but also to develop strategies that can be applied by other Ecuadorian companies engaged in international trade.

Keywords: Cultural Factors, Intercultural Negotiation, Post-Pandemic, China, Ecuador.

Part of the project involves conducting semi-structured interviews to gather relevant information on experiences, perceptions, and practices related to international negotiations. These interviews will deepen our understanding of how cultural factors influence commercial interactions and help identify potential challenges and opportunities in the intercultural context.

Additionally, a literature review will be conducted to complement the information gathered in the field, strengthening the interpretation of the results and the development of the case study.

The interviews are expected to create a space for dialogue that allows for the collection of participants' experiences, opinions, and reflections, thereby providing valuable information for the development of the research and the preparation of the thesis.

The compilation of the literature review will then be reviewed to conclude with the drafting and editing of the thesis "Cultural Factors in Post-Pandemic Negotiations: A Case Study of the Luna Pazmiño Company's Imports from China (2021–2025)"

Through this document, we extend an invitation to you to participate in an interview to be held on February, 2026, in person or virtually, at respectively, at the University of Azuay / via Zoom / at your office.

We guarantee that the information obtained will be treated confidentially. The data will be carefully analyzed and used exclusively for academic purposes. Participants will have the opportunity to review the information provided prior to its publication, in order to validate its content and request modifications if they deem it necessary.

Likewise, participants may choose not to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at any time, without this resulting in any consequences. If a participant requests the removal of their information, it will be deleted from the study.

It should be noted that only the researcher and the thesis advisor will have access to the collected data.

The estimated duration of the interview is approximately 20 to 40 minutes.

To record the interview, digital recording tools (such as Zoom or a mobile device) will be used to ensure the accuracy of the information collected. The participant may request at any time that the recording be stopped if they deem it appropriate.

The collected data will subsequently be transcribed, analyzed, and incorporated into the final research report.

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Appendix B

Structure of thematic blocks and interview questions

Interview: Osmary Bravo

| Thematic block | Questions |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Professional Profile | Could you describe your professional profile and experience in international negotiations? |
| Cultural Lessons in Negotiations | Based on your experience, what have been the most important cultural lessons learned when negotiating with Chinese suppliers? |
| Cultural Factors in Negotiations | What cultural factors do you believe influence the negotiation process with Chinese suppliers? |
| Intercultural communication | How do you think Ecuadorians should communicate when negotiating with Chinese companies? |
| Strategic recommendations | What recommendations would you give to Ecuadorian companies wishing to negotiate with Chinese suppliers? |

Interview: Mateo Castillo

| Thematic section | Questions |
|--|---|
| Professional Profile | Could you tell me about your experience in international trade and your current role? |
| Relationships with international suppliers | Do you interact with Chinese suppliers as part of your job? |
| Cultural factors in operations | In the import processes you've been involved in, what cultural factors influence the execution of trade agreements? |
| Cultural differences in communication | Have you identified differences in communication styles between Ecuadorians and Chinese people? |
| Intercultural competencies | From your perspective, what intercultural competencies are necessary for international negotiations? |
| Practical recommendations | Based on your experience, what advice would you give to improve negotiations with international suppliers? |

Interview: Xavier Patiño

| Thematic block | Questions |
|---|--|
| Professional Profile | Could you tell us about your professional background and career in international trade? |
| Post-pandemic changes | From your perspective, what have been the most significant changes in Ecuadorian foreign trade following the pandemic? |
| Cultural Factors in Business Operations | How do economic and cultural factors influence international negotiations? |
| Economic and cultural factors | Have you identified differences in communication styles between Ecuadorians and Chinese people? |
| Use of information and data | How important are data and prior knowledge in decision-making during international negotiations? |
| Strategic recommendations | What recommendations would you give to Ecuadorian SMEs to improve their negotiations with Chinese suppliers? |

Interview: Joy Zhong

| Thematic section | Questions |
|--|--|
| International Negotiation Process | How would you describe the negotiation process with Ecuadorian companies? |
| Cultural Differences | Are there differences between Chinese and Ecuadorian businesspeople in the way they negotiate? |
| Intercultural Communication | How do you perceive the communication style between Chinese and Ecuadorian companies? |
| Global cultural comparison | What differences do you observe between Latin American clients and those from other regions such as Europe or the United States? |
| Building Trust | How important is trust in international business relationships? |
| Post-pandemic changes | How has the way we negotiate changed after the pandemic? |
| Cultural Impact on Negotiation | Do you believe that understanding another country's culture influences the success of a negotiation? |
| Perception of Ecuadorian business partners | How would you describe Ecuadorian companies or businesspeople? |

Interview: Gabriela Fajardo

| Thematic section | Questions |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Academic background | Could you tell us about your academic background and professional experience? |
| Uncertainty and Negotiation | How do you think the uncertainty during the pandemic transformed international negotiations in terms of trust and decision-making? |
| Working Conditions and Negotiation | How do work overload and professional pressure influence the quality of international negotiations? |
| Organizational Adaptation | What role do cultural factors play in companies' adaptation to new forms of post-pandemic negotiation? |
| Intercultural communication | How does virtual communication impact intercultural communication in international negotiations? |
| Well-being and decision-making | How do emotional factors influence decision-making in international negotiations? |
| Post-pandemic changes | What changes have taken hold in the post-pandemic environment regarding international negotiations? |
| Strategic Recommendations | What recommendations would you give to Ecuadorian companies to help them adapt to the post-pandemic context in international negotiations? |

Appendix C

Interview Transcript

Interview Transcript – Osmary

Samantha: Good morning, we're here with the general manager of Comercial Luna Pazmiño. I'd like to start by asking how Luna Pazmiño began its business relationships with suppliers in China and how its experience has evolved over time.

Osmary: It's a pleasure to give this interview and thank you for including us in this academic project. Comercial Luna Pazmiño is a company with over 35 years of experience in the construction sector. We sell construction materials and finishes, initially in the city of Cuenca, and since 2018 we have also been operating in the city of Loja.

In addition, we supply the Austro region, including the provinces of Cañar, Azuay, Loja, Zamora, and El Oro, and our vision is to continue expanding with a focus on southern Ecuador.

As I mentioned, starting in 2018 we began to develop a vision for expansion, which is why we saw the need for more innovative, more customized products. For that reason, in 2016, my mother, Mrs. Lucía Luna, who was the manager at the time, decided to travel to China to seek out opportunities for new products and better commercial terms so we could pass those benefits on to our customers.

We had the opportunity to participate in the Canton Fair, where we were able to connect with suppliers. One of them is a factory called Yakiki Sanitary, with whom we had a meeting with Joy Chong, our business consultant. We are more focused on construction, in that niche market.

Samantha: From your experience as general manager, what cultural differences have you identified in the way you negotiate with Chinese businesspeople?

Osmary: We've been told to be very careful with Chinese businesspeople. I also traveled there two years ago and found that they are quite flexible when it comes to what you ask of them.

When negotiating with Chinese suppliers, you must always be very careful and provide them with very detailed specifications for the products we need, because they can truly manufacture whatever you ask for.

If it's about price, they can make it as cheap as possible, and the cheapest isn't always the best. To provide good service to our customers, it's important to have a good product—not just for the price, but for the quality. When negotiating with the Chinese, it's all about the details—explaining our needs and everything we want in detail.

Since China exports to many countries, there are differences in infrastructure—for example, types of energy, types of lighting, and the quality of the lighting is also different.

The Chinese are quite flexible and can be somewhat informal, but not because they lack values; rather, they are very open to all types of markets and adapt to absolutely everything, or they take everything you tell them very literally.

So you have to be very careful to explain in great detail what is needed.

In terms of product development, they have top-quality products and top-quality models. I think there's still a lot of potential to tap into, but many local brands bring in the cheapest options, and the cheapest isn't always the best.

Even in China, they categorize us as a cheap market. When I visited some booths, they asked me where we were from, and when I said South America, they said they don't sell to South America, only to Europeans or North Americans.

They categorize us as a budget market, but within that, we must seek out product quality.

Samantha: Have you traveled to China?

Osmary: Yes, I traveled there two years ago. Always with the idea of seeing new styles, new products, and trends. I was thinking about importing, but I didn't because of operational issues we were having at the warehouse.

That's already being resolved, and we're getting organized so we can import and bring in value-added products.

Samantha: When you traveled to China, did you meet with anyone there?

Osmary: Yes. I went to the Canton Fair, which is held twice a year. I didn't have a formal meeting because I went to look for suppliers. I went to the booths and met with the representatives.

Samantha: And how was it?

Osmary: They were polite, professional, and quite friendly, but they have their own strategy. They ask questions and have a very broad view of international trade.

They don't ask how many stores you have; they ask how many countries you sell to. They have a very broad perspective.

They don't know Ecuador; it's not on their radar, which is why we always say we're from South America, and they lump us all together as one group.

I also went to a place called Yiwu. It's a more flexible market, because at the Canton Fair they require fairly large quantities—for example, 20 containers per model.

In Yiwu it's different; it's more adaptable to Latin America. There you can buy smaller quantities and fill a container with various products.

In Yiwu, there are no direct manufacturers, only traders. They buy from the factories and sell in smaller quantities.

There are factories and also people who act as middlemen. Sometimes there are several intermediaries, so you have to be careful and verify the supplier.

There are companies in Ecuador that verify the supplier's legitimacy, such as Clifco. They charge a commission, but they ensure that the supplier is a direct manufacturer and that there are no further intermediaries.

Samantha: And directly with the supplier?

Osmary: It's with the direct supplier or the first intermediary, no more.

Samantha: From the perspective of an Ecuadorian company, what do you think about how the Chinese view us?

Osmary: It's like this: our market is primarily focused on affordability. We don't buy luxury goods. They want to sell, work, and meet their quotas.

They don't think about Ecuadorians, but about South America.

It depends on the product. In some cases, they do recognize Ecuador, for example, with products like Spanish roof tiles.

In general, they want to do business and do recognize South American culture.

Samantha: You mentioned that you've been working with them since around 2018. After the pandemic, what changes did you notice in the dynamics of negotiations with Chinese suppliers?

Osmary: I think that the pandemic helped streamline the process of virtual meetings and made it easier to connect with suppliers online. Before, everything was done in person, and then it went virtual.

For me, it was a good thing, because I feel like we were behind in Ecuador when it came to going digital and online sales. Now we're more globalized.

When I attended the Canton Fair, I was told it was one of the most well-attended fairs. People were more curious about China and about doing business with China. I think it really boosted things.

During the lockdown, there was a drop in sales, but since these are cyclical periods, there was a subsequent spike.

In construction, there was a decline in 2024 accompanied by the energy crisis. However, for 2025 and 2026, we project significant growth in construction, especially in the southern region.

We view the outlook with optimism. Cuenca is becoming an attractive place to live, and we want to offer different, innovative products.

Samantha: How do you think you had to adapt to the negotiation style of Chinese suppliers?

Osmary: They are quite persistent and efficient. When you ask for a quote, they deliver it within minutes. They are natural negotiators and want to close the deal immediately.

Their way of negotiating is immediate. For them, large quantities are the norm.

Adapting has meant learning to explain things in detail. I tell a local supplier something and they get it right away, but with a Chinese supplier, you have to spell out the measurements, specifications—everything.

Adapting means not making mistakes due to lack of detail and handling the pressure because they want to close the deal quickly.

Samantha: Have you had to adapt to that, or are you trying to find a balance?

Osmary: They have to adapt to us. It's always the seller who adapts to the customer. Adapting has meant negotiating with someone from outside and explaining a lot of things to them.

Samantha: From your perspective, what have been the key cultural lessons?

Osmary: The art of negotiation, discipline, personal and business relationships, and reliability.

The first purchases are cash-only, but with trust, you can work on credit. That's something you build.

Seeing the scale of their operations also broadens your perspective. What seems like a lot to us is small to them.

Samantha: What recommendations would you give to Ecuadorian companies that want to negotiate with Chinese suppliers?

Osmary: First, conduct a thorough market analysis. I've seen cases where companies import products based on fleeting trends and end up losing money.

It's important to analyze who I'm going to sell to, how I'm going to sell, and where I'm going to set up operations.

Also, understand the business, specialize in a niche, and don't get involved in too many things.

Samantha: And what about cultural factors?

Osmary: It's important to have a good understanding of the culture, how they work, and how things operate, and to seek advice.

If you don't communicate well, it can lead to losses. You have to analyze whether importing is a good idea, considering the capital, time, and profitability.

It's important to start cautiously.

Samantha: As an Ecuadorian, what advice would you give on how Ecuadorians should communicate with the Chinese?

Osmary: Be prepared, go in with confidence, project confidence, and know your stuff.

Be honest, don't say things that aren't true, and don't promise more than you can deliver.

Say what you want and what you need.

Building interpersonal relationships is very important, including with suppliers, financial institutions, and customers.

Interview Transcript – Mateo Castillo

Samantha: Well, we're here with Mateo Castillo, a student of International Studies. Mateo, tell me a little about yourself, your work experience, and what you studied.

Mateo: Thank you for including me in your thesis. I finished my studies in August 2020 and graduated in early 2021.

My first job was at the Cuenca customs office, with the National Customs Service of Ecuador. I applied for a secretary position and stayed for three years, learning everything about customs.

Then I got a better job opportunity with a customs agency. Now I work in the private sector, interacting with customs from the outside.

I handle all customs operations: consulting, document review, pre-clearance documents, receiving paperwork, data entry, customer service, and process tracking.

I also review transport documents such as B/Ls, clearance certificates, departure letters, transport documents, and warehousing documents.

We work with clients in Cuenca, Guayaquil, and Quito, primarily handling sea and air freight.

Samantha: Do you deal with Chinese suppliers a lot, or not so much?

Mateo: Yes. We have two types of clients:

First, large companies that have their own foreign trade department and interact directly with Chinese suppliers.

And another type of client where we handle the entire process. In that case, we do interact with Chinese suppliers.

It's not a large percentage—I'd say about 15%—but we do work with them.

Samantha: From your perspective, how have you observed the negotiation dynamics between Ecuadorian companies and Chinese suppliers?

Mateo: The dynamics are pretty standard. They mainly communicate via WhatsApp or WeChat.

Very few use email, only for formal matters like proformas or transfers.

We even have WhatsApp groups that include the importer, us, and the Chinese supplier.

Everyone interacts there and shares updates on payments, shipments, and the arrival of the cargo.

Samantha: Have you spoken directly with Chinese suppliers?

Mateo: Yes, but only via WhatsApp. 95% of them use English. Very few use Spanish, and their English is pretty basic.

Their English is sometimes basic and full of mistakes, so you have to try to understand them.

I've never spoken with them on Zoom or in person.

Samantha: In the import process, what cultural factors have the biggest influence?

Mateo: The Chinese are pretty direct and honest. They get right to the point.

That forces us to be direct too. You can't beat around the bush.

Another factor is the time zone. They work when it's early morning or night here, so you have to adapt.

And another point is the formality of documents. In Ecuador, invoicing is very formal. In China, it isn't.

They send invoices in Excel or simple formats. That can be a hassle, but you have to adapt.

Samantha: Have you encountered any problems due to cultural differences?

Mateo: Yes, all the time.

A lot of the time they don't understand what we need because customs rules are different.

There's also the issue of invoices, which we sometimes have to redo to meet requirements.

Another problem is with shipping documents, like B/Ls, because they don't always communicate correctly.

Mateo: Another problem is when they send gifts in the shipment.

That's not on the invoice and can cause serious problems at customs: fines, seizures, or the shipment being held up.

They do it out of kindness, but it causes problems.

Samantha: I thought they were more professional.

Mateo: Yes, in some ways, but not so much when it comes to imports.

Samantha: Since the pandemic, have you noticed any changes in the way you negotiate?

Mateo: Not really.

For more than 10 or 15 years, everything has been handled online: email or WhatsApp.

The process has always been the same: quote, payment, production, shipment, and arrival.

The only thing is that now everything is faster.

Samantha: Back then, people even traveled to negotiate.

Mateo: Yes, operations used to be much slower. Now, with the internet, everything is more streamlined.

Samantha: From your perspective, what intercultural skills are necessary?

Mateo: It's essential to be fluent in English.

Bonus points if you know Mandarin and have knowledge of Chinese culture.

But the foundation is knowing how to negotiate in English.

Samantha: Any advice based on your experience?

Mateo: Be direct.

Don't beat around the bush or use flowery language.

Clearly state what you need to avoid misunderstandings.

Samantha: Okay, thanks, Mateo

Interview Transcript – Xavier Patiño

Samantha: Good morning. We're here with Xavier Patiño. I don't know, could you tell me a little about yourself—who you are, what you've done, your college degree, your experiences, something like that.

Xavier: Okay, I'm an economist. I studied Economics at the University of Azuay. Then I went on to earn a master's degree in Business Administration. I've taken courses at TEC de Monterrey and also at INCAE. I also had the opportunity to study the topic of attracting investment to countries, specifically in South Korea, in Seoul, for a couple of years. So, that's more or less the trajectory of my academic career.

Now I'm really focused on studying artificial intelligence and, above all, how it can, in one way or another, help small businesses. In fact, at Data País we use it a lot.

In terms of my professional career, I served as president of the Cuenca Chamber of Commerce and led INVEGE, an investment promotion agency that received significant funding from USAID, a U.S. government agency focused on international cooperation. I was deeply involved in that work. I also worked for a long time at Cartoper. I joined the Chamber as executive director and later became president. I was also a manager in the southern division of Shop Seguros. I have served as a board member of Mutualista Azuay, among other roles. Currently, I work on Data País and IA Data Negocios, which are two digital platforms. In the case of Data País, what it does is promote everything you can imagine regarding comparative data between countries and cities in South America.

Based on that, we produce reports, studies, and analyses, which we sell on our website. As for IA Data Negocios, our focus is on guiding or encouraging other companies—including small and medium-sized businesses—to adopt similar practices and use artificial intelligence as a tool to support their operations. So, that's more or less what I do, in addition to teaching at the University of Azuay.

Samantha: Okay, got it. Well, one of the questions I wanted to ask you, from your perspective—both at Data País and the Chamber of Commerce—is: what significant changes have you observed in Ecuadorian foreign trade since the pandemic?

Xavier: You see, one of the radical changes that I believe, in every sense—not just in foreign trade, but in every sense—was the issue of technology use. I think the pandemic accelerated what might have been a five- or six-year process, or something like that, and did it in a year.

In other words, technology streamlined many things and also sparked the need for new platforms, new payment methods, new ways of living life—not to mention new ways of doing business, buying, and selling.

What used to be perhaps an exception—being able to do e-commerce—is now the rule. Almost, if you don't have a website where you can market or offer your products and sell them there, if you don't have social media or something like that, it just doesn't look good anymore.

So, I believe that one of the areas we can focus on and, above all, elevate in foreign trade is precisely that: the use of technology. Now, without a doubt, foreign trade from our country's perspective has been growing tremendously.

In 2019, for example, remittances in our country were roughly three billion dollars. And today we can simply say they're close to eight billion dollars. So, it's quite an unusual trend.

And I'm going to give you the export figures. A rather interesting fact is that around 2019 or 2018, before the pandemic, our exports were around twenty-one or twenty-two billion. And today they stand at around thirty-eight or thirty-seven billion. So, we've increased by fifteen billion in six years.

That has generated a positive impact, at least for our country, from what has happened since the pandemic. Now, there could be many reasons for this. One of them is technology. Two, trade liberalization is another key factor. Right now, despite the tariff issues we're facing with the United States, Ecuador's trade liberalization has also been quite favorable. In recent years, we've had trade agreements with China, South Korea, Saudi Arabia just a few days ago, and some Central American countries. So, trade liberalization also supports and helps that post-pandemic framework.

Samantha: Okay, perfect. Yes, I totally agree. And also, with what we're about to see now—the upcoming openings, including the port of Shanghai—that's going to be quite significant... I think we need to give much more attention to foreign trade issues. What relevant trends were evident or are evident in Ecuadorian imports from China during the 2025–2026 period, which was after the pandemic? What do you think was the most significant factor...?

Xavier: One of the things is the growth in our country's dependence on China. To give you a figure, right now about twenty-two percent of our imports—ranging between twenty-two and twenty-three percent—come from China.

The growth in imports, especially China's presence in our country, is increasing. And that's a factor where logistics, transportation, and virtual proximity are becoming increasingly important—because the physical distance remains exactly the same—but the factors I mentioned earlier make it, in one way or another, much more accessible and feasible.

Today, it is increasingly easy and visually apparent to realize this simply by looking at the number of Chinese vehicles on the road and the number of Chinese-made products in circulation. So, since the pandemic—or more specifically, from 2019 to the present—China has been growing tremendously in terms of imports to our country.

So, it is now a country we cannot dismiss, we cannot ignore, and we cannot take any action without being very careful, because twenty-two percent of our imports come from there. It is no longer a one-off issue, an isolated issue.

Samantha: I see. And in your opinion, what structural limitations have Ecuadorian companies faced when doing business in highly competitive markets like China?

Xavier: The thing is, I think one of the main reasons is partly a cultural issue. The cultural aspect, combined with a lack of knowledge. As we all know, in China you can find everything from a ten-dollar phone to a thousand-dollar phone. I'm just using that as an example. What I mean is that, without proper knowledge, you might end up buying either something of very low quality or something of very high quality. This can only be addressed through knowledge.

So, people who gradually get to know their supplier and develop a stronger relationship and greater trust can simply ensure their products are sold here. That was the serious problem: a complete lack of knowledge. In fact, at the beginning, Ecuadorian companies were formed whose sole purpose was to verify that the Chinese company actually existed or was legitimate.

Because we would simply see a Chinese company on a website, find a product we liked, and just import it. But we didn't know if it was real, if it might turn out to be a scam, or if the goods would even arrive—and in what condition they would arrive. Today, things are much more formal, and access to information has become much easier.

So, I think one of the most significant factors that has been improving is the cultural aspect and the issue of cultural unfamiliarity. And I say this because you have to understand Asian culture to be able to negotiate effectively.

Samantha: And more than anything, there are quite a few differences. I mean, really, just the way they communicate, the way they negotiate. For example, I was told that when you negotiate with a Chinese supplier, you deal with the main supplier, and from there it branches out to about five more suppliers, so it ends up being more expensive and more difficult. So I don't know if you've had the opportunity—you mentioned that you've also been to Korea—to negotiate directly with Chinese suppliers and what your experience has been like with that.

Xavier: Yes, I've also had the chance to be in China a couple of times, and one of the things that happened—at least in my experience—is that sometimes, once you reach a certain level with a supplier, it seems like trust or the personal relationship comes first, and then the actual negotiation. I mean, first I get to know you—the typical lunches, snacks, let's go eat, let's have a drink, and so on. I get to know you, and tomorrow I'll show you the company, tomorrow I'll show you how everything works, and so on. In other words, first I want to know who I'm going to be negotiating with.

So those things, and if we add to that the fact that maybe if someone comes here to Ecuador, we prioritize the reception aspect—we're very careful about it—it seems like over there it's much more informal and much more to the point, much faster. But I think these things are a cultural issue.

For them, food is very important, and they want the person—whether a future client or a potential client—to eat, and to eat everything, and they see it as a very pleasant gesture. So, in my experience—and my brother has

had the same experience—when he has to travel, he goes there once a year, so it's very similar when there's a new supplier or client, depending on whether they're buying or selling, but once they're known, the conditions are completely different. It's a different matter.

So the cultural aspect is indeed very important—understanding and knowing—because everyone negotiates differently depending on the culture they're in. It's not always the same traditions, customs, or ways of negotiating.

Samantha: Sure. And how do you think data analysis and economic intelligence can help Ecuadorian companies better understand international markets and adapt to cultural differences in negotiation processes? Aside from thoroughly researching the market, knowing who we're negotiating with, and all that. Maybe I'm referring a bit more to things like dress code, speaking style, and timing. For example, I've been told that some Chinese people are very informal, but let's say, if you ask for a pro forma, they're able to send it within five minutes. Things like that.

Xavier: I think the issue of data is fundamental. There's a book by Kaplan and Norton that says, "What cannot be measured cannot be managed." And if it can't be managed, it might not exist as well. So I believe that measurement must be applied to all factors—in every small business, in every medium or large company—there must always be metrics.

And the issue of data is now becoming an extremely user-friendly and indispensable resource, no longer just for large companies, but also for small businesses. With the help of technology, this is no longer a barrier, but has come to democratize access fully and absolutely, regardless of size.

Now, what do I mean by data? That if tomorrow I know what China is exporting, under what conditions, to which countries, at what prices—I can already know that. Those are inputs I can use to compare and understand. I know that China is exporting such-and-such products to Colombia. And that information is free. If I go to the United Nations' Trademap, I can easily obtain that information and know what is happening.

So, that data, once transformed into information about what China is using and what it is exporting to Colombia or Peru, can become full knowledge, because Ecuadorians can make decisions based on that. Import or don't import, buy or don't buy, bring in that product or don't bring it in. So, that information, which is currently very accessible everywhere, I have to start looking for.

If right now I find or have a Chinese supplier, I can already know who the supplier is, how much the supplier sells, and to whom the supplier sells, simply to determine whether that supplier is reliable or unreliable, trustworthy or untrustworthy. So, right now, the whole data issue is already starting to be an extremely useful tool for knowing, for assessing, and for making decisions that will determine in the future whether we can sell or not, whether we can market or not—which, as we discussed at the beginning, used to be a complete mystery.

Samantha: Perfect. And well, I actually had more questions, but everything you just told me covers this quite extensively, not only from the economic side but also from the cultural side, as you mentioned. Finally, I'd like to know, from your professional perspective, what recommendations would you give to Ecuadorian companies, to Ecuadorian SMEs, to improve their negotiations with Chinese suppliers, considering both economic and cultural factors?

Xavier: I would suggest two things. First, that sometimes price doesn't determine complete satisfaction or the full picture. I think I would focus heavily on quality—not just on price, but on quality.

Second, I would also place a strong emphasis on data and knowledge before importing or getting involved in something—both knowledge and data, internal matters, understanding the domestic market, and obviously the external aspect, in this case with China.

If I decide to import for reason A or B—whether because I found product X in China, or because I found a weakness or an opportunity here in Ecuador, whatever the reason—I think it's very important to do research. And above all, when I research, I look not only to see if this opportunity exists, but also to ensure it has long-term sustainability.

We know that many companies can pop up at any time. Today, if you ask me for something, I can say, "Yes, of course I can do it; I'll build a website in two days and that's it." And I can resell something and that's it. So, taking the time to find out where else there are options, what alternatives exist, what choices are available regarding one product or another that, for one reason or another, the person has decided to import.

So, I believe those factors are very important, because I'd say that today it's so easy to see hundreds of products on a screen, hundreds of alternatives, but it's so hard to know if those hundreds of products are real or not, if they're resold or not. I'm talking about the supplier or the supplier's supplier's supplier.

So, regarding that, I would say: stay calm. One of the fundamental things is calmness and patience. The import will happen anyway, but still, if you're going to dedicate yourself to a business, take it slow. I believe this is one of the fundamental factors: making sure and checking three times before proceeding.

Samantha: And on the cultural side, what advice would you give professionally based on your experience? As I said, perhaps the way you dress, the way you speak—those kinds of cultural factors—which do you think have had the biggest impact, or which have you found to work best for you, for your negotiations, or in this kind of context?

Xavier: Two things. First, don't lose your own identity. Because you don't have to become Chinese to be able to work with them. You're Latin American. You have to preserve and maintain your identity. But it is extremely important to understand the other person's culture, because understanding their culture prevents me from simply making assumptions; it prevents me from thinking things that aren't true or that are.

And third, I think it's essential—before having a conversation, before traveling there—to do two things: first, get to know the company—what it does, what its business is; and second, learn about its culture—in this case, Chinese culture—and understand its core principles.

And for that, today, go to any AI model and ask it: “Okay, I have a meeting with such-and-such company, such-and-such, such-and-such—what are the best ways for me to act?” And it will practically tell me the tips on what I shouldn't do or what I should emphasize. But of course, while understanding the person and without losing the unique character of being Latin American.

Samantha: Perfect, economist, thank you very much. I'm going to stop recording now.

Interview Transcript – Xavier Patiño

Samantha: Hi, nice to meet you. My name is Samantha. I study international business. I'm working on my final project to graduate, so maybe you could help me with some questions.

Joy: Okay.

Samantha: The first question is: how would you describe the negotiation process with Ecuadorian companies such as Luna Pazmiño?

Joy: I think the negotiation process between us is very pleasant.

Samantha: Do you think there are many differences between Chinese and Ecuadorian businesspeople?

Joy: Before, between us, we always talked about the order and the details of the order, but I don't think the cultural differences affect our cooperation.

Samantha: What do you think about the way we communicate? Maybe Chinese people are more formal, or Ecuadorians are more informal.

Joy: I think most of the time I'm informal, so I don't think the people on your side are informal.

Samantha: You have customers all over the world. What differences do you see between Ecuadorian or Latin American customers and others, such as Europeans or Americans?

Joy: Europeans are usually polite and kind, but they have specific requirements for the products. They demand higher quality and better after-sales service.

Samantha: How important is building trust in business relationships?

Joy: I think building trust between us and the customers before the order is placed is very important. Customers place orders because they trust us, trust our factory, and trust our quality.

What our factory needs to do is be honest with the customer and do our best to offer the highest quality.

Also, if customers have any questions during negotiations or after they receive the goods—sometimes there will be quality issues. I can't guarantee that all goods are perfect, but when customers have problems, we do our best to help them resolve them, such as by offering replacement parts.

Samantha: Do you have a percentage of products with problems?

Joy: First, if we find quality issues in our factory, we investigate them. The percentage is very small—only a few issues per order.

Samantha: After the pandemic, has the way you negotiate with international clients changed?

Joy: Yes, I think it has changed. We communicate with customers more and more through apps like WhatsApp or WeChat.

WeChat is more popular. Many customers use WeChat to communicate with us because WhatsApp cannot be used directly in China. We need special software to use it.

Samantha: Do you think international clients have changed since the pandemic?

Joy: Yes, they've changed a lot. The economic situation around the world has gotten worse.

Samantha: Do you have more clients now than before the pandemic?

Joy: In the first year or two, things changed a little, but in the past two years, especially in 2025, the number of customers dropped significantly.

Samantha: Why?

Joy: The global economic situation has worsened. Many countries are at war, so business has been affected. Also, exchange rates from the U.S. have fluctuated significantly, which impacts international business.

Samantha: Do you have problems with customers from the U.S.?

Joy: It affects us, but we don't have many customers from the USA. However, the policies affect other customers, especially European customers.

Samantha: In your opinion, does understanding another country's culture influence the success of a negotiation?

Joy: Yes. Understanding the other country's culture helps ensure the success of a negotiation.

Knowing more about the other country's culture helps us communicate better with customers. If we understand the culture, we know how to interact with people and can show each other greater respect.

Samantha: How would you describe Ecuadorian people or Ecuadorian companies?

Joy: I don't have many customers in your country—only three. But I think people are very nice. It's a pleasure for us to do business with them.

Most of the time I send a lot of messages, emails, or WhatsApp messages, but in the past two or three years I haven't received many replies.

Samantha: But now we want to work together again.

Joy: Yes, it's great to be back. I hope I haven't bothered you over the past few years.

Samantha: Thank you, Joy. Thank you so much for your help.

Interview Transcript – Gaby Fajardo.

Samantha: Well, first of all, Gaby, I wanted to thank you for your help with this interview for my thesis topic. To start, I'd like you to tell me a little more about yourself—your academic and professional background, everything you've done, what you've studied, and what you're currently doing.

Gaby: Let me tell you, I'm an economist; I studied at the University of Azuay. I also earned a master's degree in Business Administration, which was my first master's degree. Then, since I've been teaching for a long time in the fields of economics and mathematics, I went on to earn a master's degree in Applied Mathematics.

I'm currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Business Administration, but my dissertation focuses on gender-based workplace disparities in universities, specifically in administrative and teaching roles.

That is what I am doing now. I also conducted a preliminary study during the pandemic, in collaboration with the Ecuadorian Network of Women Scientists, on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Ecuadorian female academics and scientists.

Samantha: I've noticed that your research highlights high levels of uncertainty during the pandemic. How do you think this uncertainty transformed the way companies conduct business internationally, especially in terms of trust and decision-making?

Gaby: Uncertainty creates risk in business because risk is precisely associated with not knowing what is going to happen.

That's what happened during the pandemic. We didn't know how long it would last, or if there would be a vaccine or a solution. So, this uncertainty holds us back when it comes to building relationships or doing business.

Additionally, people's consumption patterns have shifted. Habits changed because we were in lockdown and prioritized health and food. That directly affected business dynamics.

Samantha: You also mention the effects on work overload and professional pressure. How do you think these factors might have influenced the quality of international negotiations?

Gaby: The workload changed completely. We went from working in offices to working from home.

Home became the workplace. That meant adapting to new ways of working remotely.

This brought a new way of working, interacting, and negotiating.

Before, you had a clear schedule. At home, however, communication could happen at any time. That changed the work dynamic and also facilitated international communication, because it allowed you to connect with people from other countries at any time.

Samantha: Based on your findings regarding adaptation in crisis contexts, what role do you think cultural factors play in companies' ability to adapt to new forms of post-pandemic negotiation?

Gaby: It's a constant challenge. Companies must always adapt to change.

Technology wasn't used before, and now it's essential. The pandemic accelerated that process, but it's still something companies must do constantly.

Companies must continually update themselves, especially in international contexts.

Samantha: How do you think this impacts intercultural communication in international negotiations?

Gaby: There are two important things.

When you visit a country, you get to know the culture, the customs, the language, and the way people interact.

But when you only communicate via Zoom, you only get to know the person, not the entire culture.

Digital tools facilitate constant communication, but they limit real cultural engagement.

Face-to-face contact allows you to understand customs, behaviors, and negotiation styles.

However, living in a globalized world, we already have some prior knowledge of other cultures.

Even so, personal contact remains essential for cultural exchange and negotiations.

Samantha: Your study also addresses emotional well-being. How do these factors influence decision-making in negotiations?

Gaby: During the pandemic, there was an overlap of tasks.

People were working while simultaneously taking care of the home, children, and personal responsibilities.

High levels of multitasking were recorded, even up to 70% in some cases.

This affects emotional well-being because there is no separation between work and personal life.

It also affects decision-making since there is no adequate rest.

Samantha: From your perspective, what changes have taken hold in the post-pandemic environment and continue to influence international negotiations?

Gaby: The use of technological tools is the main change.

Many people continue to work from home. This allows for job mobility and remote work from anywhere in the world.

Companies no longer need a physical space for all their employees, just digital supervision.

However, in-person negotiations are still necessary in certain cases.

Samantha: What recommendations would you give to Ecuadorian companies that negotiate with international suppliers to adapt to the post-pandemic context?

Gaby: Take advantage of everything learned during the pandemic, especially the use of technological tools.

But it's also important to maintain interaction in person interaction.

Personal contact allows you to understand the culture, adapt better, and strengthen business relationships.

The ideal approach is to combine both methods: digital and in-person.

Samantha: Perfect, I don't have any more questions. Thank you very much for your help.

Gaby: You're welcome.