



**Faculty of Legal Sciences**

**School of International Studies**

Intercultural Communication as a Competitive Advantage in  
Multinational Companies: Case Study: San Miguel Industrias  
Ecuador Sanmindec S.A. (SMI Solutions)

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

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To my parents,

With all my love and gratitude, I dedicate this achievement to you—it is not mine alone, but the result of all the effort you have put in over the years. I am aware of every sacrifice, every day of hard work, and every moment you put my dreams before your own to give me the opportunity to get this far.

Thank you for teaching me, through your example, the value of hard work, perseverance, and the dignity of labor.

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This achievement is a reflection of everything you have done for me.

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# **Intercultural Communication as a Competitive Advantage in Multinational Companies: The Case of San Miguel Industrias Ecuador Sanmindec S.A. (Smi Solutions)**

## **ABSTRACT**

This research analyzes intercultural communication as a competitive advantage in multinational companies, based on the case of San Miguel Industrias Ecuador SANMINDEC S.A. (SMI Solutions). The study is grounded in the intercultural perspective, organizational culture, and competitive advantage, with the purpose of understanding how interaction among cultures influences negotiation processes, internal coordination, operational efficiency, and corporate positioning. Regarding the methodology, a qualitative case study was conducted, based on a systematic literature review, document analysis of internal and external sources, semi-structured interviews with the company's key stakeholders, and data triangulation through thematic analysis. The findings show that intercultural communication is not limited to language, but requires understanding cultural codes, interaction styles, and diverse organizational contexts. In the case studied, its proper management promotes cooperation among departments, strengthens relationships with suppliers and work teams, and helps reduce misunderstandings, delays, and operational failures. Likewise, it was found that when it is not managed strategically, significant logistical and economic consequences may arise. It is concluded that intercultural communication represents a strategic competence for multinational companies because, when linked to organizational culture and management processes, it can become a sustainable competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** commerce, intercultural communication, organizational culture, company, innovation, competitive advantage

# **Comunicación Intercultural Como Ventaja Competitiva En Empresas Multinacionales Caso: San Miguel Industrias Ecuador Sanmindec S.A (Smi Solutions)**

## **RESUMEN**

La presente investigación analiza la comunicación intercultural como ventaja competitiva en empresas multinacionales, a partir del caso de San Miguel Industrias Ecuador SANMINDEC S.A. (SMI Solutions). El estudio se sustenta en la perspectiva intercultural, la cultura organizacional y la ventaja competitiva, con el propósito de comprender cómo la interacción entre culturas influye en los procesos de negociación, coordinación interna, eficiencia operativa y posicionamiento empresarial. Con respecto a la metodología, se desarrolló una investigación cualitativa de estudio de caso, basada en revisión sistemática de literatura, análisis documental de fuentes internas y externas, entrevistas semiestructuradas a los principales elementos de empresa y mediante la triangulación de la información, a través de un análisis temático. Los hallazgos ponen en manifiesto que la comunicación intercultural no se reduce al idioma, sino que requiere de comprender códigos culturales, estilos de interacción y contextos organizacionales diversos. En el caso estudiado, su adecuada gestión favorece la cooperación entre áreas, fortalece las relaciones con proveedores y equipos de trabajo, y contribuye a reducir malentendidos, retrasos y fallas operativas. De la misma manera, se consiguió identificar que, cuando no es gestionada de una manera estratégica, puede generarse consecuencias logísticas y económicas significativas. Se concluye que la comunicación intercultural representa una competencia estratégica para las empresas multinacionales debido a que, al ser relacionadas con la cultura organizacional y con los procesos de gestión, se puede convertir en una ventaja competitiva sostenible.

**Palabras clave:** Comercio, comunicación intercultural, cultura organizacional, empresa, innovación, ventaja competitiva

# INTRODUCTION

The process of globalization and economic interdependence are two factors that, over recent decades, have allowed organizational dynamics—particularly within multinational companies—to evolve favorably into their current state, where interculturality is a visible part of the daily business environment. In this context, interactions among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds have transitioned from isolated occurrences to structural elements of organizational management. This shift has encouraged the development of theoretical approaches aimed at understanding how culture influences communicative processes and, conversely, how these processes affect business performance and competitiveness (Caballero et al., 2025).

Building upon this context, Barragán et al. (2025) suggest that culture can be understood as a complex system of meanings, values, and practices that guide the behavior of individuals within a social group. This perspective helps illustrate that communication is neither a neutral nor a universal process; rather, it is deeply conditioned by cultural codes that shape how messages are transmitted, interpreted, and validated within a society. In this regard, intercultural communication emerges as a field of study that analyzes interactions between culturally diverse actors, emphasizing the need to recognize, interpret, and navigate these differences to achieve effective communicative processes.

In the organizational sphere, these ideas hold considerable importance, as multinational companies often need to align practices, values, and strategies across heterogeneous cultural contexts. Recent literature highlights that intercultural communication goes beyond mere language proficiency; it also involves developing competencies related to the interpretation of symbols, social norms, interaction styles, and power structures. Consequently, the ability to manage cultural diversity through appropriate communication processes becomes a determining factor in internal coordination, decision-making, and the building of sustainable organizational relationships (Ochoa, 2022).

Alongside the organizational sphere, it is helpful to understand that the concept of competitive advantage has evolved from approaches focused exclusively on economic factors

to perspectives that incorporate intangible elements, such as organizational culture, knowledge, and dynamic capabilities. Accordingly, the resource-based view suggests that assets which are difficult to imitate, such as intercultural competencies, may serve as sources of sustainable differentiation. In this way, intercultural communication can be viewed not merely as an operational skill, but as a strategic capability that contributes to improving organizational efficiency and strengthening positioning in global markets (Valdez, 2025). Likewise, organizational culture emerges as an element that correlates intercultural communication and competitiveness, as it provides the reference frameworks that guide the behavior of the organization's members.

Here, shared values, norms, and practices influence how cultural differences are managed, conflicts are resolved, and strategies are implemented. For this reason, studying intercultural communication in the business context requires a multifaceted approach that considers its relationship with organizational culture, leadership, and internal management processes (Teeza, 2020). Based on the preceding information, it is important to note that analyzing and correlating intercultural communication, organizational culture, and competitive advantage helps illustrate that organizations compete not only through tangible resources but also through their ability to manage diversity and foster effective cooperative environments. Therefore, analyzing these concepts from a comprehensive perspective is fundamental to explaining how multinational companies might transform cultural complexity into a strategic opportunity within globalized environments.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **STATE OF THE ART**

### **1.1 Investigation Background: Similar International Cases**

There are numerous studies that address the research variables. Internationally, a notable example is the thesis by Savolainen (2024) from Savonia University of Applied Sciences in Finland, titled “Business culture and intercultural communication in bilateral trade relations: Italy and Finland,” which examines how intercultural dynamics influence the development of trade relations, using Italian and Finnish companies—which have very different cultures—as case studies. The research was based on documentary analysis, and its conclusions highlight the importance of using intercultural communication as a strategy for building strong trade relationships.

Additionally, in the international context, it is important to highlight the research by Luqman and Agathsya (2025) titled “Intercultural Communication in Multinational Work Environments: A Comparative Analysis of Communication Patterns and Cultural Factors,” which examines communication styles in multinational companies using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys of employees of various nationalities. This study identifies communication barriers, such as linguistic differences and contrasting cultural styles, and concludes that understanding these cultural factors is essential for improving communication effectiveness in internationalized teams, which strengthens human capital management in global organizations.

Based on studies conducted in our region, we examine the case analyzed by Hoffmann (2022), “Gestión intercultural en América Latina. Estrategia y cultura organizacional en las empresas multinacionales danesas; la relación entre la casa matriz y sus subsidiarias en dos casos argentinos seleccionados” (Intercultural Management in Latin America: Strategy and Organizational Culture in Danish Multinational Companies; The Relationship Between the Parent Company and Its Subsidiaries in Two Selected Argentine Cases) which sought to understand how intercultural management influences organizational culture, with communication serving as one of its primary means. The author found that subsidiaries in

Argentina maintain close management ties with the Danish parent company but create structures, values, and dynamics within the country to better engage with the market; furthermore, they seek to balance cultural differences, although there are still a lot of cultural challenges to manage.

At the local level, in Ecuador, research contributions vary depending on the author's research approach. For example, Kassar's (2023) thesis, "Diseño de una política de comunicación organizacional interna para el fortalecimiento de la cultura en la Empresa Prix" (Designing an Internal Organizational Communication Policy to Strengthen Culture at Prix,) uses an intercultural communication approach to strengthen internal communication at this company, which has operations in five countries in the region. On the other hand, there is Sáenz's (2024) thesis on "Factores de enlace "Cross-Cultural" en fusiones y adquisiciones. Entre la multiculturalidad y la hibridación; estudio del sector de energía en Ecuador" (Cross-Cultural Linking Factors in Mergers and Acquisitions. Between Multiculturalism and Hybridization: A Study of the Energy Sector in Ecuador), which examines the intercultural approaches used in international business within the energy sector—one of the sectors with the highest participation of foreign companies. These strategies emphasize cultural integration and the management of cultural diversity.

In the same vein, recent academic literature examines aspects of intercultural communication and its relationship to organizational management. For instance, the study by López Arias (2023), "Comunicación, clima y cultura organizacional para la gestión del conocimiento en la empresa de transporte y comercio internacional Transcomerinter Cía. Ltda. Ecuador"(Communication, Organizational Climate, and Culture for Knowledge Management at the International Transportation and Trade Company Transcomerinter Cía. Ltda., Ecuador ), developed at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, examined how internal communication and organizational climate influence knowledge management through surveys administered to employees of a company with international operations. The findings indicate that effective organizational communication significantly contributes to the socialization of knowledge and cooperation across departments, which fosters a positive organizational climate and facilitates adaptation to multicultural contexts within the company.

## **1.2 Intercultural communication as a competitiveness factor**

Continuing with the study, it is essential to analyze what the variables of the research topic—intercultural communication and competitiveness—entail. Intercultural communication, for its part, consists of two broad concepts: communication and culture. On the one hand, communication is a social process that is not exclusive to human beings, but we may be the species with the most tools and the greatest development in this area. At a technical level, communication is understood in three dimensions: syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic, with the first relating to coding, channels used, capacity, and noise; the second examines meaning; and the third examines the behavior reflected. (García y otros, 2021, p. 16).

On a social level, communication stems from the need for cooperation that early humans recognized within their communities, based on two factors: first, the socio-cognitive abilities to create shared intentions and attention with others, and second, prosocial motivations that enable them to help and share with others. (Dottori, 2020, p. 545).

Continuing with the analysis, culture is a concept that also has several dimensions. On the one hand, it is organization, which corresponds to a complex, interconnected system of diverse and distinct elements; on the other hand, it is society, which is defined as collective and linked to social groups. According to Héau, it does not float in the air: people (historical actors) are more important than ideas (2020, pp. 491–492). From an anthropological perspective, culture is understood as a structure of meaning: “every culture has its own values, ways of viewing relationships between people, expected modes of behavior, and, fundamentally, its own meanings” (Avenburg y Morano, 2024, p. 38).

In this context, interculturality can be defined as: “the presence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions, achieved through dialogue and an attitude of mutual respect” (Briones et al., 2020, p. 28), as it represents an approach toward other cultures. Historically, cultural differences have been used to criticize, exclude, and devalue. The intercultural approach advocates for an open and conciliatory attitude to foster mutual understanding and promote equality and inclusion. Furthermore, based on

Lozada's text (2025, p. 3380), intercultural communication is characterized by the coexistence of linguistic, symbolic, and behavioral differences that influence the interpretation of messages and the relational dynamics between interlocutors [it implies] the ability to negotiate meanings and establish respectful and understanding relationships in culturally diverse contexts.

To summarize, intercultural communication occurs in all contexts, including the corporate environment, especially in the current process of economic globalization, where it is increasingly common for companies to engage in international ventures. In this regard, those who are part of the organization must learn to interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. To do so, it is essential to recognize cultural diversity and adapt one's manner of expression when the situation requires it. (Gómez y Velasco, 2024, p. 239).

In addition, another important aspect to define is competitiveness, a term that is constantly used in the business world. It is defined as "[...] the set of tools that, when combined, make it easier to lead the market and outperform competitors in the industry [...]" (Díaz et al., 2021, p. 147). In the market, all companies are constantly competing with one another to gain market share and generate greater profits, and this competitiveness can be a determining factor in defining a company's strategy.

Building on the previous analysis, Vieyra (2023) notes in his theoretical review that in companies operating in multiple countries, intercultural communication acts as an organizational competency that facilitates the adoption of diverse cultural values and the integration of multicultural teams, which can positively influence the effectiveness of internal communication and organizational outcomes by reducing misunderstandings and facilitating the exchange of information relevant to global operations, resulting in fluid communication that optimizes processes (p. 8). This analysis underscores that intercultural communication competencies not only foster internal cooperation but also translate into improved processes for adapting to external markets and a greater capacity to respond to intercultural challenges, making it a factor that can enhance competitive advantages in globalized contexts.

Beyond traditional economic indicators, the competitiveness of today's companies is driven by innovation and quality management. Quiñones-More and Pacheco-Pumaleque (2025)

support this with a predictive model that identifies both variables as key to the success of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in challenging markets (pp. 147–160). Consequently, adding intercultural communication skills to this approach enables companies to manage diversity optimally and secure their long-term viability.

### **1.3 Organizational Culture, Leadership, and Enterprise Development**

Other factors to consider include organizational culture, positioning, and internal management within companies. Organizational culture is an abstract concept that has been part of the business world since the early 20th century, but it has only recently gained the recognition it deserves. In general, organizational culture derives from the concept of culture but applied to the corporate context of each individual company to understand how social construction within the company shapes its direction and purpose. More specifically, “culture is conceived as an internal strategic design; when it becomes a basic element of management orientation [...] it means moving from a spontaneous system to an organic management system” (Yopan et al., 2020, p. 265).

Organizational culture is a fundamental strategic asset for optimizing an organization’s productivity, competitiveness, and market position. While every organization inherently develops its own system of values, habits, and rituals, the theoretical approach to organizational culture is multifaceted, drawing on sociological, anthropological, and organizational psychology perspectives.

From a technical perspective, Sánchez et al. (2006) define it as the “set of beliefs, norms, and values that influence behavior” (p. 182). Under this approach, cultural architecture is broken down into five interconnected levels:

- Artifacts: Tangible manifestations and products of cultural activity, such as logos and brands.
- Structures: Mechanisms governing coordination, communication, and decision-making processes.

- Behavioral norms: Implicit and explicit guidelines that determine accepted or rejected behaviors within the workplace.
- Values: Ethical and operational priorities that guide the organization's "ideal state."
- Unconscious assumptions: Deeply rooted premises that emerge from everyday social interactions (Sánchez et al., 2006, p. 182).

Today, organizational culture is a broad concept that encompasses all the elements that shape the identity of a group of people within a corporate context. It has been given the consideration it deserves because it shapes the environment in which employees operate, and this affects how they perceive their day-to-day work, their initiative, innovation, conflict resolution methods, and how they address competitiveness and lack of productivity, among other factors. For this reason, it is considered a resource that can be leveraged to gain a competitive advantage internally.

There are various approaches to defining, studying, and measuring organizational culture; in fact, between 1975 and 1992, 18 scales were developed (Coca et al., 2022, p. 1314), and no significant variations were found. There are more significant studies in the literature, such as the Cameron and Quinn model, which refers to the assumed values, underlying assumptions, expectations, and definitions that characterize organizations and their members, and the Denison model, which allows for an understanding of business dynamics through organizational performance. We can also mention Hofstede's model, which analyzes group cultural behaviors based on individual behavior, leading to his proposal of six dimensions (Roa et al., 2023, p. 209).

From a business perspective, organizational culture directly influences the way institutional strategies are designed and implemented; decisions related to planning, resource allocation, and priority setting do not occur in a vacuum, but rather respond to cultural patterns previously established within the organization. In this regard, Robbins and Judge (2021, p. 512) note that organizational culture acts as a frame of reference that guides managerial behavior and shapes acceptance of or resistance to organizational change. In this regard, companies with

clearly defined cultures tend to demonstrate greater consistency in their strategic decisions and greater stability in their internal processes.

Given its importance, leadership plays a crucial role in the implementation and transmission of organizational culture. Leadership styles influence the way institutional values are interpreted and put into practice on a day-to-day basis. According to Northouse (2022, p. 254), leaders communicate culture not only through formal speeches but primarily through their actions, attitudes, and interactions with employees, which either reinforce or weaken existing organizational values. Therefore, the correlation between leadership and culture is essential for strengthening employee engagement and fostering a work environment aligned with business objectives.

When considering its counterpart, organizational culture also shapes the company's relationship with its external environment, including customers, suppliers, and other market stakeholders. Additional factors such as internal practices, ethical standards, and how the company responds to social demands influence corporate reputation and the perceptions that stakeholders form of the organization. In this context, Villafañe (2021, p 118) argues that organizational culture affects corporate identity and institutional credibility, elements that become particularly relevant in business environments characterized by intense competition and heightened social expectations. In this way, internal culture transcends the boundaries of the company and extends into the surrounding environment.

An analytical examination of these elements reveals that organizational culture does not operate in isolation but rather maintains a constant relationship with a company's positioning and internal management. Leadership styles, strategic decisions, and relationships with the external environment are rooted in cultural patterns that guide organizational behavior. Understanding these links is essential for analyzing business performance, as it allows us to identify how internal dynamics influence the organization's ability to adapt, compete, and sustain itself over time.

## **1.4 Positioning: Conceptual and Strategic Foundations**

Positioning, on the other hand, is a concept that has been in use since the 1980s, when efforts were made to improve marketing strategies by understanding the consumer's mindset. Positioning is the place a product occupies within the brand and in the market; it is based on consumer recognition and constant desire. While the characteristics of the product or service help improve positioning, its primary dimension is the idea that the customer or consumer has of the product or service (Franco et al., 2022, p. 85). Achieving positioning, therefore, is not solely due to the attributes of the product or service, but is also attributed to its use and application in people's lives, its place within a specific consumer segment, its position relative to the competition, its differentiation, and even its reputation in the market (Franco et al., 2022, p. 86).

Given this perspective, Ries and Trout (2022, p. 29) define positioning based on the following premise: "To succeed in over-communicated societies, a company must occupy a position in the minds of customers, but this position must take into account not only the company's strengths and weaknesses, but also those of its competitors." Positioning is important because "there is a positive relationship between positioning decisions and brand success; that is, brand success revolves around the axis of the positioning decision" (Saqib, 2021, p. 143). Companies seek to position themselves through a variety of strategies that enhance the company's image in the customer's mind, including the most modern ones related to human talent management, sustainability, inclusion, and social responsibility.

Corporate positioning is intrinsically linked to internal management, as credibility with consumers stems from the alignment between corporate messaging and the actual service experience. In this regard, Keller (2021, p. 67) emphasizes that identity and culture must align with external practices to establish a positive and lasting brand image in the minds of consumers.

Furthermore, positioning is influenced by a company's ability to adapt to changing contexts and increasingly informed and demanding consumers. In markets characterized by intense competition and message saturation, the brands that succeed in standing out are those that build clear value propositions consistent with the social and cultural expectations of their environment. According to Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre (2021), brands that build their positioning around symbolic meanings and values shared with their audiences create stronger

and more lasting bonds, which strengthens consumer loyalty and reduces vulnerability to competition.

Finally, in the current context, brand positioning is increasingly linked to intangible factors such as corporate reputation, business ethics, and social responsibility. Several recent studies indicate that consumers evaluate not only the functional performance of products or services but also how companies address social and environmental issues. In this regard, Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2022) note that social responsibility initiatives influence brand perception and can strengthen brand positioning when they are perceived as authentic and consistent with the organizational identity. In this way, positioning transcends the commercial realm to become linked to the company's social legitimacy.

### **1.5 Human talent management as an articulator of culture, intercultural communication, and competitiveness**

In the context of human resource management, this section addresses internal management within companies—an area of administration and management from which management strategies emerge, including intercultural communication and competitiveness strategies. Previously, we addressed the concept and models of organizational culture, which is built upon the various elements that make up the company, such as the general work environment, policies regarding customers and suppliers, strategies, the operational environment, leadership style, and performance management—all of which affect the company's performance and productivity (Barragán et al., 2024, p. 17). The management and control strategies that determine each of these areas are implemented through internal management. In this regard:

[...] management is conceived as an administrative tool responsible for undertaking all the steps necessary to achieve efficient performance linked to increased productivity, thereby providing the organization with profitable and sustainable benefits, while recognizing that personnel are an active and essential resource for achieving institutional objectives. At the same time, it emphasizes that, within an organization, human resource management is the most significant and important aspect [...] (Own translation)

la gestión se concibe como una herramienta administrativa encargada de emprender todas las diligencias orientadas a lograr un desempeño eficiente asociado al incremento de la productividad para beneficiar rentable y sostenidamente a la organización, reconociendo que el personal es un recurso activo y necesario para alcanzar los objetivos institucionales, a la vez que enfatizan en que en una organización la gestión de recursos humanos es la más significativa e importante [...] (Huertas y otros, 2020, p. 168). (Huertas et al., 2020, p. 168).

From this perspective, internal management plays a significant role in linking organizational culture, intercultural communication, and competitiveness, integrating these three elements into the implementation of policies, standards, and practices that guide employee behavior and align their actions with the company's strategic objectives. Human talent management has become a key pillar for promoting inclusive and culturally diverse work environments, where intercultural communication fosters cooperation, reduces conflicts, and leverages diversity as an organizational resource. In this regard, Gómez, and Velasco (2024, p. 241) note that organizations that incorporate intercultural communication strategies into their internal management succeed in improving coordination between departments and strengthening employee engagement, which has a positive impact on organizational performance.

Likewise, internal management directly influences business competitiveness by enabling the optimization of processes, improving decision-making, and responding more effectively to environmental demands. Purposeful internal management focuses not only on control and supervision but also on the development of organizational capabilities, continuous learning, and adaptation to change. According to León and Cedeño (2023), companies that strategically manage their human and communication resources demonstrate higher levels of efficiency and sustainability, as they succeed in aligning individual interests with institutional objectives and strengthening their position against the competition (p. 96).

To summarize the information above, it can be said that internal management can be understood as the arena where a company's strategic decisions are implemented and where

organizational values, culture, and goals are translated into everyday practices. It is through coherent and planned internal management that intercultural communication ceases to be a theoretical discourse and becomes an operational tool, and that competitiveness is built sustainably based on people's performance. Therefore, internal management not only coordinates resources and processes but also guides the organization's direction and determines its ability to sustain itself and grow in increasingly diverse and complex business environments.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1. Culture and Communication: Theoretical Fundamentals**

##### **2.1.1 Culture Defined in Social Sciences**

Fajardo et al. (2020) argue that the concept of culture in the social sciences should be understood as a network of practices, meanings, and representations that shape the expectations of social actors and help explain why certain behaviors are repeated or transformed in specific contexts, such that culture functions as a frame of reference that regulates perceptions of authority, time, and norms of coexistence; additionally, this approach allows us to study how tensions between traditional practices and external changes generate processes of identity renegotiation within work and community groups; moreover, approaching culture from a dynamic perspective facilitates the analysis of adaptations and resistance when organizations face processes of strategic change.

Contemporary literature adds that interpretive approaches prioritize the observation of routines, discourses, and symbols as primary sources for understanding cultural reproduction in organizational settings, which leads to a methodological emphasis on ethnographies and narrative analyses that document the lived experiences of individuals engaged in everyday practice. Similarly, studies on intellectual capital and value creation show how tacit knowledge and shared routines influence companies' productive capacities and the way in which they convey expectations to their workforce (Gómez-Bayona et al., 2020).

Along these lines, authors who have conducted similar analyses argue that organizational culture serves a regulatory function by establishing symbolic boundaries regarding what is considered acceptable, desirable, or inappropriate within the company. These guidelines are not always expressed formally, but rather manifest themselves through repeated practices, implicit agreements, and shared expectations that guide employee behavior. In this sense, Alvesson, and Sveningsson (2021, p. 74) explain that cultural norms influence how employees interpret their roles, respond to authority, and manage uncertain situations, which helps explain why similar

organizations may exhibit significantly different internal behaviors when faced with equivalent conditions.

Likewise, cultural analysis in organizations allows us to examine how power relations and hierarchies are shaped in the workplace. Culture influences the legitimization of leadership styles, the distribution of responsibilities, and the mechanisms of recognition and sanction. From this perspective, Schein (2022, p.109) notes that deeply rooted cultural assumptions tend to be reproduced in organizational socialization processes, especially when new members join, as they quickly learn the unwritten rules that govern daily interactions. This cultural reproduction contributes to organizational stability, but it can also impede change processes when existing practices create tension with new environmental demands and shift employee habits.

On the other side, organizational culture plays a key role in the analysis of business learning and adaptation processes. Organizations respond to external stimuli not only through structural adjustments but also through cultural reinterpretations that redefine priorities, behavioral habits, meanings, and ways of acting. In this matter, Crossan, Maurer, and White (2021, p. 63) argue that organizational learning is linked to the cultural frameworks that determine what knowledge is valued, how it is shared, and how it is incorporated into daily practice. Thus, culture influences a company's ability to innovate, absorb changes, and sustain improvements over time.

### **2.1.2 Organizational and National Culture**

In his analysis, Porter (1996) notes that organizational culture must be examined in relation to the values and norms that prevail in the national context, given that the translation of corporate policies into local practices is shaped by historical interpretations of work, authority, and cooperation. This situation implies that efficient structural designs may clash with established labor practices if they do not align with local cultural frameworks; furthermore, the interaction between strategic orientations and social expectations determines the receptivity to administrative and technological changes, and therefore strategic analyses must incorporate cultural variables when evaluating the operational feasibility of managerial decisions; Consequently, assessing cultural compatibility between the parent company and the subsidiary is relevant when planning integrations or acquisitions.

Empirical studies show that factors such as power distance, collectivist or individualist orientation, and time management influence everything from the assignment of responsibilities to the way teams are led; thus, adapting management styles and control mechanisms to national norms reduces operational friction and improves cross-departmental coordination. Corroborating these findings, recent research on digital transformation and strategic management suggests that the adoption of technologies and new routines requires a carefully planned cultural adjustment process to avoid negatively impacting productivity, as technical changes simultaneously necessitate reconfigurations in communication practices and organizational incentives (Furr et al., 2022).

### **2.1.3 Relationship between Culture and Communication**

Communication, in addition to being a channel for transmitting information, is a social practice shaped by cultural assumptions that determine what is said, how it is said, and what is considered credible or legitimate; therefore, analyses of communication flows in organizations must incorporate contextual variables that explain discrepancies between formal messages and practical meanings. Consequently, interpretation depends both on shared symbolic repertoires and on power structures that shape the willingness to express disagreement or accept instructions; as a result, understanding communication failures requires investigating the implicit rules that guide interactions (Caballero-González et al., 2025).

When communication is examined through the lens of everyday interaction, key factors such as styles of politeness, time expectations, and forms of feedback emerge, which influence the efficiency of order transmission and conflict resolution. This phenomenon directly impacts the operational performance of teams with diverse cultural backgrounds; furthermore, literature on dynamic capabilities highlights that the communicative ability to translate strategic objectives into shared practices influences organizational resilience and the ability to maintain results in the face of changes in the control structure (Teece, 2020).

### **2.1.4 Elements of the Communication Process in Diverse Cultural Contexts**

In a study conducted by Fajardo, Gómez, and Mejía (2020), the authors argue that the communication process in diverse cultural settings consists of technical and symbolic components that interact in complex ways within organizations; so the sender and receiver are

not merely functional roles but bearers of cultural repertoires that shape code selection, message interpretation, and the willingness to provide feedback, making proper synchronization between channel, code, and context a prerequisite for the effective transmission of strategic guidelines. In the same context, the presence of technological systems and communication platforms adds an additional layer where digital mediation alters the timing and form of communicative exchange, forcing teams to negotiate new norms of interaction to maintain operational coherence.

Continuing with the analysis of this argument, the classic elements of communication (message, channel, code, context, feedback, and noise) take on specific nuances when the interlocutors come from different cultural backgrounds, since what is clear evidence for one group may be insufficient or even offensive to another, requiring specific practices for clarification, verification, and the adjustment of expectations; likewise, nonverbal aspects such as proxemics, tone, and ceremonial routines influence the reception and perceived legitimacy of the message; therefore, interventions that modify only the channel without addressing cultural codes are highly likely to result in communication failures (Vesga Rodríguez et al., 2020).

### **2.1.5 Cultural Barriers in Communication**

Studying communication internally within the cultural context, Alharbi (2024) warns that cultural barriers operate at linguistic, symbolic, and structural levels, so that the most frequent problems do not only stem from poor translations but also from implicit assumptions about authority, time, and job expectations that distort the interpretation of strategic messages; these barriers translate into misunderstandings in coordination processes, slowness in implementing changes, and the emergence of micro-conflicts that, if not addressed, erode trust between organizational units; therefore, identifying the types of barriers early on and designing corrective mechanisms is a practice that should be incorporated into change management to reduce operational friction and associated costs.

Cultural barriers include stereotypes and implicit biases that limit active listening and openness toward others, differences in communication styles that create ambiguity regarding priorities and deadlines, as well as hierarchical structures that inhibit upward feedback. Additionally, organizational factors such as departmental silos—where departments operate

independently and without smooth communication among themselves—play a role. Meanwhile, incompatible technological platforms and the absence of clear protocols for translating corporate standards into local practices amplify these difficulties, necessitating the design of interventions that combine communication retraining and institutional adjustments to facilitate mutual understanding and operational cooperation (Guzmán, Tenorio & Pazmiño, 2022; Barney, Ketchen & Wright, 2021).

## **2.2 Theories and Models of Culture Applied to Organizations**

### **2.2.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions**

The dimensional framework proposed by Hofstede offers a set of analytical categories that allow for the comparison of collective values such as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation—understood as cultural predispositions that influence incentive structures, the distribution of authority, and the way labor agreements are negotiated. These dimensions help explain why uniform decisions issued by corporate headquarters generate varied responses in subsidiaries located in diverse national contexts, which necessitates considering not only the form of corporate policies but also how local actors interpret technical and administrative procedures based on their cultural frameworks (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2020).

This theory is reinforced by the contributions of Nancy Adler, who argues that culture is a central variable in the management of multinational organizations, particularly in the processes of communication, leadership, and intercultural coordination. Adler argues that many of the difficulties companies face in international contexts do not stem from technical flaws in strategy design, but rather from cultural misinterpretations that arise when global strategic decisions are not adequately translated into local contexts. In this regard, understanding the cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede is essential for anticipating how different organizational groups interpret authority, control systems, and performance expectations.

From an empirical perspective, Espinoza Mina and Espinoza Gallegos (2020) show that, in productive sectors, cultural dimensions have a direct impact on the acceptance of control mechanisms and the effectiveness of standardized processes. These findings align with Hofstede's model by demonstrating variables such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance

influence workers' willingness to accept formal rules and oversight mechanisms. Consequently, to achieve effective operational alignment following mergers or acquisitions, it becomes essential to conduct a cultural assessment that identifies discrepancies between local expectations and corporate standards, enabling the design of culturally compatible organizational adaptation strategies. In line with Adler's approach, this cultural assessment not only serves a descriptive purpose but also acts as a strategic input for selecting communication adjustment mechanisms and intercultural training aimed at reducing friction in the execution of critical activities. Adler emphasizes that developing intercultural competencies among managers and employees facilitates alignment between headquarters' decisions and local practices, increasing the likelihood of effective adoption of organizational changes.

A further examination of the practical application of cultural dimensions reveals significant implications for value chain design, human talent management, and the delegation of authority, given that cultural variables influence the propensity for innovation, risk tolerance, and the speed of response to market changes. From this perspective, both Hofstede and Adler agree that culture directly impacts organizations' ability to coordinate activities, adapt to the environment, and sustain their performance in international contexts. For this reason, when analyzing how a multinational company aligns its strategic decisions with its operational routines, it is pertinent to incorporate metrics that link cultural dimensions to indicators of productive performance and internal cohesion, which allows for prioritizing actions aimed at reducing coordination costs and strengthening communicative efficiency (Gómez-Bayona, Londoño-Montoya & Mora-González, 2020).

### **2.2.2 High and Low Cultural Context**

A recent study by Edward T. Hall explores the differences between high-context and low-context cultures based on the extent to which information relies on implicit, relational, and situational elements, as opposed to explicit, verbalized, and codified communication. This distinction is particularly relevant in organizations with a multicultural workforce, as it shapes the choice of communication procedures and the mechanisms through which meaning is conveyed within the company. In transnational settings, this dichotomy influences the decision to formalize instructions through written protocols or, conversely, to prioritize socialization

processes, observational learning, and informal communication, directly impacting organizational change strategies and the coordination of communication across hierarchical levels, particularly during integration processes following mergers or acquisitions (Neeley, 2021).

This approach is complemented by the contributions of Stuart Hall, who conceives of communication not as a linear process of information transmission, but as a process of producing, circulating, and interpreting meanings. Based on his model of encoding and decoding, the author argues that messages are encoded by senders within specific cultural frameworks and subsequently decoded by receivers based on their own experiences, values, and symbolic references. In this sense, the differences between high- and low-context cultures can be interpreted as variations in the cultural codes used to produce and understand organizational messages, which reinforces the need to consider not only the content of the message but also the cultural conditions under which it acquires meaning.

When an organization works with entities accustomed to important levels of contextuality, interventions based exclusively on formal documents, digital platforms, or standardized manuals may prove insufficient, since the legitimacy of the message depends largely on prior relationships, nonverbal cues, and shared references. From Stuart Hall's perspective, this situation can generate processes of negotiated or oppositional decoding, in which recipients reinterpret or reframe institutional messages based on their own cultural frameworks. Conversely, in low-context environments, where a more explicit communicative logic, expository clarity, and standardization of procedures predominate, decoding occurs that is more aligned with the originally encoded meaning, favoring the replication of organizational practices at scale (Furr et al., 2022).

Consequently, integrating Edward T. Hall's approach with Stuart Hall's theory of representation and communication helps us understand that communication strategies in multinational organizations must be tailored not only to the level of cultural contextuality but also to the processes through which messages are interpreted and reinterpreted by various organizational actors. This theoretical framework is key to designing intercultural communication strategies that reduce the risk of misinterpretation, strengthen internal

coherence, and ensure effective operational execution in culturally diverse organizational contexts.

### **2.2.3 Cultural Orientations of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner**

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, in their study, raise cultural dilemmas such as universalism versus particularism, neutrality versus affectivity, and achievement versus ascription, categories that serve to understand practical tensions in the management of internal policies and in the assignment of status within organizations with heterogeneous personnel; these orientations allow diagnosing potential conflicts in the application of corporate norms when a parent company tries to impose standard criteria without considering local demands, so that change management must consider negotiation strategies that recognize differences in criteria of justice and in modes of performance evaluation (Pisano, 2020).

According to this theory, when cultural orientations clash during integration processes, specific dilemmas arise regarding the selection of evaluation indicators and the reward system, necessitating the design of hybrid frameworks that combine corporate standards with contextual adaptations and also include participatory mechanisms to legitimize decisions and reduce operational resistance; In this way, sensitivity to cultural orientations helps minimize adaptation costs and improve cooperation among teams with different backgrounds (Iturralde Ordóñez, Proaño Piedra & Morales Castro, 2024).

### **2.2.4 GLOBE Model and Intercultural Leadership**

The GLOBE project aims to expand the discussion on leadership by identifying cultural dimensions that influence the effectiveness of different leadership styles, since what one context perceives as exemplary leadership may differ radically from expectations in another country; hence, in multinational companies, a GLOBE assessment is essential to inform the selection and training of middle managers responsible for coordinating between headquarters and local operations, since the appropriateness of the management style influences employee commitment and the ability to implement changes that require cross-functional coordination (Barney, Ketchen & Wright, 2021). This approach engages with the classic contributions of Hofstede (2001), who already warned that cultural differences in dimensions such as power distance,

individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance condition expectations about authority, decision-making and acceptable leadership styles within organizations.

Complementarily, House's (1998) theories on charismatic and culturally contingent leadership laid the groundwork for understanding that the traits associated with effective leaders are not universal but socially constructed. From this perspective, leadership is interpreted as a relational phenomenon, where the leader's legitimacy depends on the extent to which their behavior aligns with the values shared by the group. This idea was later reinforced by Yukl (2013), who argues that leadership effectiveness is linked both to the leader's characteristics and to the cultural expectations of followers, which is particularly relevant in diverse and multicultural organizational contexts.

Similarly, Schein's (2010) insights allow us to explore the relationship between leadership and organizational culture in greater depth by pointing out that leaders not only operate within an existing culture but also actively contribute to its creation, maintenance, and transformation. According to this author, managerial decisions, the promoted criteria for success, and responses to critical situations convey cultural assumptions that eventually become entrenched within the organization. In international contexts, this influence becomes more complex, as leaders must balance corporate culture values with local cultural norms, avoiding the imposition of management models that feel alien or lack legitimacy for work teams.

Based on the information cited, an analysis of the results of comparative studies on intercultural leadership reveals that effectiveness depends on the alignment between culturally valued traits (for example, collectivity orientation, emotionality, or hierarchical distance) and the governance practices implemented by the company, suggesting that management development programs should include components of cultural diagnosis, situational training, and impact assessment to ensure that local managers not only replicate theoretical models but also translate them into routines that are understandable to their teams.

Furthermore, the interaction between intercultural leadership and an organization's dynamic capabilities reveals that leaders who can articulate meanings across contexts promote the recombination of knowledge and the transfer of best practices—a process that fosters

strategic adaptation and reduces productivity losses during restructuring; therefore, designing succession plans and mentoring programs that take cultural criteria into account is a strategic investment for sustaining operational coherence in changing environments (Porter, 1985).

### **2.2.5 Critical Contributions and Limitations of Cultural Models**

A critical analysis of cultural models shows that, although they offer useful heuristic frameworks for comparing national and organizational environments, they present methodological and normative problems that require caution, because the reduction of multiple cultural dimensions to numerical indices can hide internal heterogeneities and processes of change that rapidly alter work practices; therefore, recent proposals insist on complementing dimensional approaches with qualitative studies that capture local narratives and subcultural variations, so that the interpretation of results is not based solely on aggregate scores (Alharbi, 2024).

Another frequent objection is the limited predictive capacity of these models when faced with contexts of digitalization and remote work that reconfigure modes of interaction and displace certain face-to-face patterns, so that the classical dimensions must be updated by incorporating technological and mediated communication variables that modify the temporality and form of cooperation; in this way, hybrid approaches using quantitative analysis and case studies favor a more nuanced reading of how culture impacts on strategy and operation (Niño Durán, 2020).

Furthermore, from the perspective of the resources and capabilities theory, it is argued that the application of cultural models to strategic analysis should consider the complementarity between tangible resources, human capital and intangible assets such as tacit knowledge, because cultural dimensions alone do not explain value creation if they are not articulated with organizational routines and dynamic capabilities that allow converting shared meanings into sustainable advantages; Therefore, a critical reading requires linking cultural models with resource theory to avoid isolated interpretations and guide interventions that increase the firm's competitiveness (Barney, Ketchen & Wright, 2021; Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2020).

## **2.3 Intercultural Communication**

### **2.3.1 Definition**

From a theoretical analysis of intercultural communication, Caballero-González, Salazar-Estrada and de Luna-Velasco (2025) propose that it should be understood as a multidimensional process in which the exchange of meanings between interlocutors is affected by symbolic repertoires, habitual practices and historical expectations that delimit what is acceptable or inappropriate in a given organizational environment, and therefore analyzing communication requires observing both the explicit messages and the implicit patterns of interaction that shape trust and legitimacy. Based on this criterion, the notion transcends the simple transmission of information and moves towards the construction of shared understandings that facilitate coordination between units with different backgrounds.

The contemporary definition incorporates elements of power and social position that modulate the willingness to express disagreement and the effective possibility of modifying routines, so that it is not enough to describe linguistic codes; it is also necessary to map influence relationships and legitimization channels that amplify or attenuate certain messages, which is crucial when designing communication strategies in business integration processes where the parent company and the subsidiary have divergent histories and expectations (Fajardo et al., 2020).

From an applied perspective, intercultural communication involves practical skills for negotiating, including meaning, building bridges between interpretative frameworks, and generating verification procedures to check the actual reception of the message in the field. Similarly, these competencies are developed through organizational practices, training and dialogue spaces that facilitate the translation of strategic policies into activities that are understandable to groups with diverse experiences (Gómez-Bayona, Londoño-Montoya & Mora-González, 2020).

### **2.3.2 Types of Intercultural Communication in Organizations**

Within the organizational sphere, formal and informal communication are recognized. The former is associated with documents, protocols and institutional channels that seek to

standardize messages; and the latter is related to personal networks, daily rituals and socialization practices that circulate outside the official circuits; these modalities interact and often oppose each other, generating tensions that require coordination mechanisms to align the explicit with the tacit, and therefore communication planning should consider both circuits to increase the likelihood of adopting corporate changes (Vesga Rodríguez et al., 2020).

It is also possible to distinguish between intracultural communication, which takes place between members who share similar repertoires; and intercultural communication, which occurs between actors with different frameworks, the latter being more prone to loss of meaning, misunderstandings due to implicit assumptions and the need for additional mediations; in multinational contexts these types are intertwined and require the design of cultural translation protocols and the creation of deliberative spaces where the written and experienced by local teams are confronted ( Fajardo et al., 2020).

### **2.3.3 Verbal Communication in Multicultural Environments**

Within the scope of analysis, verbal communication in multicultural contexts incorporates not only the choice of language, but also applies variations in pragmatics, levels of formality and use of implicit allusions that condition the clarity of instructions and the perception of authority; when sentences contain shared cultural references, comprehension is accelerated, while the absence of such references requires redundancy strategies, contextualized examples and constant validations to ensure that the message was understood in the intended sense, which is essential in technical activities where errors of interpretation can translate into productive losses (Neeley, 2021).

In situations of organizational change, the selection of terms, the structuring of orders and the configuration of meetings require careful calibration because the word “priority” or “adjustment” can evoke different deadlines between teams, so that communication protocols should incorporate operational glossaries, clarification sessions and standardized formats that reduce ambiguity and allow measuring the reception of orders; thus, decisions on verbal style influence the effectiveness of implementation and the perception of fairness in the intervention (Alharbi, 2024). Verbal feedback practices also have differential effects depending on the

cultural context, since in some environments direct criticism is accepted and expected while in others discretion and preservation of the relationship are privileged, which implies that managers must adapt the tonality and form of the evaluation so as not to provoke defensive reactions or compliant silences that hide real problems (Guzmán, Tenorio & Pazmiño, 2022).

#### **2.3.4 Nonverbal Communication and its Intercultural Impact**

According to his analysis, Pisano (2020) notes that gestures, proxemics, eye contact, and conversational pauses make up a nonverbal repertoire whose meaning varies substantially between cultures. This is why misinterpreting a pause, or a glance can lead to erroneous conclusions about commitment or disagreement, a circumstance that requires observation and practice training that allows teams to recognize and decode other people's signals without projecting prejudices. From this perspective, nonverbal communication becomes an operational element that influences coordination and trust between units.

In addition, the layout of the workspace, the organization of meetings and dress codes convey messages about hierarchy and openness to dialogue which, when incompatible with local expectations, generate internal friction that hinders cooperation. Therefore, interventions in organizational design and physical interaction protocols contribute to mitigate misunderstandings and favor conditions in which nonverbal signals reinforce the coherence of strategic actions (Vesga Rodríguez et al., 2020).

#### **2.3.5 Intercultural Communication Mediated by Digital Technologies**

Through an exhaustive analysis by Furr, Shipilov, Rouillard and Hemon-Laurens (2022), they determine how digital platforms alter the communicative ecology by shifting part of the face-to-face interaction towards asynchronous messages, video conferences and collaborative tools, transforming temporality and response norms. Such a transition requires organizations to define explicit protocols for the transmission of critical messages, clarify expectations about response times, and establish recording practices that facilitate verification of receipt, since the absence of nonverbal cues in mediated environments increases the likelihood of misinterpretation.

In remote or hybrid work scenarios, cultural differences become visible in the preference for synchronous or asynchronous channels, in the frequency of updates and in the formality of messages, so technological policies must incorporate design decisions that balance efficiency and cultural sensitivity, including training in digital communication and the selection of tools that allow contextual translations and safeguards against ambiguities and marked differences (Neeley, 2021).

The mastery of electronic communication through digital channels also requires measures to preserve cultural cohesion when dispersed teams negotiate meanings, including digital onboarding practices, common rules of online etiquette and virtual socialization spaces that allow the reproduction of shared symbolic repertoires; these actions facilitate the transfer of tacit knowledge and reduce the loss of relational capital that accompanies technologically mediated interactions (Iturralde Ordóñez, Proaño Piedra & Morales Castro, 2024).

### **2.3.6 Intercultural Conflicts and Resolution Styles**

Analyzing the case study by Barney, Ketchen and Wright (2021), it is determined that intercultural conflicts often emerge due to discrepancies in assumptions and expectations rather than incompatible interests, so that their resolution requires diagnoses that identify the symbolic sources of disagreement and not only the surface of the conflict; thus, resolution processes must combine mediation techniques, structured meetings for the clarification of meanings and the joint definition of solution criteria, which contributes to transforming frictions into opportunities for organizational learning.

Moreover, resolution practices vary between cultures: some contexts prioritize negotiation and consensus, while others accept imposed hierarchical decisions. This, consequently, obliges organizations to design effective mechanisms, which involve knowing local preferences, offering alternative solution paths, and establishing clear rules that allow teams to select the most appropriate path according to the circumstances, thus avoiding escalations and preserving operational continuity (Porter, 1996).

## **2.4 Intercultural Competence**

### **2.4.1 Concept and Scope of Intercultural Competence**

Continuing with Alharbi's (2024) analysis, mentioned above, it is worth noting that the notion of intercultural competence in business environments refers to a set of practical knowledge, dispositions and procedures that enable individuals and collectives to interpret symbolic differences and negotiate meanings in work situations where diverse cultural frameworks converge; Therefore, this concept requires a view that combines cognitive aspects with observable practices, so that the assessment is not limited to declarative knowledge but incorporates evidence of behaviors in interdependent tasks, validations in the field and the ability to adjust operational standards in the face of cultural discrepancies, aspects that enable effective coordination between heterogeneous units.

The operational definition must contemplate multiple levels (individual, group and organizational) because the presence of personal skills without institutional anchorage does not guarantee their effective deployment, and therefore interventions must link training, incentives and verification protocols so that understanding translates into measurable performance; furthermore, the breadth of the scope is expressed in the influence that such competence exerts on the reduction of frictions, the transfer of tacit knowledge and the rapid adaptation to changes in diverse markets.

Almeida Lucero (2024) explains that when approached from the perspective of strategic management, intercultural competence shows its potential to improve the company's ability to exploit opportunities in heterogeneous contexts; in this sense, the ability to link local practices with corporate guidelines acts as a mechanism to adapt products and processes to specific demands, while reducing coordination costs and facilitating the diffusion of innovations among subsidiaries, which implies that its scope reaches both day-to-day operations and external competitive projection.

The multi-scale conceptualization facilitates the identification of intervention points, since it makes it possible to distinguish whether the competence gaps are located in specific teams or whether they are systemic in nature; therefore, the diagnoses must relate these gaps to

operational efficiency indicators and to results in the value chain in order to define training and management priorities, and thus direct resources towards the organization's critical nodes.

Alternating the definition, Barney, Ketchen and Wright (2021) parted from the perspective of resource theory, an institutionalized intercultural competence reproduced through practices difficult to imitate by rivals becomes an intangible asset that enhances dynamic capabilities; therefore, its incorporation in the resource architecture requires measurement mechanisms that prove its rarity and sustainability, as well as its contribution to the appropriability of benefits by the firm vis-à-vis competitors.

To operationalize the scope in practical terms, it is advisable to build metrics that connect the reduction of errors due to communication misunderstandings with the speed of inter-functional coordination and with the quality of interaction between units, so that the evaluation allows realigning training investment with observable results and not only with individual perceptions, a circumstance that requires collaboration between technical areas, training and human resources.

#### **2.4.2 Components of Intercultural Competence**

Referring to the analysis produced by Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2020), it is explained that the first component refers to operational cultural knowledge, understood as a repertoire of conventions, symbols and practices that allow decoding communicative acts in specific contexts and anticipating reactions; this practical knowledge guides the selection of both verbal and non-verbal codes in concrete situations and facilitates coordination between actors with diverse trajectories, reducing misinterpretations that may affect technical or decision-making activities.

Consequently, the second dimension corresponds to dispositions and attitudes, i.e., openness, curiosity and tolerance towards difference, because in the absence of these predispositions the transfer of knowledge is blocked and collaborative initiatives stagnate; therefore, organizations must generate incentives that promote exploration and active listening so that cultural knowledge has real possibilities of becoming shared and observable practice in daily work.

For their part, Gómez-Bayona, Londoño-Montoya and Mora-González (2020) explain in their analysis that the third component is where procedural skills appear: the ability to formulate clear messages, verify understanding, mediate intercultural negotiations and adapt communicative formats to operational circumstances; these skills, accompanied by documentation and mentoring routines, facilitate the codification and replication of useful practices, allowing tacit knowledge to flow between units with different organizational histories and increasing the efficiency of the value chain.

Similarly, emotional regulation and self-reflection function as resources to manage tensions and avoid escalation due to misunderstandings, which has an impact on climate indicators, talent retention and continuity in transversal projects; therefore, incorporating social-emotional development exercises in training programs contributes to sustaining stable labor relations even in contexts of pressure and change.

Corroborating the above, according to Iturralde Ordóñez, Proaño Piedra and Morales Castro (2024), technological communicative competence (skills to use digital platforms, select appropriate channels and design messages in asynchronous contexts) is shown to be a critical component because it reduces the loss of information in mediated interactions and complements traditional competencies when work is organized remotely or hybrid; consequently, programs should include specific training in collaborative tools and digital etiquette practices.

Finally, institutionalization through policies, incentives and evaluation systems turns the sum of individual capabilities into a manageable organizational asset, so considering cross-cultural competence metrics in performance management systems ensures that training investment produces verifiable and sustainable effects over time, which requires explicit linkage between training and career paths.

### **2.4.3 Intercultural Development and Training in Human Talent**

Corresponding to the analysis of intercultural development, Furr et al. (2022) indicate that effective development combines formal training with situated experiences such as rotations, transnational projects and temporary stays that expose personnel to different practices and allow

learning to stop being merely declarative and become repeatable routines; these experiences facilitate the incorporation of tacit knowledge into observable procedures and require spaces for guided reflection that transform the experience into transferable lessons within the organization.

Fragmented training in isolated courses usually has limited effects on collective behavior, so it is preferable to design training itineraries that articulate conceptual content, on-the-job coaching and in-context evaluations; such a strategy requires coordination between training, operations and supervision areas so that learning has measurable effects on task execution and project management, and is also linked to professional incentives.

In turn, Almeida Lucero (2024) indicates that, in sectors that demand innovation, programs should incorporate collaborative methodologies, such as design thinking and co-creation laboratories, which favor the recombination of heterogeneous knowledge and the generation of applicable solutions; these practices strengthen the dynamic capabilities of organizations by accelerating the emergence of new products and processes and by facilitating the dissemination of successful practices among multicultural teams. In order to continue with the hybridization of these practices, the training paths require continuous evaluation instruments that record changes in behavior and operational results, allowing programs to be adjusted with empirical evidence and preventing interventions from remaining theoretical exercises disconnected from the productive reality; in addition, the construction of operational glossaries and verification protocols helps to reduce ambiguities in technical tasks and to ensure consistency in execution.

Analyzing the perspective of the availability and use of resources, Barney, Ketchen and Wright (2021) indicate that training adds value when it generates competencies that are difficult to imitate by rivals, so that investing in mentoring, communities of practice and sustained learning structures increases the company's stock of intangible resources and enhances its strategic positioning; therefore, intercultural training should be planned as a strategic investment subject to return evaluation in terms of adaptive capacity and competitive advantage.

Ultimately, the sustainability of learning depends on institutional incentives, the legitimacy of instructors and the connection between training and career plans, conditions that

increase the motivation to develop intercultural competencies and facilitate their internalization as communicative practices appropriate to multicultural contexts, so that career paths become channels for the reproduction of the cultural capital installed in the organization (Teece, 2020).

## **2.5 Multinational Companies and Intercultural Management**

According to the study conducted by Hitt (2020), it is argued that multinational companies are configured as organizations that coordinate productive, commercial, and administrative operations in more than one country, which requires simultaneous management of heterogeneous institutional and cultural environments. This condition generates scenarios in which organizational practices must adjust to different social norms, legal frameworks, and labor expectations, directly influencing the way in which internal processes are structured. As a result, intercultural management becomes a strategic dimension that cuts across decision making, internal communication and coordination between headquarters, avoiding frictions derived from divergent cultural interpretations.

The dynamics of multinational companies are not limited to geographic expansion but are also subject to the incorporation of constant flows of knowledge, talent, and capital between territorially dispersed units. Such flows can enhance organizational learning when professionally managed but can also lead to conflict if underlying cultural differences are not recognized. In this scenario, intercultural communication operates as a mediation mechanism that allows translating global corporate practices into local contexts without losing organizational coherence (Neeley, 2021).

From an organizational perspective, intercultural management implies designing policies that recognize cultural diversity as a structural condition and use it as a business strength; and that it is not considered a complex phenomenon to manage. This implies the implementation of internal rules that promote inclusion, respect for differences and symbolic negotiation between diverse cultural actors. Such actions have an impact on labor stability, staff commitment, and the social legitimacy of the company in the countries where it operates, especially in Latin American contexts characterized by strong cultural identities (Caballero-González et al., 2025).

## **2.6 Competitive Advantage: Theoretical Approaches**

### **2.6.1 Concept of Competitive Advantage**

To analyze his approach, it is important to define what a competitive advantage is. According to Porter (1996), it is stipulated that competitive advantage arises when a company manages to position itself favorably vis-à-vis its competitors by creating value perceived by customers. This approach emphasizes that superior performance does not depend exclusively on the economic sector, but on the strategic decisions that guide differentiation or cost leadership. In this sense, competitive advantage is built on organizational choices that determine how to compete and which activities to prioritize.

The concept of competitive advantage is also associated with the ability to sustain favorable results over time, even in the face of environmental factors. This implies that the company must not only achieve outstanding performance but also maintain it through continuous adjustments in its strategies. The interaction between internal resources and external conditions defines the strength of such advantage, particularly in globalized markets where competition is intense (Sołoducho-Pelc & Sulich, 2020).

From a contemporary approach, competitive advantage is linked to the organizational capacity to adapt to highly fluctuating environments, without losing strategic identity. This approach recognizes that factors such as organizational culture, aggregated knowledge and internal communication influence the sustainability of corporate positioning. In multinational organizations, these dimensions acquire greater complexity due to the cultural diversity that permeates their operations (Romero, 2020).

### **2.6.2 Michael Porter's Theory and the Value Chain**

According to Porter's (1985) study, the value chain is conceived as an analytical tool that allows the company to be disaggregated into interrelated activities, identifying those that generate value and those that incur costs. This approach makes it possible to understand how coordination between primary and support activities affects organizational competitiveness. In multinational environments, the value chain is fragmented territorially, which increases the need for cross-cultural coordination mechanisms.

The application of the value chain model in companies operating in multiple countries requires consideration of how cultural differences affect the execution of activities such as talent management, logistics or customer service. When these differences are not properly managed, operational inefficiencies and internal conflicts can arise, leading to structural disruption and process misalignment. Therefore, intercultural communication becomes a factor that influences the functional coherence of the value chain (Espinoza Mina & Espinoza Gallegos, 2020).

In addition, Porterian theory emphasizes that competitive advantage is not generated in isolated activities, but in the strategic articulation of all of them. In this process, understanding diverse cultural contexts allows adapting corporate practices without losing strategic alignment. In this way, intercultural management contributes to sustaining competitiveness in international markets characterized by high sociocultural diversity, where cultural differences are enhanced to cover larger market areas (Porter, 1998).

### **2.6.3 Resource Based Approach (RBV)**

There is an analysis that argues that competitive advantage is based on the possession and management of resources that present attributes of value, rarity and difficulty of imitation, Barney (2021) conducted this analysis. This approach shifts the focus from the competitive environment to within the organization, highlighting the importance of capabilities developed over time. In cross-cultural contexts, such capabilities include cognitive and communicative skills to interact effectively with actors from distinct cultures.

The RBV recognizes that intangible resources, such as organizational knowledge and intercultural experience, generate greater possibilities for competitive sustainability. These assets are built through processes of collective learning, socialization, and knowledge transfer between organizational units. In multinational companies, cultural diversity expands the repertoire of available knowledge, if there are adequate integration mechanisms and that employees are willing to use these mechanisms (Gómez-Bayona et al., 2020).

From this perspective, intercultural communication is understood as an organizational capacity that allows the mobilization of resources dispersed in different geographies. Its development favors strategic coordination and reduces losses derived from cultural misunderstandings associated with poor organizational practices at the multicultural level. Thus, competitive advantage is strengthened when the organization manages to turn cultural diversity into an organizational asset that is difficult for competitors to replicate (Teece, 2020).

#### **2.6.4 Sustainable Competitive Advantages in Global Environments**

In a theoretical analysis conducted by Teece (2020), it is argued that the sustainability of competitive advantage depends on the company's ability to reconfigure its resources in the face of environmental changes. In global markets characterized by accelerated technological and cultural transformations, organizations require flexible structures that allow them to adapt without losing strategic coherence. This challenge is especially relevant for multinational companies exposed to multiple cultural contexts simultaneously.

In the same context, it is important to emphasize that dynamic capabilities make it possible to anticipate changes and respond in a timely manner to new market demands. In this framework, intercultural management helps to identify emerging opportunities arising from cultural diversity. The ability to interpret diverse cultural signals strengthens strategic decision making and reduces risks associated with international expansion, strengthening the organizational structure and thus the company's (economic or social) utility (Shiferaw & Amentie Kero, 2024).

Competitive sustainability is also influenced by the social legitimacy of the company in the countries where it operates. Appropriate intercultural management favors stable relationships with local stakeholders, strengthening corporate reputation. This social recognition acts as a factor that reinforces the permanence of competitive advantage in the long term, favoring organizations that apply it correctly over those that do not (Rivera García et al., 2024).

#### **2.6.5 Human Capital and Knowledge as a Source of Competitive Advantage**

According to the exhaustive analysis of the theory proposed by Valdez-Portilla (2025), human capital represents a source of strategic value in organizations operating in complex environments. Tacit knowledge, acquired through intercultural experiences, strengthens the organizational capacity to solve problems and generate innovation. In multinational companies, this knowledge emerges from the daily interaction between employees from different cultural backgrounds.

Human capital management in intercultural contexts requires policies aimed at continuous learning and recognition of diverse knowledge. These policies influence the motivation of personnel, directly influencing their common well-being and their willingness to share knowledge at the organizational level. When the company promotes spaces for intercultural dialogue, the collective capacity to face strategic challenges is enhanced (Pisano, 2020).

Likewise, intercultural knowledge becomes an organizational asset that is difficult to imitate, since it is built through prolonged social processes. This distinctive character strengthens the company's competitive position against competitors that lack similar experiences. Thus, intercultural human capital contributes to consolidating competitive advantages in dynamic global environments (Almeida Lucero, 2024).

## **2.7 Intercultural Communication as a Competitive Advantage**

Analyzing the use of intercultural communication as a competitive advantage at the organizational level, Caballero-González (2025) suggests that intercultural communication in organizations transcends the exchange of information, as it directly intervenes in the way actors interpret shared norms, values, and expectations. In multinational companies, this communication influences the coordination of diverse teams and strategic alignment between sites, which has an impact on organizational performance. When messages are adapted to different cultural frameworks, interpretative distortions that affect operational efficiency and internal cohesion are reduced.

Being related, intercultural communication and organizational performance are evidenced in the ability of companies to respond coherently to heterogeneous environments. Communication that is sensitive to cultural diversity favors informed decision making and

reduces internal tensions associated with divergent communication styles. These conditions strengthen organizational trust and cooperation between areas, aspects that affect the overall productivity of the company (Hitt et al., 2020).

From a strategic perspective, intercultural communication shapes the processes that make it possible to generate sustained value in international markets. Its proper management enables the articulation between global strategies and local practices, avoiding operational ruptures. In this way, communication ceases to be an operational resource and becomes part of the organizational assets that support competitiveness, even from an internal symbol, which belongs to the integral environment of the collaborators and is a corporate seal at the organizational level (Barney et al., 2021).

Organizational productivity is also influenced by the quality of intercultural communication in diverse work contexts. When employees understand the cultural codes of their interlocutors, task coordination is optimized and the time spent correcting communicative errors is reduced. In addition, a respectful communicative environment favors the organizational climate and the willingness to work collaboratively, elements linked to innovation processes (Guzmán et al., 2022).

Furr (2022) notes that organizational innovation is enhanced when there are spaces for intercultural dialogue that allow the convergence of diverse perspectives. Intercultural communication facilitates the generation of disruptive ideas by using multiple cultural experiences in creative processes. This cognitive diversity expands the company's capacity to design solutions adapted to heterogeneous markets, strengthening its competitive position.

## **2.8 Intercultural Communication in the Latin American Context**

Considering a study located at the regional level, Vesga Rodríguez (2020) points out that the Latin American context is characterized by a strong presence of relational values, indirect communication, and high sensitivity to interpersonal ties. These cultural particularities influence the way organizational messages are interpreted and the way trust is built within multinational companies. Consequently, ignoring these traits can lead to tensions between global corporate policies and local practices. There are risks associated with organizational management at the

local level for multinational companies operating in Latin America, as they face challenges associated with the coexistence of standardized organizational cultures with national cultures marked by specific historical and social traditions and even habits biased by customs. Intercultural communication acts as an adjustment mechanism to translate global guidelines into culturally acceptable languages. This adaptation promotes organizational legitimacy and the acceptance of business decisions (Carrillo Ramos, n. d.).

In a deeper context, at the Ecuadorian level, intercultural communication acquires relevance due to the existing cultural diversity and the importance of social relations in the workplace. Organizations that recognize these particularities achieve greater staff commitment and less resistance to change. Cultural sensitivity in communication contributes to building stable and collaborative work environments, strengthening organizational sustainability (Fajardo et al., 2020). Thus, intercultural management in Latin America is linked to strategic adaptation processes in the face of changing economic and social environments.

Companies that use culturally aware communication practices have a greater capacity to manage conflicts and negotiate with local stakeholders, which positions them as low-risk organizations due to their low negative organizational impact. These skills strengthen organizational resilience and their competitive positioning in the region (Romero, 2020) and attribute organizational strength to the structural level.

## **2.9 Business Context of Industrias San Miguel (ISM)**

In his theory, Porter (1990) argues that the competitiveness of companies is intricately linked to their ability to adapt to the national environments in which they operate. In the case of Industrias San Miguel, its international expansion has implied the interaction with diverse cultural contexts that condition its organizational practices. This trajectory has required constant adjustments in its internal processes and communication strategies to maintain corporate coherence. Industrias San Miguel's presence in Ecuador takes place in an environment characterized by a strong cultural identity and relational labor dynamics. These conditions influence the way corporate policies are implemented, and work teams are managed. Communicative adaptation to this context is decisive for the acceptance of the company's

organizational culture and for the alignment of local personnel with the strategic objectives set by the organization (Almeida Lucero, 2024).

Industrias San Miguel's organizational culture is configured because of shared corporate values and practices adapted to local contexts. This intercultural adjustment process allows global standards to be used with specific cultural expectations, avoiding internal ruptures. Internal communication plays an articulating role by facilitating the understanding of corporate guidelines at different organizational levels (Gómez-Bayona et al., 2020). Internal communication practices in the analyzed company directly influence the management of cultural diversity within the organization. Clear and culturally sensitive communication favors team cohesion and operational efficiency. It also helps to reduce conflicts arising from divergent cultural interpretations, strengthening organizational performance and the company's competitive advantage in the Ecuadorian market (Rivera García et al., 2024).

## **2.10 Theoretical Models of Intercultural Communication and Competitiveness in Organizational Contexts**

### **2.10.1 Intercultural Communication**

#### **2.10.1.1 Hall's Proxemic Theory**

To understand the impact of intercultural communication, it is essential to analyze some theories that explain how the importance, necessity and impact of intercultural communication are constructed. Edward Hall's Proxemic Theory, proposed in 1959, is taken into consideration. In this case, proxemics is defined as the study of how humans use space in communication (Mogrovejo and Martinez, 2024, p. 94). Thus, proxemics analyzes the concepts and internal manifestations; culture from the base of people and the meanings that each culture understands about interaction define communication.

Deepening, according to Salamanca, “the observations and theories that study the use that man makes of space as a specific cultural product” (2005, p. 6), and used this approach to understand that culture does not generate differences in how people see each other, but that

people “inhabit different sensory worlds” (Salamanca, 2005), which is why the same experience can be perceived differently by a person from one culture with respect to another from another culture.

Considering Hall's study, it is determined as one of the most important contributions to the concept of high and low context cultures, where high context cultures (de Lizaur, 2016, pp. 14-15) would be those more individualistic, direct in communication, action-oriented and analytical, and high context cultures are more concerned with the collective, to the environment, to nonverbal expression. The clash between these two types of culture usually leads to cultural and social conflicts, but they are manageable by understanding each type of culture. High-context cultures are typical of Asia and the Middle East where communication is totally context-dependent and becomes more strict and based on collective traditions and values, while low-context cultures are typical of countries such as the United States and Germany, where individualism is more common, broad cultural aspects are not so strictly rooted, but each small group decides its own values (Mogrovejo and Martinez, 2024, p. 94).

This theory is especially relevant in the context of intercultural communication because it helps to understand how people from different cultures can relate to each other, how to prevent conflict or how to resolve those that are already in place because of cultural differences. In high-contrast communication, preference is given to indirect verbal expression, and the receiver is expected to understand the message based on the context, since he/she already knows the boundaries, norms, values, and history of the context. While low-contrast communication is more explicit, as the sender understands that the context does not provide enough information for the receiver to decipher the message (Alizadeh, 2021). Under this premise, when low-contrast and high-contrast people communicate in work environments, conflicts often arise due to the natural differences that are found; where low-contrast people consider that high-contrast people do not give enough information, while high-contrast people may feel that they are given unnecessary information. To reinforce this criterion, the text proposed by Alizadeh is taken into consideration, which indicates that “[...] given that different cultures have different ways of communicating, international organizations must respond to the growing need to adapt their

communication strategies to the target cultures in order to improve the communication outcome” (2021).

### **2.10.1.2 Hofstede's Dimension Theory**

Considering the cases mentioned above, we also find a particularly important theory to understand cultural differences and approach intercultural communication. This is Hofstede's Theory of Dimensions, which considers theoretical aspects of economics, marketing, and anthropology, which argue that organizational culture is closely related to the culture of each human group, which is transferred to the culture within the company. The author analyzes the relationships between national cultures and those that develop within organizations and determines that values influence business and market behavior (Aguilar et al., 2018, p. 74). This theory proposes dimensions that mark cross-cultural differences in organizational culture, which are currently “individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence-restraint” (Żemojtel-Piotrowska and Piotrowski, 2023, p. 2).

Individualism has a similar position to Hall with his proxemic theory, which indicates that there are cultures that encourage more individualism than others, therefore, competitiveness and achievement are rewarded, while other cultures give more prevalence to the collective, loyalty and unconditionality, hence, well-being is rewarded more (Aguilar et al., 2018, p. 74). For its part, power distance refers to how much hierarchies and inequalities are accepted between people who monopolize power and those who submit to it. Power can be concentrated in the family, school, community, labor organization and public institutions, the level of tolerance on the control that these groups exercise over the person is the dimension that interests Hofstede's study (Aguilar et al., 2018, p. 75).

Uncertainty avoidance implies that the culture seeks to control and predict the future or on the contrary accept risk (Hurtado and Marrero, 2024, p. 430).

"This dimension refers to a society's tolerance of ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members in unstructured situations" (Aguilar et al., 2018, p. 76). In

accordance with this quote, it is also established that masculinity-femininity is a dimension that refers to how much social characteristics are valued based on the difference between contributions of each gender, the main relationship being that of aggressiveness with the masculine and care with the feminine (Hurtado and Marrero, 2024, p. 430). A culture may focus more on values associated with masculinity or femininity, which are opposites. Masculine cultures focus on individual achievement, profit, material goods, competition, and rewards. While feminine cultures focus on quality of life and communal harmony and relationships (Aguilar et al., 2018, p. 76).

Consequently, the long-term orientation dimension analyzes how changes are managed with respect to the multigenerational vision (Hurtado and Marrero, 2024, p. 430). “This dimension describes how each society has to maintain some links with its own past when dealing with the challenges of the present and the future” (Aguilar et al., 2018, p. 77). It is a dimension that marks the relevance given to the position of seniority, the experience of elders, the knowledge of other generations, and legacies. The last dimension is indulgence and restriction, which takes into account how much individual needs such as desires and impulses are repressed or released (Hurtado and Marrero, 2024, p. 430). Restraint is given by strict rules, control of emotions and regulation of behavior, especially in front of groups. Indulgence is based on how much value is given to leisure, enjoyment, freedom of expression and positive emotions as markers of behavior (Aguilar et al., 2018, p. 76).

### **2.10.1.3 Cultural Dimensions of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner**

From the approach rooted in their study, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner expanded the theory of Hofstede's dimensions to understand how people, belonging to different human groups, interrelate with each other, settle disputes, make decisions, and generate conditions for social adaptation (Mogrovejo and Martínez, 2024, p. 88). They take the Hofstede dimensions as a basis and generate seven dimensions that deepen the dimensions already mentioned and add another one especially aimed at organizations, related to the management style. According to the author (Hurtado and Marrero, 2024, p. 429), these dimensions are:

- (a) Universalism vs Particularism

- b) Individualism vs. Communitarianism

- c) Specific vs. diffuse

- d) Neutral vs Emotional

- e) Achievement vs.

- f) Sequence vs Synchronous

- g) Internal vs External Direction

The dimension of universalism vs particularism refers to how one judges the behavior of others, “at one extreme, we are faced with an obligation to adhere to norms universally accepted by the culture in which we live [...] at the other extreme, we are faced with particular obligations toward people we know” (Trompenarrs and Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 31).

The individual vs. community dimension pits self-interest against group interests, where it is understood that each culture prioritizes one extreme or the other and that this guides the way it thinks, and especially shapes how challenges are taken on and outcomes are processed. On many occasions, the communitarian is related to ancestral structures and values and the individual to modernization, but this idea does not always apply in all cultures (Trompenarrs and Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 52).

In the specific vs. diffuse dimension, organizational culture is oriented towards the concrete and the isolated, it does not seek articulation, for example, it is not seen well to link personal relationships with business; while in the diffuse culture, personality permeates the work (Trompenarrs and Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 81). Its counterpart, the neutral vs. emotional dimension exposes how control of emotions is prioritized, “carefully controlled and repressed” or spontaneity and natural expression of feelings provoked by situations (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 69).

Continuing the study, the dimension of achievement vs. ascription refers “to the status achieved by the individual, versus the status attributed to him or her” (Mogrovejo and Martinez, 2024, p. 89). In this sense, “While some societies grant status to people based on their achievements, others attribute it by virtue of age, social class, gender, education, etc...” (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 102).

The next dimension is sequence vs. synchronic, which considers the time in which each perspective understands each other. That is, whether only current and future time matters, and events are constructed sequentially, or whether past and future events are interspersed in synchrony with the present, where innovation, change, history, and memories are interrelated (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 120). Finally, internal vs. external management refers to how the company is managed with respect to its environment, whether nature is used as an ally or as a risk for the organization, and how much importance is given to controlling the context (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998, p. 141).

#### **2.10.1.4 Adler's Intercultural Communication**

In line with the conceptual analysis, Nancy Adler devoted her academic career to the study of intercultural communication. Her focus was on the cultural exchange that takes place in international organizations. Regarding communication, the author considers that it is an exchange of meanings, that is, it is based entirely on what each being used perceives and interprets about the environment and processes, and it also includes verbal and non-verbal aspects, where the use of symbols transmits everything that cannot be externalized explicitly (Adler, 1991, p. 63).

In this sense, intercultural communication occurs when a person from one culture sends a message to a person from another culture, which achieves understanding and prevents misunderstandings due to misperception, linked to incorrect interpretation and evaluation. The counterpart indicates that misperception refers to selective perception based on what is known and previous experiences, which leads to choosing what is seen and believed when in a new environment (Adler, 1991). This can be expressed in overlooking the mistakes of others or, on

the contrary, paying too much attention to unimportant oversights, understanding things that for others are not there, such as seeing a violent situation in a minor confrontation.

The phenomenon of misinterpretation occurs when the person tries to understand and give meaning to what he or she perceives based on his or her own experience, which leads to categorizations, assumptions and stereotypes, mostly negative since there is a tendency to give more attention to expressions, behaviors and attitudes that are considered bad. An example of incorrect categorization is assuming that a woman in an office is the secretary rather than the executive, since in the newcomer's culture women do not opt for high-profile positions (Adler, 1991). Misevaluation involves judging whether something is good or bad, where one's own culture is used as the reference of what is positive, what is normal and anything that resembles this is good, discarding what is different by judging it as bad or inferior (Adler, 1991).

An example of bad evaluation would be to label a colleague who arrives unpunctually as lazy and indifferent to business just because in one's own culture punctuality is an extremely important value.

His contributions in intercultural communication are truly relevant in the field of international business because he focuses fully on human relations in the international work context. Adler believes that “the creative interaction between different cultures that will allow the production of new knowledge and realities” (Mogrovejo and Martinez, 2024, p. 91), which favors the company to improve its strategies based on the improvement of relations and exchanges between people from different contexts and experiences. This coupling of knowledge that creates opportunities is called cultural synergy and considers that it “maximizes the way in which efficient work organizations are produced among groups of people who use cultural elements as creative and learning tools” (Mogrovejo and Martinez, 2024, p. 91).

## **2.11 Competitiveness**

Regarding the theories, there are many theoretical approaches that try to explain how competitive advantage is generated, the cause of competition between companies and its necessity in the development of markets. In this context, the company that has better defined

production parameters, spends less producing and offers it at a lower price has an absolute advantage over another (Páez et al., 2021, p. 122). This theory is rigid, since it proposes that it is the context that determines which elements will generate more advantages for the company.

From another point of view, competitiveness is understood from the Comparative Advantage Theory, which proposes that a company is more competitive if it focuses on producing only what it can offer at better conditions than others, even if it has no absolute advantage whatsoever (Paez et al., 2021, p. 123). This theory is slightly more flexible, however, it still concentrates on access to the elements of the environment for production. From the theory of comparative advantage follows the Heckscher-Ohlin Model which starts from the same basis, but analyzes advantages from macroeconomic factors, mainly access to resources (Páez et al., 2021, p. 125). From this it follows that countries with more resources have greater competitive advantages than those with resources on a smaller scale.

Currently, competitiveness is observed in a more flexible and less deterministic way, and especially more individualistic or sectorized, less focused on the country, which is why the Theory of Competitive Advantage is more popular, where “the analysis of competitiveness falls on the specific characteristics of the company or industry, but not of any specific country” (Páez et al., 2021, p. 128). Michael Porter is one of the most recognized authors who pushed this theory.

According to his analysis, Porter does not attribute the competitive power of a company solely to environmental factors, but concentrates his attention mainly on elements of its strategy and stipulates that “competitive advantage represents characteristics that differentiate a company's product or service from the product or service of other organizations” (Romero et al., 2020, p. 469). For each company its competitive advantage will reside in different factors, and even in interactions, and Porter proposed that to identify competitive advantage, the company's value chain should be studied (Romero et al., 2020, p. 470).

This theory makes the analysis of competitiveness have a more dynamic and modern approach, since it does not propose that competitiveness is achieved by identifying useful external factors, but rather that it is the company's proposal, strategy and value chain that

generates the advantage for the company, beyond its context. Of course, a good analysis of competitiveness never neglects external factors, which certainly have an impact on companies. It follows that Porter contributed two key analyses to the study of competitiveness, the diamond model, which focuses on the functional areas of the company, and the 5 forces model, which takes into account various external aspects (Andrade et al., 2022, p. 165).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The development of this research was guided by a qualitative approach aimed at understanding in depth the practices, meanings and processes of intercultural communication operating in the subsidiary under study. In this framework, the interpretation of the actors' experiences and the contextualized reconstruction of communicative practices were privileged as elements that may represent a competitive advantage; this type of approach, according to Taylor and Bogdan, allowed the analysis of beliefs, meanings and relationships in natural scenarios and let the data and information obtained guide the development of the study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1987).

From a methodological point of view, the study was framed within a logic of methodological triangulation that combined multiple sources and techniques to contrast and enrich the empirical evidence. As Okuda Benavides and Gómez-Restrepo (2005) state, triangulation, in its variants of methods, sources and theories, is useful to increase validity and rigor in qualitative research by confronting different perspectives on the same phenomenon. In this context, triangulation has made it possible to relate the corporate documentary review, the in-depth interviews, and the field observations.

The chosen design was that of a single case study, focused on the empirical unit corresponding to the subsidiary in Ecuador, with integrated units of analysis (management, human resources, middle management, culturally diverse teams, and the most relevant external stakeholders). The case study facilitated answering explanatory questions such as “how” and “why” and made it possible to relate multiple sources of evidence to understand complex organizational processes (Yin, 2003). In addition, this approach has considered the meaning that the actors attribute to their interactions and the weight of the context in the construction of meanings, a perspective widely defended by Stake (1995).

The selection of participants was conducted through purposive sampling (by criteria), seeking informants with direct experience in multicultural teams and internationalization processes; this was later complemented with snowball sampling to locate key interlocutors who were not visible a priori. The planned sample included the application of four semi-structured

interviews and the systematic review of institutional documents (internal policies, training programs, and internal communications).

This procedure responded to Sautú's (2003) guidance on the need to select cases and sources that allow a contextualized and rich understanding rather than a statistical generalization. For data collection, semi-structured interview guides were used, adapted by level (managers, middle managers, and collaborators of mixed teams). In parallel, a documentary analysis of manuals, training reports and internal communications was carried out to provide context and complementary evidence. Where relevant, a checklist with Likert-type scales was applied to obtain descriptive indicators that contributed to the triangulation, such as the perception of communication effectiveness and its effects on innovation or customer satisfaction.

The analysis continued with the application of systematic qualitative procedures: open coding was carried out to identify emerging categories, then axial coding was applied to link categories, and finally selective coding was developed to relate a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon studied. This process was supported by qualitative analysis software or developed through manual analytical matrices according to availability. To ensure quality and rigor, classic qualitative research criteria were adopted, such as credibility (verification of interpretations with participants), transferability (rich descriptions of the context), dependability (detailed record of methodological decisions and field diary) and confirmability (audit of analytical processes and explicitness of the researcher's assumptions). These strategies have responded to the interpretative nature of qualitative research and the need to recognize the role of the researcher without claiming absolute neutrality (Sautú, 2003; Taylor & Bogdan, 1987). Finally, design limitations were taken into account, such as the nature of the case study, which implies restrictions in statistical generalization, and the possibility of bias due to social desirability in the responses of informants linked to management.

Finally, the deliberate combination of techniques and data triangulation was implemented as a mechanism to reduce these limitations and has allowed us to offer conclusions applicable to organizational practice, formulating recommendations aimed at enhancing intercultural communication as a competitive advantage (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). As Okuda Benavides and Gómez-Restrepo (2005) point out, triangulation, in its variants of methods, sources and theories,

is useful to increase validity and rigor in qualitative research by confronting different perspectives on the same phenomenon. In this context, triangulation has made it possible to relate corporate documentary review, in-depth interviews, and field observations.

### 3.1 Participants

For the development of this research, the main information was collected to understand how intercultural communication is configured as a competitive advantage within a multinational company such as San Miguel Industrias Ecuador SANMINDEC S.A. (SMI SOLUTIONS). In this sense, participants were selected to reflect the cultural and functional diversity present in the organization, including executives, middle management, human talent personnel, and collaborators who make up teams with frequent intercultural interaction.

This selection made it possible to analyze different hierarchical and operational perspectives on communication practices, cultural adaptation processes, and their impact on organizational performance. The process also facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of internal dynamics by contrasting strategic and operational visions of intercultural management.

The participants contributed their experience in multicultural team management, intercultural conflict resolution, internal operating strategies, and organizational communication dynamics. Consequently, they assumed the role of key informants, since, due to their background and direct experience within the company, they have demonstrated expertise in the communicative processes that influence efficiency, innovation, and business competitiveness.

**Table 1:**

*Interviewee Profile*

| <b>Interviewee</b> | <b>Position in the organization</b>  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>Justin Vera</b> | <b>Position:</b> International Purchaser of SMI. Professional responsible for international purchasing management and negotiation with foreign suppliers. His role involves constant interaction with actors from different cultural contexts, analysis of global markets and application of corporate policies in strategic sourcing processes. His profile is relevant to his direct experience in intercultural negotiation, decision making in international |

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
|                        | environments and coordination with the head office, key aspects to analyze intercultural communication as a competitive advantage.  |
| <b>Cecilia Ugalde</b>  | <b>Position:</b> Expert in Social Communication and Marketing and Academic Informant. Master in communication and marketing, with experience in strategic analysis of organizational communication and brand positioning. Her profile provides a theoretical and strategic perspective on intercultural communication, the symbolic construction of organizational culture and its relationship with business competitiveness in multinational contexts.  |
| <b>Mario Brazzer o</b> | <b>Position:</b> Specialist in anthropology and sociology, and academic informant. She has a background in social sciences and experience in the analysis of cultural dynamics, identities, and intercultural relations within different social and organizational contexts. Her profile provides a critical and theoretical perspective on interculturality, dialogue of knowledge and understanding of cultural differences, contributing to analyzing how organizations can manage cultural diversity and strengthen intercultural communication in globalized environments. |
| <b>Natalia Rincón</b>  | <b>Position:</b> Expert in Tourism, Culture and Competitive Advantage and Academic Informant. Specialist in cultural studies and competitiveness in international environments. Her academic trajectory allows her to analyze cultural diversity as a strategic resource and to understand how adequate intercultural management can become a factor of sustainable differentiation in globalized organizations. Her contribution strengthens the theoretical underpinning of the research from an interdisciplinary perspective.   |
| <b>Francisco Toral</b> | <b>Position:</b> Business professional with experience in commercial relations and customer service within the hardware sector.   |

Note: This table details the information about the people who will be participants in the interview.

### 3.2 Instruments

A combination of qualitative strategies was implemented for data collection, including systematic literature review, qualitative documentary analysis, and semi-structured interviews. According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell (2023), a literature review is a written summary of articles, books, and other key documents on a topic that describes existing knowledge, organizes the information into categories or concepts, and demonstrates how the study extends or contributes to the field. For these authors, the focus of the review is not just a compilation of sources, but a critical analysis that establishes connections between previous research and the new study. Accordingly, the literature review provided theoretical and contextual support on intercultural communication, competitive advantage, and organizational practices in multinational environments; in addition, a targeted search in academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO and Google Scholar was used, along with inclusion and exclusion criteria defined a priori to ensure relevance and timeliness. This stage made it

possible to identify conceptual frameworks, recent empirical studies and theoretical gaps that guided the selection of documents and the design of the interviews.

Documentary analysis was conceived as a systematic procedure to examine SMI's internal and external sources (corporate policies, procurement manuals, communiqués, framework contracts, international procurement reports, intercultural training materials, and institutional websites). Following recent methodological recommendations, the selection of documents was carried out using a previously defined strategy (temporal criteria, type of document, level of access and relevance to the research questions); also, an extraction matrix was constructed, piloted and progressively adjusted, and a qualitative inductive thematic analysis was applied to identify categories related to communicative practices, intercultural protocols and evidence of competitive advantage (Morgan, 2022; Moilanen et al., 2022). The use of documentary analysis has allowed us to triangulate findings with the interviewees' accounts and reduce biases derived from relying solely on individual perceptions.

The primary data collection was done through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders such as international buyers, foreign trade analysts, human talent managers, regional managers, and academic experts consulted. The list of interviewees were agreed upon by purposive sampling and saturation criteria. The interview guide followed a flexible design around thematic axes such as organizational culture and international approach, intercultural management in purchasing, negotiation and decision-making processes, corporate policies, and intercultural communication as a competitive advantage. Each interview was audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim and subjected to an iterative thematic coding process. For the design and conduct of interviews, good practices and ethical considerations were adopted, as suggested by Knott et al. (2022), including the construction of rapport, the use of open-ended questions aimed at exploring meanings and concrete examples, and the possibility of subsequent contact to validate interpretations (member checking).

The analysis plan was composed of coding techniques and reflexive thematic analysis. The transcripts and documentary texts were subjected to a first familiarization phase, followed by inductive and/or deductive coding according to the research question, grouping into categories and construction of interpretative themes that explained how intercultural communication manifests itself and how it contributes to SMI's efficiency, negotiation, and

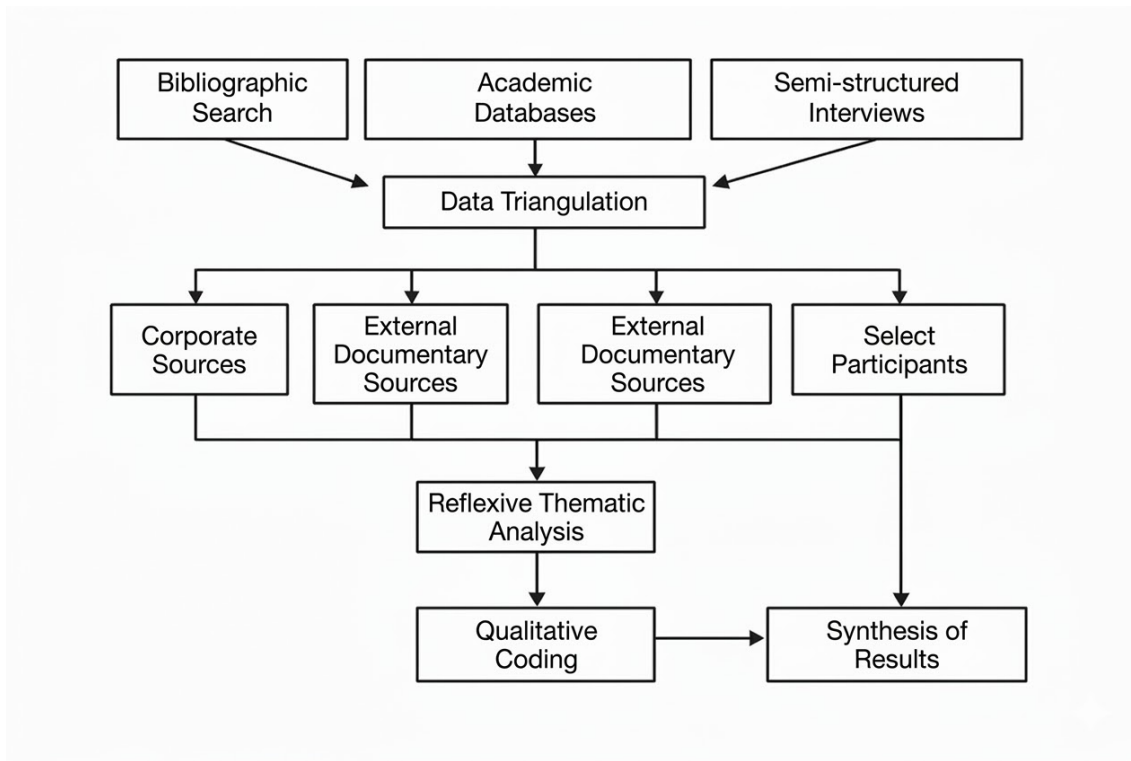
competitive positioning. For the analysis, the practical framework of reflexive thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021) was used, which facilitates the generation of interpretative themes and the traceability of the analytical process. Triangulation of data (documents and interviews) has strengthened the credibility and robustness of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Flick, 2022).

To ensure quality and confidence in the results, several strategies were applied: (a) methodological triangulation of sources and techniques; (b) recording of an audit trail that documented sampling decisions, changes in the extraction matrix, and coding processes; (c) piloting of the interview guide and documentary matrix to adjust instruments; (d) inter-researcher review by double coding at key stages to reduce interpretive biases; and (e) validation with participants when relevant (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In addition, strict attention was paid to ethical issues, including written informed consent, confidentiality, anonymization of data, and secure storage of recordings and transcripts, in accordance with institutional regulations and contemporary best practices (Knott et al., 2022; Morgan, 2022).

And finally, the combined use of these instruments made it possible not only to describe intercultural communication practices in SMI's purchasing and foreign trade processes, but also to interpret how these practices were related to indicators of operational efficiency, international negotiation, and competitive advantage. The results led to practical recommendations (such as internal policies, intercultural training programs, and negotiation protocols) that have been validated through triangulation between theory, corporate documents, and the voices of key stakeholders.

The following figure summarizes the use of the instruments in this research.

**Figure 1: Research Instruments**



### 2.3 Procedure

To clearly articulate the objectives and intentions of this research, several thematic axes were previously established to serve as a guide during the information gathering process. These axes guided both the documentary review and the interviews, ensuring coherence with the general objective and the specific objectives.

The thematic axes defined were the following:

- Organizational culture and international approach.
- Intercultural communication in purchasing and foreign trade processes.
- Negotiation and decision-making processes in multinational environments.
- Corporate policies and intercultural protocols.
- Intercultural competencies and human talent training.
- Competitive advantages and operational efficiency.

These pillars made it possible to structure the semi-structured interview guide and the documentary analysis matrix. They also facilitated the identification of categories during the thematic coding process. Within this framework, a flexible script of open-ended questions was elaborated, which made it possible to obtain in-depth information without leaving aside the spontaneity of the interviewee, which contributed to maintaining the fluidity of the conversation and made it possible to explore concrete examples of intercultural experiences within the organization.

The procedure was developed in several sequential and complementary stages:

***First stage: Systematic literature review.***

Targeted research was conducted in recognized academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO and Google Scholar, applying previously defined inclusion and exclusion criteria (date of publication, thematic relevance, type of study and methodological quality). This stage made it possible to construct the theoretical framework, identify key concepts and establish preliminary categories that guided the design of the data collection instruments.

Second stage: Documentary analysis.

Internal and external documents related to SMI, such as corporate policies, procurement manuals, foreign trade guidelines, institutional reports, training materials and official communications, were compiled and reviewed. An information extraction matrix was used to systematize the main data. Subsequently, an inductive thematic analysis was carried out to identify patterns linked to communication practices, intercultural management and the generation of competitive advantages, which helped to consolidate more precise interpretative categories.

***Third stage: Semi-structured interviews.***

The primary collection of information was carried out through interviews with key players in the organization, selected by means of purposive sampling and theoretical saturation criteria. Participants included international buyers, foreign trade analysts, human talent

managers, regional managers, and academic experts. Each interview was recorded (with prior informed consent), transcribed verbatim and subjected to a reflective thematic coding process.

***Fourth stage: Data analysis and triangulation.***

The transcripts and documents collected underwent a process of familiarization, coding and thematic categorization. Subsequently, the methodological triangulation between literature, institutional documents and participants' testimonies was carried out to strengthen the credibility and robustness of the findings. This phase made it possible to interpret how intercultural communicative practices influenced the company's operational efficiency, international negotiation and competitive positioning.

### **3.1 Informed Consent**

Before conducting the interviews, a transparent communication process was conducted between the researcher and the participants, with the purpose of generating an atmosphere of trust and respect. Given that the research directly involved people within an organization, it was considered fundamental to guarantee ethical principles such as autonomy, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

Prior to starting the interviews, the purpose of the research, the objectives of the study, the type of participation requested, and the exclusively academic use of the information collected were explained in detail. Likewise, it was informed that participation was completely voluntary and that the participant could withdraw at any time without any consequence. It was also indicated that the participant could refuse to answer questions that were uncomfortable for him/her.

Explicit authorization was requested for the audio recording and for the use of the information for research purposes. The data were anonymized to protect the identity of the participants and have been securely stored. The possibility of reviewing their statements prior to their inclusion in the final document (member checking) was also offered, which has ensured greater transparency in the process.

Informed consent was presented in writing and was signed by each participant as proof of free and voluntary acceptance. This procedure ensured the ethics of the study, strengthened the researcher-participant relationship, and contributed to obtaining reliable and valid information for the development of the research. Prior to the interviews, a transparent communication process will be carried out between the researcher and the participants, with the purpose of generating an atmosphere of trust and respect. Given that the research directly involves people within an organization, it is essential to guarantee ethical principles such as autonomy, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

# CHAPTER 4

## INTERVIEWS

### 4.1 Interview Justin Vera

In the process of identifying key informants, with the aim of gaining a broad and in-depth understanding of the role of intercultural communication within international procurement processes and its influence on the competitiveness of multinational companies, it is essential to consider the perspective of professionals who work directly within these commercial dynamics. For this reason, we interviewed Justin Vera, who works in the foreign trade department as a buyer at San Miguel Industrias in Ecuador. His role involves constant interaction with international suppliers, logistics agents, and negotiation processes related to foreign trade, giving him a principal view of the challenges and opportunities that arise in contexts of exchange between different business cultures.

During the interview, the participant explained the company’s operational structure, noting that the corporate headquarters handles the main negotiations with suppliers, while the local office executes logistics processes, coordinates purchase orders, and manages relationships with international transport agents. Throughout the conversation, Justin Vera was collaborative and willing to share real-life experiences from his work, providing concrete examples of situations in which communication, understanding of the cultural context, and management of administrative processes directly influenced the efficiency of operations and the company’s results.

**Table 2**  
*Interview results: Justin Vera*

| <b>Interviewed:<br/>Justin Vera</b>                   | <b>Results</b>   |
|---|--|
| Organizational culture and structure of foreign trade | The interviewee explains that the company manufactures plastic packaging and has a significant presence in the Latin American market. In the area of foreign trade, key negotiations with international suppliers are conducted by the corporate headquarters, which is responsible for finalizing agreements regarding prices, projects, and purchasing terms. Subsequently, the subsidiary located in Ecuador receives the guidelines from those negotiations and is responsible for conducting the operational processes necessary to finalize the imports. |
| International purchasing processes                    | As part of his duties as a buyer in the foreign trade department, Justin Vera explains that his job involves managing purchase orders generated from negotiations conducted by the parent company. This includes properly defining international trade terms, such as Incoterms—including FCA—and other  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>logistical arrangements that ensure the efficient transport of products from the supplier to the company. In addition, the local office is negotiating with shipping agents to secure better rates and terms for international transport.</p>  |
| Relationship with logistics providers                     | <p>The interviewee notes that negotiations related to international shipping are conducted with external providers, such as freight forwarders. These providers play a key role in coordinating international shipments, as they enable the evaluation of different routes, stopovers, or direct flights depending on the urgency of the request. In situations where a spare part needs to be imported quickly, the foreign trade department must analyze multiple logistics options to ensure that the product arrives as quickly as possible and at the lowest cost.</p> |
| Importance of logistics research                          | <p>According to the interviewee, researching and comparing logistics options is an essential part of foreign trade. Not relying on a single freight forwarder makes it possible to identify better routes or available space on various modes of transport. This helps prevent the company from facing delays or logistical constraints that could disrupt the continuity of its industrial operations.</p>   |
| Adaptation of intercultural communication                 | <p>Mr. Vera notes that communication with international suppliers must be adapted to the cultural and professional context of each counterpart. Even though the buyer represents the client, they should not adopt an arrogant attitude in the face of delays or setbacks, as many factors in international shipping are beyond the control of the parties involved. For this reason, he considers it essential to maintain respectful, mature, and understanding communication that helps preserve positive business relationships.</p>                                    |
| Challenges in international negotiations                  | <p>One of the main challenges mentioned is the initial mistrust of some international suppliers, who prefer to work on a prepayment basis. This situation can make negotiations difficult when the company seeks to establish trade credit or payment terms. However, the interviewee notes that through dialogue, trust-building, and a clear explanation of the company's needs, it is possible to reach more favorable agreements.</p>   |
| Communication failure case                                | <p>The interviewee recounts an experience in which a supplier refused to ship certain spare parts due to an issue related to a change made to a purchase order in the company's system. Although a screenshot had been sent showing the change, the supplier insisted on receiving the formal document in PDF format. This requirement caused a delay in the process, as issuing the document required further internal approval.</p>   |
| Operational consequences of the problem                   | <p>Due to a delay in receiving the formal document requested by the supplier, the production plant experienced a machine shutdown due to a lack of spare parts. This delay resulted in financial losses and demonstrated how an administrative issue can have significant consequences for the company's industrial operations.</p>   |
| Lack of flexibility and communication                     | <p>The interviewee believes that this case reflects a lack of assertiveness on the part of the supplier, as the supplier never clearly explained its document policies or showed any flexibility considering the critical situation the company was facing. The insistence on receiving the document in a specific format, without considering temporary alternatives, directly impacted on the efficiency of the logistics process.</p>  |
| Recommendations for improving intercultural communication | <p>Finally, Justin Vera emphasizes that to improve communication in international procurement processes, it is necessary to develop personal skills such as emotional intelligence, the ability to conduct logistics research, and assertive communication. He also highlights the importance of remaining calm under pressure, clearly explaining delays, and understanding that international trade involves multiple factors that can affect established timelines.</p>  |

Analysis of the interview shows that the company's foreign trade operations are structured through coordination between the corporate headquarters and the subsidiary in Ecuador, with the former handling strategic negotiations and the latter carrying out the operational import processes. The interview also highlights the importance of logistics management, exploring alternative transportation, and intercultural communication with suppliers. The interview also demonstrates that administrative problems or communication failures can have significant operational and economic consequences.

## **4.2 Interview with Cecilia Ugalde**

In the process of identifying key informants to gain a broad and in-depth understanding of the role of intercultural communication in the competitiveness of multinational companies, it is essential to incorporate the academic perspective of specialists who analyze this phenomenon from both theoretical and practical standpoints. For this reason, we interviewed Cecilia Ugalde, an academic and communication specialist affiliated with the University of Azuay, who has experience in analyzing organizational culture, strategic communication, and internationalization processes. The interview was conducted by Caterine Ochoa, a student in the International Studies program, as part of her thesis titled "Intercultural Communication as a Competitive Advantage in Multinational Companies: The Case of San Miguel Industrias." During the conversation, the interviewee reflected on the importance of understanding cultural codes in organizational communication, the differences between internationalizing a brand and culturally adapting it to new markets, as well as the challenges companies and leaders face when working with culturally diverse teams. Throughout the interview, Cecilia Ugalde was open and thoughtful as she shared academic examples and professional experiences that demonstrate how intercultural communication can become a strategic element for corporate positioning in globalized environments.

**Table 3**  
*Interview results with Cecilia Ugalde*

| <b>Interviewed person: Cecilia Ugalde</b>        | <b>Results</b>  |
|--|---|
| Conception of intercultural communication        | The interviewee notes that intercultural communication is now a cross-functional skill essential for any organization engaged in internationalization or interaction with diverse cultural contexts. Beyond language, it involves understanding the cultural codes that shape how people interpret messages. When these codes are not understood, misunderstandings, conflicts, or communication barriers can arise, affecting organizational efficiency.   |
| High and low context societies                   | Ugalde explains that cultures communicate in different ways. In the case of Ecuador, especially in cities like Cuenca, it is a high-context society, where much of the meaning is conveyed through subtext, gestures, or implicit messages. This means that people often do not directly express their disagreements, which can lead to misunderstandings if these cultural codes are not understood.   |
| Dynamism of culture                              | The interviewee emphasizes that culture is a dynamic phenomenon that is constantly changing. As an example, she cites the rise in individualism in Ecuador in recent years, which has transformed the way people interact, cooperate, and make decisions within organizations.  |
| Internationalization and cultural adaptation     | Cecilia Ugalde explains that internationalizing a brand does not simply mean entering new markets but rather understanding the culture of the environment in which the company intends to operate. To achieve successful integration, companies must study the cultural norms, consumer habits, and communication styles of each society.   |
| Examples of cultural adaptation in campaigns     | The interviewee cites instances where marketing campaigns have failed due to a lack of cultural understanding. One example is the use of the term “jugo de la China” to refer to orange juice in some Caribbean countries, an expression that can be confusing to other Spanish-speaking audiences. She also mentions the case of a campaign in Ecuador with the slogan “Ponte pilas,” which was interpreted negatively in some cities due to its association with local street smarts, forcing the message to be adapted according to the region of the country. |
| Strategic importance of intercultural management | According to the interviewee, intercultural communication should be viewed as both an ethical and a strategic necessity; however, from a business perspective, it takes on greater strategic importance because it strengthens organizational culture, improves team cohesion, and prevents internal conflicts arising from cultural misunderstandings.   |
| Impact on creativity and innovation              | Ms. Ugalde points out that when organizations allow people with different cultural perspectives to participate, they create opportunities for creativity and innovation. Cultural diversity makes it possible to analyze problems from different angles, which strengthens companies’ ability to adapt to international markets.  |
| Challenges for intercultural leadership          | One of the main challenges for leaders is recognizing that cultural differences influence the way people interpret communication. To manage diverse teams, leaders must foster an environment of trust, dialogue, and respect where people can express their ideas without fear of criticism.   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Development of Intercultural Skills                        | Cecilia believes that professionals working in international settings should develop soft skills such as conflict management, negotiation, assertive communication, and cultural adaptability. Senior management should promote these skills so that they become part of the organizational culture.   |
| Institutional experience and change of mindset             | Ugalde describes his experience at the University of Azuay in promoting international student exchange programs. In this process, he faced institutional resistance due to negative perceptions of academic exchanges. However, he maintains that these experiences strengthen intercultural skills and allow students to step outside their comfort zone.               |
| Lack of business investment in intercultural communication | The interviewee believes that many companies still do not invest enough in developing intercultural skills because they do not immediately see the benefits these skills can bring. In many cases, organizations prioritize other strategic issues without recognizing the problems that can arise from poor cultural management.  |
| Intercultural Communication as a Competitive Advantage     | Finally, Cecilia Ugalde asserts that intercultural communication can become a sustainable competitive advantage for companies, as organizational culture is strengthened over the long term. When a company succeeds in understanding its internal and external audiences from a cultural perspective, it can position itself more effectively in international markets. |

This interview demonstrates that intercultural communication is a strategic competency for organizations operating in international contexts. The interviewee emphasizes that understanding cultural codes—beyond language—helps prevent misunderstandings and improves interaction among people from different cultures. She also highlights that cultural diversity can foster creativity, innovation, and organizational cohesion. Finally, she notes that developing intercultural competencies and promoting their management within companies can become a sustainable competitive advantage.

### **4.3 Interview with Mario Brazzero.**

In the process of incorporating academic perspectives that enable a deep understanding of intercultural communication within multinational organizations, it is essential to consider the contributions of social science specialists. For this reason, we interviewed Mario Brazzero (Dr. Mario Brés), a specialist in anthropology and sociology, whose expertise allows him to analyze intercultural communication from a critical perspective on cultural dynamics, power relations, and the construction of identities. During the interview, the specialist offered theoretical insights on dialogue between cultures, the importance of respect, and cultural adaptation in globalized organizational contexts.

**Table 4**  
*Interview results with Mario Brazzero*

| <b>Interviewed person:<br/>Mario Brazzero</b>        | <b>Results</b>  |
|--|---|
| Conception of intercultural communication            | The interviewee explains that intercultural communication must first be understood in terms of the basic communication process between sender and receiver, in which language acts as a mediator. For effective communication between cultures to take place, it is necessary to share linguistic codes that enable the messages to be understood. However, he emphasizes that intercultural communication is not limited to the exchange of words but involves understanding the cultural meanings that influence the interpretation of messages within organizations. |
| Interculturalism as a dialogue of knowledge          | Brazzero points out that there is a narrow interpretation of interculturality as merely a horizontal dialogue between cultures. Drawing on anthropology, he argues that the concept goes beyond dialogue and refers to a true “dialogue of knowledge,” in which different forms of knowledge must be recognized as valid and relevant. This implies accepting, with integrity and openness, that the knowledge of others is legitimate, even when it stems from cultural systems different from the Western one.  |
| Cultural diversity in organizations                  | The interviewee asserts that cultural diversity exists in all social contexts and is not limited to obvious ethnic differences. Even within a single country or city, multiple cultural identities coexist and give rise to complex dynamics. Therefore, when people from different sociocultural backgrounds interact within an organization, intercultural relationships emerge that require mechanisms for dialogue, active listening, and mediation to prevent conflicts.   |
| Importance of listening and mediation                | According to the interviewee, intercultural communication in negotiation or decision-making processes should include mediation mechanisms that facilitate dialogue between the parties. Active listening and the use of interaction protocols—such as the order of participation or time management during discussions—help ensure that all voices are heard and that cultural differences do not create unnecessary tensions.  |
| Critique of the concept of tolerance                 | Brazzero emphasizes that the concept of tolerance is problematic in the context of intercultural communication. He explains that tolerance implies a hierarchical relationship in which one person allows another to be present without necessarily respecting them. Instead, he proposes fostering deep respect and genuine acceptance of cultural differences, since it is only through genuine recognition of the other that healthy intercultural relationships can be built within organizations.  |
| Cultural Adaptation in Global Contexts               | The interviewee introduces the concept of “glocality,” explaining that global processes always interact with specific local contexts. In this regard, multinational companies must understand that it is not possible to apply the same strategies in every country, since each region has its own cultural, social, and communicative norms that must be respected and understood.   |
| Cultural identities and organizational relationships | From an anthropological perspective, Brazzero argues that cultural identities are not constructed within the company; rather, people arrive with already formed identities. What emerges within organizations is a network of relationships among these identities. To explain this process, he uses the metaphor of a “constellation,” in which each person contributes their cultural perspective and all the identities together form a broader system of relationships.   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Building Intercultural Confidence            | The interviewee notes that trust among people from different cultures is built when there is respect, freedom of expression, and shared goals within the organization. When people can express their cultural identity without restrictions and there are common purposes, collaboration and cooperation among team members are strengthened.   |
| Intercultural competencies in leadership     | Brazzero believes that leaders of multinational organizations should develop a basic understanding of anthropology to better comprehend the cultural dynamics within their teams. This knowledge would help them interpret cultural behaviors, manage conflicts, and foster a more authentic intercultural dialogue within the company.   |
| Recommendations for intercultural management | Finally, the interviewee cautions that interculturalism should not be treated as a superficial trend or a corporate image strategy. Instead, he proposes that companies develop medium- and long-term institutional policies aimed at the conscious management of cultural diversity. In this way, interculturalism can become a structural element of organizational culture rather than merely a rhetorical facade. |

The findings of this interview show that intercultural communication in organizations should be understood as a profound process of dialogue between different forms of knowledge, rather than merely as an exchange of messages between people from different cultures. In this context, the interviewee highlights the importance of replacing the idea of tolerance with respect and genuine acceptance of the other’s knowledge. Thus, he emphasizes that multinational companies must adapt their global strategies to local contexts and develop sustained intercultural policies that strengthen relationships and trust within the organization.

#### **4.4 Interview with Natalia Rincón**

In the process of incorporating academic perspectives that enable an analysis of the relationship between culture, competitiveness, and intercultural communication in globalized contexts, it is important to consider the views of experts in the fields of culture and tourism. For this reason, we interviewed Natalia Rincón, a specialist in culture and tourism, whose expertise sheds light on how cultural factors influence the strategic positioning of organizations operating in international environments. During the interview, the specialist reflected on the importance of education, cultural diversity, and strategic communication management as key elements for strengthening organizational competitiveness.

**Table 5**  
*Interview results with Natalia Rincón*

| <b>Interviewed person:<br/>Natalia Rincón</b>          | <b>Results</b>   |
|--|--|
| Relationship between culture and competitive advantage | The interviewee explains that culture is shaped by a variety of social and educational factors that influence a population's identity. In the case of Ecuador, she highlights the cultural diversity found across different regions and subcultures, which creates a complex yet enriching context for organizations operating in international settings.                                      |
| Education as the foundation of culture                 | Natalia Rincón points out that education is the cornerstone of a society's cultural development. What is taught from childhood remains in people's memories and, over time, becomes part of cultural practices. A proper education enables people to understand a country's historical and cultural origins, while a poor education can lead to prejudice or misinterpretation of reality.     |
| Cultural communication strategies                      | The interviewee emphasizes that effective communication requires the use of clear and objective teaching strategies that make it possible to explain cultural processes in an understandable way. The use of visual aids, structured explanations, and historical examples helps people understand the evolution of cultures and develop a greater appreciation for their own identity.        |
| Cultural diversity as a strategic resource             | From her perspective, cultural diversity can become a strategic asset when there is a willingness to listen, understand, and learn from others. The interviewee emphasizes that understanding the cultural context makes it possible to turn negative perceptions into opportunities for learning and cooperation among people from different cultures.  |
| Lessons learned from tourism for the business context  | Natalia Rincón notes that the tourism sector offers important lessons for international organizations, particularly through business tourism known as MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events). This type of tourism allows visitors to experience the local culture while engaging in professional activities, thereby creating opportunities for cultural and economic exchange. |
| Ethics and cultural respect                            | The expert emphasizes that one of the fundamental principles of tourism is respect for the local culture of the destination being visited. This principle can be applied to the business world, where organizations must understand and respect the cultural norms of the countries in which they operate.   |
| Risks of poor intercultural communication              | Rincón warns that organizations that fail to properly manage intercultural communication may face reputational crises or issues with public perception. For this reason, it is essential to identify the organization's various audiences and tailor communication messages to their specific characteristics.   |
| Importance of opinion leaders                          | In times of communication crises, the interviewee notes that it is important to identify opinion leaders or reliable media outlets that can help tailor the organization's message to different social groups.   |
| Complexity of intercultural competitive advantage      | Finally, Natalia Rincón believes that intercultural communication can become a sustainable competitive advantage; however, she cautions that implementing it is complex due to political, economic, and social factors that influence the way cultures interact in the global context.   |

This interview shows that culture can serve as a strategic asset for organizations when properly managed through education, communication, and respect for diversity. The interviewee emphasizes that understanding the cultural context helps prevent prejudice and strengthens relationships between different social groups. She also points out that sectors such as tourism demonstrate how cultural interaction can create opportunities for learning, cooperation, and competitive positioning in international settings.

#### 4.5 Interview with Francisco Toral

In the process of analyzing intercultural communication as a competitive advantage in the business environment, it is essential to consider the perspective of actors who are directly involved in real-world commercial dynamics. For this reason, an interview was conducted with Francisco Toral, a business professional whose experience in commercial relations helps to understand how communication and cultural interaction influence business management. During the interview, the participant reflected on the importance of communication, commercial relations, cultural adaptation, and a focus on results as indispensable elements of the business environment.

**Table 6**  
*Interview results with Francisco Toral*

| <b>Interviewed:</b>                                       | <b>Results</b>   |
|---|--|
| Francisco Toral   |  |
| <b>Relevancia de la comunicación entre organizaciones</b> | Communication is essential for coordinating activities and relationships, although the workload can make it difficult. |
| <b>Globalization and business alignment</b>               | Globalization has unified practices such as quality and service, strengthening competitiveness.                        |
| <b>Challenges in intercultural communication</b>          | It requires adaptation, active listening, and understanding of cultural and linguistic differences.                    |
| <b>Intercultural communication as a natural process</b>   | It develops empirically thru experience, not as a formal strategy.   |
| <b>Interpersonal connection strategies</b>                | Common topics facilitate bonds, trust, and negotiations.   |
| <b>Business focus on results</b>                          | Success is measured by commercial indicators; communication is a means, not the central axis.                          |
| <b>Limited awareness of intercultural communication</b>   | It is not managed strategically, but rather implicitly in daily practice.  |

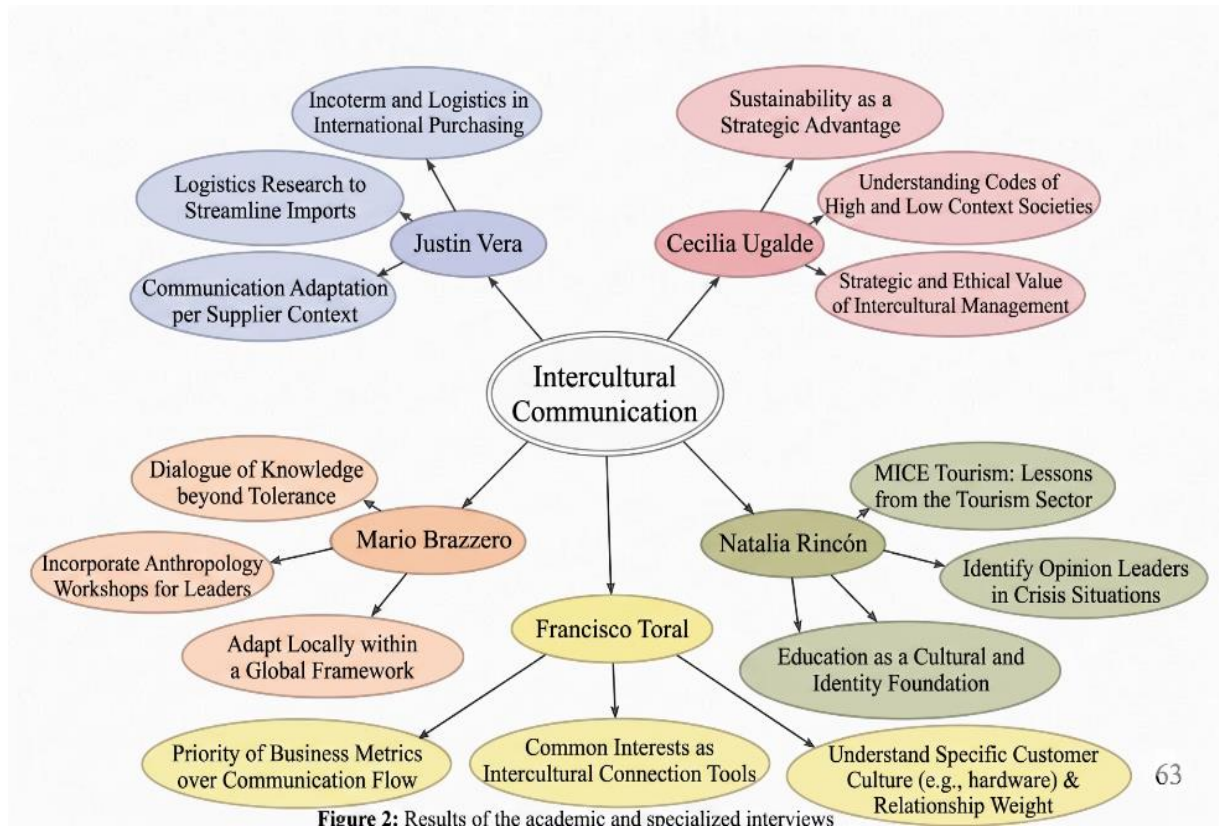
|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Relationship between communication and commercial flow</b> | Communication does not ensure results without constant commercial activity.          |
| <b>Adaptation to the cultural context</b>                     | It is key to adjust the communication style, prioritizing clarity and efficiency.    |
| <b>Training in intercultural contexts</b>                     | Training can strengthen skills, especially in new staff.                             |
| <b>Importance of the customer relationship</b>                | Adapting communication to each customer is key to commercial success.                |
| <b>Intercultural communication as added value</b>             | It is a complement that improves relationships and results, but not the main factor. |

This interview shows that intercultural communication, although not always managed formally, is present in the functioning of a company as an implicit process. The interviewee emphasizes that cultural understanding, adaptability, and the use of informal interaction strategies can facilitate business relationships. However, it is noted that business success is primarily determined by the achievement of economic objectives and resultados tangibles. En este mismo contexto, se identifica que la comunicación intercultural puede establecerse como una ventaja competitiva si se utiliza de una manera estratégica dentro del modelo de negocio y se adapta a las necesidades específicas del mercado.

# CHAPTER 5 CASE RESULTS

## 5.1 Interviews Results

**Figure 2**  
*Results of the Academic Interviews*



**Figure 2:** Results of the academic and specialized interviews

Through the analysis of each interview, key categories were identified to understand the importance of intercultural communication in organizational and global contexts. Among the main categories are intercultural management, communication strategies, cultural diversity, organizational adaptation, and cultural learning. These categories allow us to analyze how organizations and social actors face the challenges of interacting in culturally diverse environments. First, intercultural management appears as a fundamental element in the interviews. In the case of Justin Vera, it is evident that international business relationships require constant adaptation to the cultural contexts of suppliers and business partners. Vera

mentions that communication with foreign suppliers depends not only on language, but also on the understanding of cultural practices and negotiation styles. This coincides with Hall (1976), who points out that differences between high- and low-context cultures influence the way people interpret communication and make decisions in professional environments. Therefore, understanding these cultural differences helps to avoid conflicts and improve the efficiency of business processes

Second, intercultural communication strategies constitute another relevant aspect within the interviews. Cecilia Ugalde emphasizes that intercultural communication implies understanding the cultural codes of the societies with which one interacts. In her interview she mentions the importance of identifying whether a culture is high or low context, as this influences the way in which messages are transmitted. In high-context cultures, much of the information is transmitted implicitly through the social context, while in low-context cultures communication tends to be more direct and explicit. This idea is related to Gudykunst and Kim (2003), who argue that intercultural competence develops when people can adequately interpret cultural codes and adapt their communicative behavior to each context.

Third, cultural diversity is presented as a source of learning and enrichment within organizations. From Mario Brazzero's perspective, interculturality should be understood as a true dialogue of knowledge and not only as a coexistence between different cultures. Brazzero criticizes the concept of tolerance, as he considers that tolerance implies accepting the presence of the other from a position of superiority. Instead, he proposes respect and recognition of the knowledge of other cultures. This reflection coincides with Walsh (2009), who points out that interculturality implies a horizontal relationship between knowledge, where the knowledge of different cultures can dialogue and mutually enrich each other.

Fourth, organizational adaptation to globalized contexts also appears as a relevant category. In the interview with Brazzero, the concept of “glocal” is mentioned, which refers to the interaction between global processes and local realities. From this perspective, multinational companies cannot apply the same strategies in all countries but must adapt to the cultural characteristics of each territory. This idea is related to Robertson (1995), who states that globalization does not eliminate local identities, but rather generates processes of interaction between the global and the local.

Fifth, cultural learning and the role of education also stand out as important elements in the interviews. Natalia Rincón emphasizes that education is the basis for understanding culture and developing effective intercultural communication. From her experience in the tourism sector, she mentions that business tourism, especially the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events) model, can become a space for cultural exchange where visitors get to know the local culture while developing professional activities. This coincides with Hofstede (2011), who states that understanding cultural differences improves international relations and strengthens cooperation between organizations.

In this context, the interviews also show that intercultural communication can become a competitive advantage for organizations. Both Ugalde and Rincón emphasize that companies that manage to understand and manage cultural diversity properly can generate innovation, creativity, and better relations with their publics. In this sense, intercultural communication should not only be considered a management tool, but also a long-term strategy to strengthen competitiveness in a globalized world.

**Table 7***Comparison of results among interviewees from the business sector*

| <b>Category</b>                   | <b>Justin Vera (San Miguel Industrias)</b>   | <b>Francisco Toral (Commercial sector)</b>   | <b>Comparative analysis</b>  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Business approach                 | Oriented toward structured processes of Justin Vera (San Miguel Industrias) defined between parent and subsidiary. | Focused on direct buying and selling and generating sales in the local market.                   | A structural difference is evident: while Justin Vera works in a multinational company with defined processes, Francisco Toral operates in a more flexible environment focused on immediate results. |
| Relevance of communication        | He considers communication key to coordinating logistics processes and avoiding operational errors.                | He considers communication important, but subordinate to the achievement of business objectives. | Both recognize the importance of communication, but Justin links it to operational efficiency, while Toral relates it as a complement to the business.   |
| Intercultural communication       | It is managed consciously due to the constant interaction with international suppliers.                            | It develops naturally, without formal strategic planning.  | There is a significant difference: in international contexts, intercultural communication is more structured, whereas in local environments it occurs empirically.                                   |
| Relationship with external actors | Constant interaction with suppliers, forwarders, and international agents.   | Relación directa con clientes locales, principalmente ferreteros.                                | The type of actors influences the need for cultural adaptation; the greater the internationalization, the higher the demand for intercultural competencies.  |
| Communicative problems            | They are evident in administrative processes, such as errors in documentation or lack of clarity.                  | They are more evident in the form of interaction and communication styles between people.        | In multinational companies, the problems are more formal and documentary, while in commercial companies they are more relational.  |
| Impact of communication failures  | Generan consecuencias operativas graves, como retrasos logísticos o paralización de producción.                    | They affect the smoothness of the business relationship, but they don't always halt operations.  | The consequences are more critical in industrial environments, where a mistake can halt production processes.  |
| Cultural adaptation               | Requiere manejo de inteligencia emocional, respeto y comunicación profesional.                                     | It is based on finding common ground and direct communication.                                   | Justin presents a more technical and professional adaptation, while Toral uses informal interaction strategies.  |
| Vision of competitive advantage   | He believes that intercultural communication improves efficiency and international relations.                      | He considers it an added value, but not a decisive factor in economic outcomes.                  | There is agreement that it adds value, but they differ in the level of strategic importance they assign to it.   |

This comparative analysis shows that intercultural communication acquires different levels of relevance depending on the type of company and its degree of internationalization. In the case of Justin Vera, being part of a multinational company, intercultural communication is presented as a structured and necessary tool to ensure the efficiency of logistical and administrative processes. In contrast, Francisco Toral, from a more local commercial environment, perceives intercultural communication as an element that arises naturally and primarily serves as support in building business relationships.

In this same context, it is identified that the consequences of poor communication are more critical in industrial and foreign trade contexts, where errors can lead to significant economic losses. On the other hand, in local business environments, communication has a greater influence on the customer relationship than on the operation itself. By correlating this obtained information, these results allow us to conclude that intercultural communication can indeed constitute a competitive advantage; however, its impact depends on the business context, the type of operations, and the level of international interaction of the organization.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

Through this research, it has been possible to highlight the importance of intercultural communication as a highly relevant element within organizations and globalized contexts. Based on the interviews conducted with various members of SANMINDEC S.A. from different fields (foreign trade, communication, anthropology, and culture), it was noted that interaction between cultures involves not only the exchange of information, but also a deeper understanding of the values, practices, and cultural codes that influence how people interact and make decisions. In an increasingly interconnected world, organizations that are able to understand and appropriately manage these cultural differences may strengthen their international relations, improve their negotiation processes, and generate sustainable competitive advantages.

One of the most important findings for the purposes of this research is that intercultural communication requires constant processes of adaptation and learning. In the business environment, as evidenced in the interview with Justin Vera, international trade operations do not rely solely on technical or logistical aspects, but also on the ability to understand the cultural contexts of business partners. The approach to negotiation, the way information is transmitted, and the interpretation of agreements can vary significantly between cultures. Therefore,

developing intercultural competencies within organizations helps to reduce misunderstandings, improve coordination among stakeholders, and strengthen long-term commercial relationships.

Furthermore, the research demonstrates that intercultural communication holds a strategic dimension within organizations. Cecilia Ugalde highlights that understanding the cultural codes of different societies allows for the design of more effective communication strategies adapted to each context. This is especially relevant in multinational organizations that interact with diverse audiences. The ability to recognize whether a culture operates under high- or low-context codes, for example, can directly influence how messages are conveyed, trust is built, and professional relationships are managed.

From a broader perspective, Mario Brazzero's contribution helps to understand interculturality as a true dialogue of knowledge. His reflection encourages moving beyond the concept of mere cultural tolerance, advancing toward a genuine recognition of the knowledge and experience of other cultures. This approach highlights that organizations might view the management of cultural diversity not only as an operational challenge but also as an opportunity to foster collective learning, innovation, and new ways of understanding reality. In this sense, cultural diversity within work teams can serve as a source of creativity and organizational development.

Additionally, the interview with Natalia Rincón illustrates that culture and education are fundamental elements for strengthening intercultural communication. From the perspective of tourism and cultural management, it becomes evident that knowledge of the cultural context helps to foster more enriching and respectful experiences among different social groups. In this sense, education serves as the foundation for developing a cultural awareness that encourages an appreciation for diversity and helps to avoid prejudices or misinterpretations regarding other cultures.

This research leads to the conclusion that intercultural communication should be understood as an essential competency for organizations in the 21st century. In a context of increasing globalization, companies, institutions, and social actors must develop strategies that promote respect, understanding, and dialogue among cultures. Beyond serving as a communicative tool, interculturality can become a strategic factor in strengthening international

cooperation, promoting innovation, and building organizations that are more inclusive and adapted to the cultural diversity of today's world.

Intercultural communication, although not always formally managed within organizations, plays a highly important role in the business environment. Their experience demonstrates that, in sectors focused on direct commercialization, it develops implicitly as part of everyday business operations, manifesting in the adaptation to different communication styles, customer understanding, and the building of trusting relationships.

Furthermore, it can be concluded that in results-oriented business contexts, intercultural communication is often perceived as an added value rather than a core element; however, it directly influences fundamental business processes such as negotiation, customer retention, and the sustainability of commercial relationships. Thus, although economic objectives remain the primary focus, the capacity for cultural adaptation and effective communication contributes to achieving these goals.

Finally, conducting this research proved to be an enriching process on both an academic and practical level. Through the collection and analysis of information obtained from interviews with professionals across various fields, it was possible to gain a detailed understanding of the importance of intercultural communication in the business environment. This process facilitated the comparison of theoretical perspectives with real-world experiences, thereby helping to identify how interactions between cultures influence organizational competitiveness. Consequently, it can be stated that the research question was addressed satisfactorily, demonstrating that intercultural communication represents a fundamental aspect within companies and may serve as a competitive advantage when managed appropriately. Likewise, both the general and specific objectives were met, as the study successfully analyzed the significance of intercultural communication, identified its implications in business processes, and recognized its impact on building commercial relationships and positioning companies within globalized contexts.

### **5.3 Recomendations**

Through the research work carried out in this thesis, particularly in the case of San Miguel Industrias Ecuador SANMINDEC S.A. (SMI Solutions), different challenges and opportunities

related to the management of cultural diversity within organizations were identified. Interviews with specialists from different areas allowed us to recognize the importance of developing strategies to strengthen intercultural communication to improve organizational processes, labor relations, and international negotiations. In this sense, it is essential to propose recommendations that are not limited only to academic reflection, but that promote concrete actions within multinational companies.

These recommendations seek to strengthen intercultural management within organizations, encourage respect for cultural diversity and take advantage of this diversity as a strategic resource that contributes to improving business competitiveness. The aim is that these proposals can be applied in business, academic and professional environments, promoting a better understanding of intercultural communication and its impact on decision-making, organizational innovation and the strengthening of international relations.

The following are proposals developed with the objective of strengthening intercultural communication as a competitive advantage in multinational companies:

- - Develop training programs in intercultural communication within companies, directed to managers and collaborators working in international contexts. These programs should include content on cultural diversity, communication styles, intercultural negotiation and understanding of different socio-cultural contexts.
- Promote continuous training in intercultural competencies, especially in areas related to foreign trade, logistics, marketing, and international relations. This will enable professionals to better understand the cultural codes of their trading partners and avoid misunderstandings or conflicts in negotiation processes.
- Encourage cultural diversity within work teams, recognizing that the presence of people with different cultural experiences can contribute to generating new ideas, improving creativity and strengthen innovation processes within multinational organizations.
- Incorporate intercultural communication within the organizational culture, promoting values such as respect, inclusion and understanding of different cultural perspectives. In this way, cultural diversity can become a central element of institutional identity.

- Strengthening research and cultural analysis in internationalization processes, enabling companies to better understand the cultural contexts of the markets in which they operate. This knowledge can contribute to designing more effective communication and negotiation strategies.
- Leverage technological and digital tools to facilitate communication between international work teams. Digital platforms, virtual meetings, and collaborative tools can become spaces that promote cultural exchange and learning among professionals from different countries.
- Promote partnerships between companies, universities, and research centers with the objective of developing studies and training programs focused on intercultural communication and cultural diversity management in organizational contexts.
- Implement organizational policies that value cultural diversity and encourage the creation of spaces for dialogue within companies. These policies may include intercultural activities, cultural awareness workshops, and integration programs between employees from different cultural backgrounds.

It is important for multinational companies to understand that intercultural communication should not only be seen as a complementary skill, but as a strategic competence that allows them to improve international cooperation, strengthen business relationships and generate sustainable competitive advantages in an increasingly globalized business environment. In the case of SMI Solutions, the proper management of cultural diversity can contribute significantly to the strengthening of its international operations and the development of stronger and more effective business relationships.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### *Interviews Transcription*

#### **Interview with Justin Vera - transcription**

**Katherine Ochoa:** My name is Katerine Ochoa, I am a student of international studies at the University of Azuay, and I am currently developing my work titled "Intercultural Communication as a Competitive Advantage in Multinational Companies," in this case about San Miguel Industries, the company where you work.

**Justin Vera:** I wish I had urgency as a buyer. Buyer, yes, buyer.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Yes. Well, this interview seeks a qualitative research approach and aims to understand cultural communication, how it manifests in international purchasing processes, and how it impacts the company's efficiency, negotiation, and competitive positioning. Your profile is essential, as your position involves constant interaction with foreign suppliers, negotiation in diverse cultural contexts, and adaptation to international business dynamics. This interview will be conducted solely for academic purposes, do you agree to continue?

**Justin Vera:** Yes, go ahead.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Ready. Well, to start, I would like you to tell me, from your experience as an international buyer, how would you describe the organizational culture of San Miguel Industrias in relation to how they interact with international markets?

**Justin Vera:** How are you? Very good. I work in the foreign trade sector; while it is true that foreign trade is a very broad network that encompasses many categories, I am currently in the industrial part. San Miguel is an industrial company dedicated to the production of plastic containers and is one of the large industries of Latinoamérica, en la cual se ha logrado posicionar junto con socios estratégicos y grandes clientes. En mi punto de vista, en comercio exterior en Ecuador todo sale de matriz. Matriz es quien negocia las compras directamente con los proveedores del exterior, cierran precios y proyectos.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Ustedes no negocian directamente, digamos, con San Miguel Ecuador.

**Justin Vera:** San Miguel Ecuador receives the instructions from the negotiation they have closed with the supplier and automatically begins the process of creating purchase orders and properly defining the Incoterm, such as FCA or other negotiation terms to ensure the operation flows smoothly. There are also negotiations with shipping agents to secure a good international freight offer.

**Katherine Ochoa:** And let's say in the area you handle, which is precisely closing the negotiation with the freight, are they people from the same team at San Miguel Industrias or are they outsiders?

**Justin Vera:** With whom we negotiate are external suppliers, we handle that directly as Foreign Trade Ecuador and the headquarters no longer intervenes. The judgment of the people in the area is involved to negotiate according to the need. For example, if a spare part is needed in 4 or 5 days, one must explore the possibility of achieving the import by analyzing airlines with their shipping agent or forwarders. Not just one forwarder is used; there can be several to find better routes, direct flights, or layovers, seeking an efficient, fast, safe, and lower-cost import. If one does not quote and investigate beyond the pros and cons, the trusted agent may not have space or may have very long routes, losing visibility of the situation. Communication has to be smooth and keep them informed if there is any delay.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Could you say that at some point you have had to adapt your communication depending on the supplier's context?

**Justin Vera:** Yes. You have to know how to treat people; the fact that I am the client does not mean that I am going to sound arrogant in the face of a delay, because delays in air or sea happen and are beyond our control. You have to have character, be mature, understanding, and passionate about the work to achieve the company's goals.

**Katherine Ochoa:** How does intercultural communication influence decision-making? Has a negotiation ever failed due to a lack of communication or understanding of the context?

**Justin Vera:** I have a supplier who harms us a lot because of how they work. A parts negotiation was closed that they had in stock, but one item from the purchase order was no longer available. They didn't want to dispatch the other materials if I didn't remove that item from the order. In our SAP system, this caused a deliberation that required approval from other people. The supplier did not want to accept a print of pantalla de la modification, I wanted the PDF. Due to the daily routine, I revisited the issue a week later and it turned out that the plant had a machine breakdown. When I complained to them, they were very rigid; they only processed the shipment when I sent the formalized PDF by email. They never clearly explained their policy, and their lack of flexibility and poor customer service caused delays and losses for the company. It was a non-assertive communication that affected us. Communication determines effectiveness when the provider gives visibility and resources promptly.

**Katherine Ochoa:** What recommendations would you give to strengthen this assertive communication in international purchasing?

**Justin Vera:** First, be a person of strong character because there are external situations that can frustrate you, like an urgent requirement that doesn't happen on the established days. Based on experience, one must research transit times (Germany 3-4 days, Italy 2-3 days) to provide accurate dates. When things don't go as planned, the emotional part comes in: attending to the user, calmly explaining the delays, and being mindful of the tone of voice. You can't be aggressive or defensive. I like to get to know the human side and always be available and attentive. Foreign trade is a very beautiful world that moves everything from a pen to enormous machinery.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Thank you very much for your time, Justin. It will be very important for the research.

**Justin Vera:** Likewise. Bye.

## Interview Cecilia Ugalde Transcript

**Katherine Ochoa:** Well, first of all, thank you very much for accepting the interview; the contribution of your academic profile will be very valuable for my thesis, my thesis project. I am Katherine Ochoa, I study international studies at the Universidad del Azuay, and I am currently working on my degree project titled intercultural communication as a competitive advantage in multinational companies. The case of San Miguel Industrias, a plastics company that mostly distributes to Coca-Cola. This interview is part of the qualitative component of the research and its purpose is to incorporate the academic perspective—which your profile fits perfectly—on intercultural communication and its impact on organizational culture. The information provided will be exclusively for academic purposes. Do you wish to continue with the interview?

**Cecilia Ugalde:** Ready. Thank you very much. How do I see the issue of intercultural communication for the global issue? I mean, it would be for a company that has any hint of internationalization, even almost not even for those that are solely thinking about internationalizing, simply the ones working here because right here you already have a melting pot suddenly from a lot of places, it's increasingly necessary... Right now it's a must and right now you have to manage intercultural communication. It's almost a soft skills issue, like a transversal axis that has to be present for things like decision making, time management... it's not a matter of translation or speaking the same language. It's that we communicate through the same codes or that we understand the codes of others and respect them. You start having brakes there, hurdles, obstacles, misunderstandings. Our life is fraught with misunderstandings... they looked at me the wrong way, they spoke to me in a bad way... there are high-context societies and low-context societies. Ecuadorians in general, people from Cuenca clearly are a high-context society... we have a lot of those messages that are just there, those subtexts, reading between the lines... we have a lot of unsaid things that are present. So that marks the functioning of an organization.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Agreed. Thank you very much. Based on your criteria, what differences exist between internationalizing a brand and truly adapting it culturally to the different markets it will enter?

**Cecilia Ugalde:** What happens is that sometimes it is thought that internationalization is simply opening a new market, but what you rather try to seek is for that brand to fit in, become part of, understand, and integrate into the new culture where it will operate... You need to study the environment... What kind of codes do you use? There are plenty of examples of millionaire campaigns that have failed because they have not taken the cultural issue into

account. Culture is not fixed; culture is entirely dynamic. We as Ecuadorians had an individualism score of eight 2 years ago... along with Guatemala we were the two countries with the lowest individualism on the continent, and right now we are at 24... it has tripled.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Have you observed cases where a brand has strengthened its positioning thanks to proper intercultural management, and what factors were decisive?

**Cecilia Ugalde:** I worked for a while at TBWA... one thing that caught my attention a lot was the intranet... it sought collaboration and the vision from different points of view of team managers who are in cultures and who can contribute. For example, there was a campaign for orange juice... the proposals for the Spanish-speaking audience in the United States talked about "jugo de la China" [China juice] because it was made by Puerto Ricans... or Dominicans... who call orange juice "jugo de la China". I found out there, I didn't understand "jugo de la China", that makes no sense. We jumped from a lot of other places saying "this doesn't reach me". Or for example when smart light bulbs came on the market... The message was "Ponte pilas, ponte pilas y gasta menos" [Get smart, get smart and spend less]... when analyzing the impact here in Cuenca or Quito... people associated "ponte pilas" at that time with native cunning in a negative way. It's an intercultural issue within our own country... many campaigns in Ecuador are adapted to messages for the coast and messages for the highlands.

**Katherine Ochoa:** In highly competitive markets, is intercultural management an ethical need, a strategic need, or do you consider it to be both?

**Cecilia Ugalde:** I think it has the weight of both... but if you look at it from the interests of a corporation or a company, I think the strategic issue weighs more. It is indispensable... it has to do with the very values the company has, with its internal values, with that organizational communication, that organizational culture... it is strategic that within those practices you include communication issues because that strengthens you, it consolidates you as a team. You will avoid misunderstandings, you will have more cohesive groups. There are cultures where things are upfront. And here they won't say "no" to you, they tell you "I'll look into it", "I'll let you know". I sometimes do have a bit of that directness... I feel they see me, like, more abrupt because I tell you what I think... but it's that exposure that makes me feel more comfortable than beating around the bush to say what I feel.

**Katherine Ochoa:** What communication challenges do leaders face when working with culturally diverse teams?

**Cecilia Ugalde:** First I think it stems from knowledge, if you don't realize those differences, you can hardly assume them. You have to be very clear that communication is a challenge... it demands openness, a willingness to understand that someone thinking differently does not imply a personal attack... here people take any disagreement personally. First is having a degree of maturity, then it is transmitting that to your team... Your organizational culture has to be a culture that allows taking a stance, allows trust, allows dialogue, allows opening up to negotiate differences. From the moment you feel safe and comfortable... you can have the confidence to be able to express yourself and know you won't be criticized... creativity and points of view... you enrich that and feed it. Managing the issue of intercultural communication well strengthens you as a team and opens you up to many options where creativity, innovation... is fundamental because you are driving precisely that, seeing things from another angle.

**Katherine Ochoa:** What intercultural competencies do you consider fundamental for marketing professionals working in international environments?

**Cecilia Ugalde:** Training in conflict management issues... time management... hierarchies... soft skills... but this has to come from the top... it is super important that the heads are practicing or applying what is generated regarding organizational culture issues. For example, in the international relations directorate at Universidad del Azuay... when I proposed that you students have the option to study a semester abroad... you don't know all the barriers I had at the beginning... people with super square minds saying "the kids are just going on a trip". Someone who studies abroad is outside their environment, often in a language that is not theirs, outside their comfort zone... you sacrifice a lot of things on a personal level... and you are also studying with different methodologies and things. Getting people to change their mentality is difficult. You need to keep negotiating... the management of individual relationships... a lot of those soft skills that must be managed.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Do you think companies are investing enough...?

**Cecilia Ugalde:** Honestly I don't think many companies see it as a need or even as a problem... unfortunately they have other priorities and don't realize the problems that this can generate for them.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Can intercultural communication become a sustainable competitive advantage...?

**Cecilia Ugalde:** Yes, I do believe it can be a sustainable advantage... because organizational culture works long-term... the more it consolidates, the stronger it will be. The main advice is for them to become aware of how well-managed intercultural communication can become that competitive advantage... that sets me apart, that gives me that turn towards better understanding my internal and external audience. Not only do you reach them, but you reach them in a better way, you reach them with more strength.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Thank you very much for the interview

## Interview Mario Brazzeros

**Katherine Ochoa:** Well, uh, good morning, Mario. My name is Katherine Ochoa, I am a student of the international studies program at the Universidad del Azuay and I am currently developing my degree project titled intercultural communication as a competitive advantage in multinational companies, case uh San Miguel Industrias. This is a plastics company that mostly provides uh plastic as such to Coca-Cola. So, we can begin. Uh, this interview forms part of the qualitative component of the research and its purpose is to incorporate the academic and theoretical perspective on intercultural communication, its relationship with culture, and its impact on organizational processes in globalized contexts. Uh, your profile, Dr. Mario Brés, as a specialist in anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies, uh, is fundamental for the study, since it allows analyzing cultural communication from a critical perspective on cultural dynamics, power relations, the construction of identities, and the interaction between different value systems within multinational organizations. This uh work is solely for academic purposes. I don't know if you want to continue. Do you agree to continue with the interview?

**Mario Brazzeros:** Sure.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. So, tell me from the perspective of anthropology and sociology, how can the concept of intercultural communication be understood within organizational contexts, which are these multinational companies?

**Mario Brazzeros:** Well, I would start uh thank you very much for considering my point of view for your graduation project. Uh I would start a bit not so much by giving a conceptualization uh but a contextualization about these elements we are talking about, right? Communication and interculturality. Uh, starting from communication and from my area of knowledge which is anthropology, intercultural communication, uh because communication in general terms is sender receiver and a mediator between the two which can be language, right? Word. I mean, uh uh and if we speak of a communication between cultures to enter the realm of the intercultural, uh The fundamental thing would be to understand that for that communication to exist first, very first of that element of language that allows us to understand each other because I don't know if a transnational company uh at the negotiating table sit or of company actions sit a person who speaks Chinese and one who speaks English, they won't we must understand that language is the first bond we must rely on, right? A language in which both the sender and the receiver understand the uh uh uh the language codes that and that I know they are familiar with those codes of law. Without that, communication in principle is not true.

From there the issue of interculturality, uh the concept itself of interculturality is a rather complex concept in terms of anthropological analysis, but trying to reduce it to its minimum expression. Uh there is an error that is usually like usually made uh when speaking that interculturality is a is the horizontal dialogue between two cultures, two people who belong to different cultures. Uh, a sort of that's why there is much talk of the dialogic element, dialogue between two people belonging to other cultures, but interculturality is not only dialogue. Obviously, the horizontal dialogue already sets a playing field for us, there are not these hierarchical elements that yield criteria like colonialism and such of peoples who or social sectors, cultures that think themselves better than others, right? I mean, horizontality is already a step to seeing each other as equals, right? But it goes much further, I mean, it's not it is not exhausted in the dialogue between cultures of interculturality, interculturality aimed rather at the dialogue between knowledges. I mean, it is not only that I comprehend you, I understand you as an equal to me, right? Which is already a step forward, as I say, but uh it is also accepting your forms of knowledge, your knowledges as true and relevant knowledges like mine. Just now I was giving a class in anthropology of the body and health to my students and let's see how this conflict of the Western world that uh denies other medical knowledges, for example, thinking that the official medicine, the one that goes through the university is the only valid one, the one in the

medical institution. While the other ways of understanding medicine, the other knowledges about the body, about health, old age, about treatment are denied, right? So for there to be in or intercultural there is with this you admit, you assume, but with frankness, with ethics, that what that knowledge of the other is true, valid.

**Katherine Ochoa:** It is totally valid. Only in this way this of of intercultural communication can be possible. Totally. Yes, it could be said that culture plays an important role in the way people interpret messages within an organization, within different groups. Totally. From an academic perspective. What are the main cultural challenges that companies face when they operate in diverse social and cultural contexts?

**Mario Brazzero:** I don't know if it is a bit linked with exactly that is it, right? I mean, uh let's also start from another fact, cultural diversity, I mean, uh beyond the fact that we generally tend to understand that the that cultures uh when we talk about cultural diversity we think of the aragueros, those of these, we mestizos are also cultures, we are also an e-group cultures. And within us there is an even greater complexity, because within the of what we could call uh the Ecuadorian mestizos, to give it a term, right? There is a lot of internal diversity too, just as there is in the United States, just as there is in France, just as there is in Germany. I mean, There is no territory, there is no country where cultural diversity does not cohabit, that this that this cohabitation is uh respectful is one thing or that this usual is rather full of tensions, of conflicts, of powers, is another thing.

Now, uh I understand that for a company where various cultures sit at the same table, cultural agents, people who have their cultural baggage. A person from one country or another country, a Quiteño and a Cuencano, and and so on, right? The of people from the coast from the highlands or you sit with an Asian with however it is, right? Uh, we are going to be in intercultural relations, even if we are people from Cuenca because it can be from social sectors. Totally. right? So there the key is uh listening, attentive listening. I think that uh in these in these transactions, negotiations, whatever it may be, sometimes we are doing projects of even of university research projects with communities, it is the uh there must be a mediator in listening, there must be someone who puts, who leads the baton. I mean, so that so that the orchestra works because if there is not that that order is that startup through an established order, right? Of giving you the floor for so much time, what do I know, then things can get out of control there. I believe that in intercultural relations so they can work, intercultural dialogue so it can work must be mediated by some type of codes that allow us that day. The codes can be, for example, the point of order, what is going to be spoken first? What is going to be spoken later? So that no one feels affected in their rights both cultural and of being able to express the ideas that I have. We are talking negotiation, right?

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. And do you consider that these companies exactly these multinational companies truly understand the complexity of uh the contexts where the different the diverse cultures operate? Do you think they keep it uh in mind or simply like they simplify it to cultural differences and that's it?

**Mario Brazzero:** Yes, I believe that no they will hardly understand these uh these different scenarios we are talking about and how these scenarios can effectively dialogue. I mean, we have said that intercultural is not only dialogue, but also accepting accepting the other person with their with their true knowledges, as a person with diverse knowledges, but knowledges in the end. I do not believe, for example, you will see in uh in this when one speaks of interculturality, many times people speak of how is this word they use they use a lot of uh I'll remember it soon this one that is like like I accept you, but no, but I tolerate.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Tolerance.

**Mario Brazzero:** Exactly that is the word I wanted to remember, tolerance, because many people think that the word tolerance is a totally cool and nice word, but look at what that word has in between, right? Because semantics and another thing is semiotics, what is behind the word, right? If a person tells you, "Hey, I tolerate you." Do you understand that? I mean, I tolerate you because I like to tolerate you, but if I didn't if I didn't want to I would send you far away, I mean, it's not a matter of it's a matter of respecting.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. Understanding deeply.

**Mario Brazzero:** Correct. So, for companies to understand that intercultural dialogue is fundamental and not only that, it is enriching, because if interculturality has something beautiful it is that you learn from the other person, from the other culture, but not only as a learning that you put in a drawer of learnings, but it is something that can nourish your life, that can nourish your day to day, that can make you see the world with other eyes, that can make you more human. So, in that sense, uh those who manage these companies must not only foster intercultural dialogue as a matter of uh I do allow this, I tolerate, I allow that, but assume that it is going to going to going to

feed the company it's going to give it much more character. much more uh I return to the word humanize the company. that because interculturality in terms uh at the end of the road what what is sought with this complex concept is respect, respect for everything that the other person is, the other culture with everything it it what it entails. Yes, having to tolerate it, I mean, if you tolerate it fine, don't tolerate it, go to the other side and never hear from it again.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. Yes, like your boyfriend telling you I already... No, thank you very much, you're better off thanks. Well of course.

**Mario Brazzera:** It shouldn't happen in a room there shouldn't be tolerance, tolerance must be eradicated because in the end tolerance is also a deception. I am deceiving myself by tolerating you, I mean, I, what am I doing in a place where I have to tolerate someone or someone has to tolerate me? That's right. So, I think that the thing really should go along the lines of real ethical acceptance, right?, conceptual that that there is a contribution on the part of of intercultural dialogue, right? And that this rather improves everyone.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. I mean, it could be said that the deep cultural understanding uh the local culture can contribute to let's say these headquarters also uh quickly couple, let's say, to where the total is.

**Mario Brazzera:** It's not that you cannot use the same logic in New York City as in Buenos Aires, as in Quito, as in Guayaquil, because the way of seeing the world is different. Even the same advertising you do in New York, eventually here you see it like like something aggressive, I don't know.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Really yes, exactly one must yes or yes analyze the context of where one is going to operate, let's say, right? From an anthropological view, how are cultural identities constructed within organizations that bring together people from different sociocultural contexts?

**Mario Brazzera:** I wouldn't say that identities are constructed. Identities already come to the table, they already sit at the table. What is constructed rather is are these uh these relationships, right? These relationships uh that and I would give you as an example a constellation of relationship. Because let's see what I want to make understood when I speak of a constellation of... I am thinking what a constellation is, they are not isolated stars in a chaotic way, right? The constellation is that those stars form an organism, they form a Gemini, an an Orion's belt, Southern Cross, what do I know a constellation which we already manage to understand and through the understanding of the constellation we know the place each star occupies within that constellation, right? So, I would rather think that uh more than uh creation of identities. There what identities already sit at the table and what is generated is a constellation of relationships where each identity contributes like which star its place, its cultural place, its way of understanding the world, its way of understanding the situation we are in too. So, uh thinking about the concept of constellation allows me uh to say that we are not creating identity. We are uh generating a larger organism than the individual identities, which is not necessarily an identity. It is rather a constellation of relationships.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. Well, sorry for using a metaphor. No, don't worry, it's perfect. I understand completely. Yes. Uh, how do you think how does intercultural communication and the building of trust influence between people belonging to these different cultures? uh within the same organization. How do you think that I know that it is understood how this influences?

**Mario Brazzera:** And I believe that, if uh if uh the relationship is founded on respect, not on tolerance. We return. If uh it is not accepting that you being from another culture are here because it's my turn to accept you, but because effectively I know that they are going to contribute from that vision of the world. If identities can express themselves with freedom if communication can occur because there is a common element that unifies them, which can be the goal of the company, for example, the where the company points to and we all agree to contribute in that sense. If we go generating constellations of relationships, because it is not a matter of all of us understanding each other here, but that they are we can make micro small groups that later talk with larger groups, that the truth and go generating all this web of relationships each one with its significant elements, right? A web of symbolic relationships we could say from anthropology, right? Uh, I believe that that quasi to that it can happen.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. Yes. You uh what type of intercultural competencies do you consider should be developed by leaders and those who manage these multinational companies?

**Mario Brazzera:** I would tell you a bit of anthropological knowledge, truly, I mean, anthropology, while it is true, there is there is the anthropologist, there is the subject called anthropologist who has a sphere of action in society which is through the field of culture, but not because of that uh we cannot also have a certain anthropological

knowledge, at least a I don't know, anthropology workshops where we can buy interculturality, where is these concrete definitions, but that are going to allow us exactly uh to understand where we are, what terrain we are inhabiting, what territory we are inhabiting thinking of inhabiting as something that must be harmonious, I mean, harmony in an inhabiting, how to inhabit harmoniously a space and uh diverse, right? So, uh I believe that the top authorities or those in charge of personnel or of these things yes must have a an, I don't know, I am going to be sincere, an anthropology workshop that us to that to that of the of the confession of these of these fundamental elements that derive in a real dialogue, not forced. No, a dialogue with respect, a dialogue without tolerance.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Exactly. I take it out of the tolerance scenario, but yes I point it towards respect. Totally. Do you consider that intercultural communication can become exactly this strategic factor for organizations uh for these organizations operating in global environments.

**Mario Brazzera:** I believe it is fundamental uh it is fundamental because exactly you say something cool in global environments. Uh there is a concept in anthropology which is the glocal. What does glocal mean? That uh a locality, however small it may be, uh is sheltered by the umbrella of the global, okay? The global acts in the local always, right? And that's how it works. So, uh thinking about local environments, they are global environments. Yes, whether they want it or not it is a global environment, even if however much local it has, but one must understand that locality, that territory. Because territories here are the diverse ones. right? And rather the global is that is what all territories share. What differentiates them is the specificity of that territory in particular. That territory has its own cultural codes, it has its own forms of relating socially. If you go to Japan, you are not going to greet each other the way Argentines greet, with little kisses and hugs. Japan does not even let itself be touched. And a man giving a Japanese woman, they can give a kiss like how we do.

**Katherine Ochoa:** If that is it depends on the low or high context we have which cultural of that locality must be respected within global concepts.

**Mario Brazzera:** Okay. Yes. Yes. I mean, the local.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. That anthropological is applied. So, how interesting. It is super important to understand uh the territory, that local element and everything that culturally means in order to be able to act with our global strategies. Global strategies have to adapt to the localities, not the other way around, because otherwise it would be an invasion exactly it would respect, I tolerate you, but not like... Well, and to finish from your experience in anthropology, sociology and cultural studies, what recommendations would you give multinational companies to manage in a more conscious way, as we were talking and strategic, cultural diversity within these environments of organizations?

**Mario Brazzera:** I think that first uh they shouldn't fall into something so reduced, it seems to me, which is into a trend. Okay. I mean, because if it was said that, if the word interculturality is trendy, well let's apply interculturality and our company has an intercultural discourse. Look, black, red, and blue people work here. We are and that makes us so cute and so beautiful, I mean, we shouldn't fall into those essentialisms. That's the first thing I would, I mean, if we are going to talk about interculturality, let it be a a serious dialogue, not a something of the moment, a trend, any trend, because every trend ends up being something fleeting. And I think rather that they should be internal company policies, policies that uh medium and long-term that go building up, that go developing, that are part of the evolution of the... I mean, that I have no reason to tear my garments because I have people of different cultures from... That, that, that, is not, it doesn't go there. That is a vague essentialism, absurd, I would even say, and counterproductive, because you don't even have how to work with those people, you don't have how to dialogue with those people, how are you going to do it? A conflict, how do you resolve it? No, so, but if you have this anthropology workshop, if you have, if you have these concepts, if you have this of these strategies, if you think of a constellation of cultural diversity, of communicational, right? Where identities can be shown, where you can really accept the thought of the other, not necessarily tolerate their thought, but accept it responsibly, right? If you provide the necessary spaces so that we can all express ourselves, uh I believe that things go along those lines.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. I mean, competitive advantage, yes or yes. more than anything its understanding in itself, not as you say just on the outside.

**Mario Brazzera:** Exactly. Not a facade it must be the heart. Totally. Yes. It cannot be, not only a facade, it cannot be an outfit that tomorrow you change, it has to be a shirt that today I am here body, that has to be assumed.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. Something you can't take off. Totally. Thank you very much, Mario. Uh, your contribution is going to be very valuable for my degree project. I thank you. very much.

**Mario Brazzero:** I hope I have collaborated.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. Thank you very much. Super interesting as well everything you spoke to me. Likewise I am also going to go continue investigating more. It seemed to me uh that anthropology really is a fundamental base to be able to understand these complex definitions and be able to be in harmony, let's say, with all the people we inhabit. Thank you very much.

## Interview Natalia Rincón

Below, I present the literal transcription of the interview conducted with Natalia Rincón, a specialist in culture and tourism, by the interviewer, Katherine Ochoa:

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. Thank you very much. Alright. Well, first of all, good morning, Natalia. Thank you very much for helping me with this interview for my degree. I see you or I see you are very well. I think it's fine. Well, first I'll introduce myself. My name is Catherine Cho. I am a student of international studies uh at the Universidad del Azuay and I am currently developing my degree project titled Intercultural communication as a competitive advantage in uh multinational companies uh Case San Miguel Industrias, which is a plastics company.

This present interview forms part of the qualitative component of the research and its purpose is to incorporate an academic perspective that your profile fits perfectly, specialized in culture, tourism, and competitive advantage. Considering that these fields allow us to understand how cultural aspects influence the strategic positioning of organizations operating in international environments. Uh, your profile is especially relevant to me for this study. Uh, as I told you, your experience in culture, in competitiveness, uh to analyze how properly managed cultural diversity can be transformed into a competitive advantage. This will be solely for academic purposes. So, I don't know if you wish to continue with the interview.

**Natalia Rincón:** Please, continue. Delighted.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. Well, I'm going to start. From your experience in tourism and culture, how would you define the relationship between culture and competitive advantage in organizations operating in an international context?

**Natalia Rincón:** Let's see, uh it is a quite complex and super interesting topic because when we talk about culture you are talking about a group of a specific population in this case like Ecuador. Yes. Uh, if you look at the context of Ecuador it is highly diverse due to the different uh subcultures that exist within this, not necessarily that belong to indigenous populations, but also within what is the mestizo part. There are different subcultures and in many other things. We are seeing interesting, current cases of this even of of the series culture. Sure, sure. They identify you, a group of people identifies you.

Uh, for me some components within what we are going to be analyzing, culture, what is from Ecuador, first of all, an important component is education. Why do I tell you this about education? Because according to what you teach, from children to adults, it stays within the mind of each one of us and automatically the years pass and it becomes a cultural factor. Yes, because this about the Cañaris, about the Incas, etcetera, right? Now, if a history is badly told, we are it can generate other negative factors. Right. Why do I tell you this? Exactly because I give uh a class called principles of tourism.

I have a group that is diverse. This is in tourism technology and I have groups that belong, for example, to the Cuyabeno area, I have others that belong to the Austro, others that belong to the coast and others to what is the southern Amazon. So, you can already imagine from Cañar and the rest, right? And just yesterday I was giving them within what was principles of tourism, there is the component called heritage and I was giving them tips, I mean, as it is a component the history had to be highly summarized and what caught my attention the most is that many of the things I told them they did not have.

There I realized that their education could have been different from mine, uh the curriculum could have been different. Yes, I had a much much stronger base, yes? Which is what allowed me to show them that sometimes when we don't know where a country comes from, why this comes, why it goes, where it goes, we don't understand

the past like and there we start to have that problem in the present. So, why do I touch on this topic with you? Because you are exactly talking to me about heritage, about culture, you are not talking about tourism. So, but the important factor here is education, how I communicate with them, yes? Where my discourse has absolutely no, it's how would I tell you, I try to be as active exact as possible, telling them, "Okay, we started with this, the next stage was this to go understanding how the cultures within Ecuador developed, because of course, if you listen to discourses the Inca was extremely bad. The canal was before. And when I start showing them this video, they realized that there was always a fight between the pre-Inca cultures. Yes, there was always that dispute, but nobody had told them.

So, they were highly interesting topics. What I used was the communicational, visual strategy and telling them, "Okay, let's simply understand and we are going to comprehend in the present." That is one, learning to also love the country accepting them and avoiding those hate speeches because they are very easy, they are very manipulated.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect, totally clear. Well, from an academic perspective can cultural diversity become a strategic resource?

**Natalia Rincón:** Totally. Do you know why? And exactly I am going to talk to you about yesterday's case, because let's see, there are always going to be hierarchies, the hierarchy of social class has existed through the years, whatever the totally the population in every scope, if it's not from the socioeconomic point of view, it can be by ages. If it's not by ages, children of the sun, of whose of the family, do you understand me? Things like that. So, uh within this as such, in this social class, I lost my train of thought. It's what was the question.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Uh, from an academic perspective, can cultural diversity become a resource?

**Natalia Rincón:** It is highly interesting to know the position each one is in. Yes. And learning from them and one also teaching them things that I didn't know, do you understand? And also having what is listening and the attitude to be able to understand and channel that. Yes. So, for example, we are very easy from the point of view of perception. Uh, you Ecuadorians are barbarians because you eat cuida, but let's understand what the complex was, why we do it, where we live, where we work, when you understand that and there is a good message change to touch. So, listening to that person is also interesting. It's quite complex.

Another thing, I tell you, you who are in international studies, the other day I was listening precisely to Shell Obama, I like her a lot and she gave a clear example that she obviously always had a totally different party than Bush's, who was the previous president of and they have very good camaraderie between the two. Bush, Jr. And for life they always have to sit together due to the protocol that obviously mandates any uh institutional event from the United States. Yes. And many people did not understand why they got along and that's what he said. It is important first to know who you are with, who you are going with, but if I am in a group where everyone agrees with me, I am never going to realize the mistake. It is also interesting to know the other point of view, but not to reach what is a conflict. So, that's what I'm getting at. Exactly. This diversity is interesting to allow each one to speak from the real context.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Yes. Perfect. Yes. Totally. In the field of tourism, where cultural interaction is constant, what learning could you transfer to the uh international business context, already multinational?

**Natalia Rincón:** Let's see, in tourism I am going to give you precepts. First, tourism as such is always a motivation of people to know their place outside their habitat, so to speak. We agree. Tourism has different classifications. You talk to me about uh cultural tourism, so to speak, but tourism always has a base which is through what is the attraction or the reverse, that is, the cathedral, a typical festival and the rest, right? For it to develop.

However, in the field that you tell me about international studies, a type of tourism appears called the Mars sector, which is the meeting Incentives, Congress and Events, that is, it is a group of tourists that simply goes to different countries purely for business, right, but once that business thing is done it also allows them to know the attractions and potentials that this or that destination has. They start to know the exact history. Like an extra, like a plus. Totally to study the field, let's say. Storm, which is one of the strong ones. There are also companies called uh organizations which is the ICA ICCA, which is everything that is congresses, they take care of everything that is negotiations and the rest and many people are unaware of that.

Besides, it is a super interesting type of tourism because it is a tourism that has no seasonality, I mean, I don't depend on the weather in that case because that happens a lot in tourism where we have high season and low season, not in mis tourism no, because it can be developed at any time of the year in any hybrid way, right? Totally after

what the pandemic was. And what is interesting is that there is always this cultural connotation of each country because what you want is welcome to my country, there is this business, there is always a souvenir, there is always something that shows you that cultural essence of each country.

So, tourism uh, that's why I love it, it allows you to open up the sphere you are in a little bit more and realize how people's behavior is across the world and then the tourism codes of ethics appear that wherever you go, do what you see and foolishly respect that formation.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. Yes. Wok. So, totally. Culture is a resource.

**Natalia Rincón:** Totally, totally, because you also have that option to make a person who has a totally different feel at home. This part of the attitude has a lot to do with it, do you understand me? Because culturally it is one of the most complex things. For example, there are, I'm not saying they are bad, there are tourists, for example, there are the Germans and within Germany everyone is different. The same happens in Japan, everyone has their way of being. However, when they travel they have another perspective, but there is still that cultural shock. Or when it happens to us that we go to Europe, uh, there are things as simple as, "And where is the bedsheet? No, I mean, just the comforter, the comforter or the shower and things like that. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Very much agreed.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Well, uh, in another in another question I have, what risks do organizations face that do not adequately manage intercultural communication? What do you think? Have you seen have you seen any cases?

**Natalia Rincón:** Here I give you uh there is a public relations book. Public relations are based on the fact that you have to identify your audiences. Yes. Uh, depending on the institution of the organization, you can have several audiences. Uh, for example, the base is internal audience and external audience, right? Uh, the Universidad de la SUAL, to give you an example to make it clearer, is an educational institution. Within its internal audience it has three axes. You have the teachers, administrative students. Each of them has a different communication. Totally. In hierarchy too, not necessarily, but it's a different message, communication. To us it tells one thing, uh, to you it is different, but it is Exactly. It is identifying that internal communication that it has Yes, totally.

And externally, on the other hand, you have a broader audience, first of all, parents your family, yes that is one of them. Second, you have other educational institutions, other universities. Third, you have the general population. And based on all that, you work with one of the most complex things, which is public opinion. And in public opinion you have a leader, yes? So, it has a lot to do with what the bias might be, right? Now, there is a public relations book that calls you crisis cases. In crisis cases there is a chapter specifically that when you are in crisis, in the culture crisis or how you manage the message, the ideal is to recognize oneself opinion leader so that he gives you the strategy and the parameter of how I communicate with my internal audience and how I arrive with that same one.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. Sure. Identifying who we are addressing, what group we are addressing.

**Natalia Rincón:** That is strategy.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. Uh, and well, finally do you consider that intercultural communication can constitute a sustainable competitive advantage.

**Natalia Rincón:** This uh yes it could be, however, I say again, it is complex due to the educational part, due to the political, economic actors of each of the countries. A clear example is what is happening, for example, in the United States. That intercultural communication is sectorizing by nationalities and within the same nationalities it also sectorizes. Totally. Do you understand? It is a cos is another, is another and Ecuador is another. Yes. And sometimes we are Ecuador and sometimes we are not Ecuador, do you understand me? Uh, sometimes there are times we are South America, sometimes we are not South America, sometimes we are America, sometimes we are not America.

We are that is why the role developed by the United Nations, the ethical codes, the blessed SDGs is precisely to try to stop this yes, but it doesn't stop being congregate. You have to see strategy. Uh, as I tell you, identify opinion leaders or media outlets that are leaders. BC seems pretty good. CNN also has a lot. Of course there can also be a bit of bias, it never fails within the person who hides it. Such yes that happens. I don't say no, but there are media outlets that are reliable. Yes. Yes. More more than others. Ex more than others. So, that does allow you they are more partial. Exactly. It allows communication to arrive in a real way to all these intercultural groups.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Yes, perfect.

**Natalia Rincón:** Anything else that I could?

**Katherine Ochoa:** No, I love the topic and for example something that is bringing me a lot is that you guys from international studies sometimes only lean towards the purely business part and the rest. Do not forget that you have a worldwide parameter. Yes. And it is also interesting to know this social, cultural part and the background that you have to have from each of the cultures.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. Thank you very much. Besides it is going to be very valuable for my degree. Thank you very much.

**Natalia Rincón:** Thank you very much. Likewise.

## Interview Francisco Toral

**Katherine Ochoa:** I am a student of the international studies program uh at the Universidad del Azuay and at this moment I find myself conducting uh the research for my thesis called intercultural communication as a competitive advantage in multinational companies. Uh, the objective of this interview, more than anything, is to learn from your professional experience, how communication and interaction between different uh cultural contexts can influence business dynamics. Uh, I don't know if you agree to continue with the interview.

**Francisco Toral:** Yes, alright.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. Well, to begin, tell me from your experience in the business sector, how important do you consider communication within commercial relations in organizations?

**Francisco Toral:** Uh, communication is vital. All the all day we must communicate, of course, within the company and outwards. Uh, in this globalized world many doors have opened. Uh, it is very easy to communicate, however, uh sometimes time doesn't allow us. Since there is such ease of communication, sometimes the days pass uh very quickly or within the same day, it is not easy in that sense. Yes. And, however, this globalized world has helped us to align organizational, business perspectives in the same way. In our case, uh we have always maintained the line of quality, of customer service and uh of a long-term relationship with clients and this hand in hand with the companies we work with. So uh having maintained that that culture has helped us today to be given importance in the market. And but Uh, sometimes one coordinates meeting topics and with this ease of virtual meetings uh it is it is done easily.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. Uh, as you mentioned to me, from your experience working with clients and companies from different cultures and international contexts, what challenges have appeared throughout what is being worked on with these teams of different uh of diverse cultures.

**Francisco Toral:** Let's see, uh I think the most important thing is uh to listen uh to understand that each culture is different. Uh in our case it has been easy uh because we are in the Americas, a very close relationship. We do not have contact with China, which I understand the culture is a bit different and they have sought to adapt to us. Uh, however, And this one has to understand each position, I mean, uh there are customs, uh one has to investigate a bit uh sometimes even terms, words, even though we are Latin America, there are terms that do not mean the same thing. So one has to have all of that.

**Katherine Ochoa:** ...these cultural codes, right? That behind them one has to fully investigate uh from your perspective, in what way can intercultural communication contribute to the success of a company's growth. Do you think that yes it can be a competitive advantage within a company if it is applied correctly?

**Francisco Toral:** Can you tell me, please.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Uh... in what way intercultural communication uh can contribute to growth or if you think that it really is not an advantage.

**Francisco Toral:** No it is super important, but in our case it has been happening in a natural way. I mean, it's not that I have paid special attention to it, but rather uh, let's see, one has to one has to look for topics in common. An example, soccer. Soccer is very useful for this.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect. Yes.

**Francisco Toral:** Uh, one talks about soccer, everyone they have their favorite team and if not if they don't like soccer, one already knows which way to go sometimes. Uh, points of common interest, the political issue is always present. So, intercultural communication for me goes that way, I mean, being up to date on what is happening in the world.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally, as you and I were just talking, understanding cultural differences, then yes it can generate a competitiveness, a positioning of the companies. Uh, could you perhaps mention to me some situation where communication

has been key to to strengthen the commercial relationship with these different uh people, diverse cultures of the people who work within the team.

**Francisco Toral:** Let's see, uh I think it is important, but in our case in the end we are focused on buying and selling materials and in the end what carries weight is business and that is what one uh looks for. And on the other hand Large corporations, multinationals, uh measure us for example by population, Ecuador population, southern population of the country, they manage uh so many people, so they must consume so many square meters of material or such ton. One has to seek uh to reach those numbers.

**Katherine Ochoa:** So, more than communication it is...

**Francisco Toral:** Yes. So, So if even if one communicates very well, but if there is no flow really no flow in the relationship.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. Just uh like you are commenting to me right now, I mean, you you tell me that in reality companies here in Ecuador are not very aware of this uh like of this of this advantage as such which is intercultural uh communication and therefore like it is not applied. Could you tell me...?

**Francisco Toral:** ...I mean, they are not very aware, put that much attention. I mean, now that you tell me you say, uh, yes, but like it happens it keeps happening along the way. Okay. Uh, always uh in business towards our clients, whether it's the suppliers, I mean, if things flow, walk well, if there is a good environment, things keep happening. And if not, and we keep aligning ourselves in what I was saying, the issue of quality, customer service, uh in that we deliver a product that lasts over time. sustainable. We have uh this issue of the rains now. By the way, we are focused on materials that help the environment. So, all that influences.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Okay, perfect. Uh, from your perspective, because well, uh, more or less this seeing that they are not focusing much, obviously, on intercultural communication here, but more than anything on the negotiation itself. Uh, you uh from your perspective, what do you think professionals should develop to be able to work in uh intercultural contexts?

**Francisco Toral:** Uh, I think the type of business influences a lot, I mean, if there is going to be, I remember recently there was an approach from the Canadian ambassador here in Cuenca, at the Chamber of Industries and I know that in Canada they give you a lot of support... they force buildings then to have paintings sculptures.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Yes.

**Francisco Toral:** And I made that comment to the ambassador, but like it's not the mining issue, because of the issue uh of how Canada can uh be a place that can be exported, Ecuadorian products, but the cultural part, I imagine Uh, is something that, if one seeks that type of market, of business, of focus, for me I think it would be important. However, and when one starts a business, of course, sometimes you have to learn and you have to fall flat on your face until you start.

**Katherine Ochoa:** And in and in this type of negotiations, let's say, uh in your experience you haven't had like difficulties uh in these messages between the lines, let's say, let's say Canada is a low-context country, which refers to that, let's say, they are much more direct in how they express the indications they give. On the other hand, Ecuador we are a high-context country where we send like messages between the lines, right? Like we don't want to directly say no, but like we beat around the bush, like yes, maybe, I mean, like hasn't there been kind of like difficulties when I don't know if you have like any experience like that, something like that that has happened to you.

**Francisco Toral:** Let's see, uh, it's not that, let's see, yes, yes it has happened to me and experience leads me to be direct, I mean, even if it is like that, sometimes one says, "No, it's that I'm going to risk more". But in the end uh with time one says, "Okay, I have to find a path, I have to focus on something, I have to keep going that way until it really isn't there I have to educate.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Exactly.

**Francisco Toral:** But uh yes it is better to be very direct, I mean, what you say due to the cultural issue sometimes and just in case I said, I open this door, but uh for me it is today with the rhythm, with the needs for things to be very clear towards the team that works here, uh I need to be very direct. So, sense.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Well, right now let's say from what we are talking about, uh, right now that you are kind of realizing that there is this intercultural communication thing, which can be a plus, let's say, for the company, do you right now believe that uh like uh providing workshops to these to the workers within the company on this of intercultural communication would be good? Like a plus right now that I am opening this topic for you.

**Francisco Toral:** Let's see, uh in our case, ours are mainly hardware store owners. We get there.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Okay.

**Francisco Toral:** And there uh each hardware store owner is a world the relationship carries a lot of weight. So if uh within the intercultural part there does go a part that is focused towards the relationship, towards winning over the client, uh it could be, but uh more than intercultural, because in the end, I mean, We move in the environment mostly the south of the country.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Yes.

**Francisco Toral:** So, uh it can be for a bit uh those who are not accustomed, although now I look for people with experience, because going training them is more...

**Katherine Ochoa:** ...totally.

**Francisco Toral:** But uh for people, new people who work with us it could be an option for them to understand a little more the the the culture of the hardware store owners.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. Yes.

**Francisco Toral:** Totally.

**Katherine Ochoa:** In conclusion, uh right now that we talked, how could you define for me right now the importance of this intercultural uh communication in the business world?

**Francisco Toral:** Let's see, we uh are focused on sales, we are interested in selling. So uh I would give it an added value in the negotiation part, I mean, uh You have to it's hard for me to understand young people sometimes, I say, why? Why do I have to be behind them chasing them or why do I have to be telling them, "Hey, do the process this way and it's repetitive"?

**Katherine Ochoa:** Exactly.

**Francisco Toral:** Or the degree of responsibility or the degree of importance. Or it just happened to me a girl who wanted to come work here and I told her, "You are a civil engineer, but I need you visiting projects and closing sales. I mean, I know you trained one way, but uh the focus is that I need to deliver the material that is charged properly..."

**Katherine Ochoa:** ...immediately...

**Francisco Toral:** ...that it is dynamic more than anything in all areas. So, uh in our case it's sales, so if it aligns as part of sales it would have an interest.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Totally. I understand. Of the level of responsibility...

**Francisco Toral:** ...I mean, like I am free, I am young, I want to do it my way...

**Katherine Ochoa:** ...impossible...

**Francisco Toral:** ...and it really becomes a very very complex job.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Perfect, Francisco, thank you very much. This is going to be a great contribution to my research. I thank you for your time. Thank you very much.

**Francisco Toral:** A pleasure.

**Katherine Ochoa:** Likewise.

## Appendix B

### Information Sheet

| Hoja Informativa: entrevista   |
|--|
| <p>COMUNICACIÓN INTERCULTURAL COMO VENTAJA COMPETITIVA EN EMPRESAS MULTINACIONALES CASO: SAN MIGUEL INDUSTRIAS ECUADOR SANMINDEC S.A (SMI SOLUTIONS)</p>   |
| <p>HOJA DE INFORMACIÓN PARA LOS PARTICIPANTES</p>  |
| <p>El presente proyecto de investigación tiene como propósito analizar la incidencia de la comunicación intercultural en la competitividad organizacional dentro de empresas multinacionales, considerando que estas operan en entornos globalizados caracterizados por la diversidad cultural. En el contexto empresarial actual, la interacción entre colaboradores, directivos y actores externos de distintas nacionalidades y marcos culturales genera dinámicas complejas que influyen en la cultura organizacional, la toma de decisiones, los procesos de liderazgo, la gestión del talento humano y el posicionamiento estratégico de la empresa.</p> |
| <p>Esta investigación busca comprender cómo se gestiona la comunicación intercultural dentro de la organización y de qué manera esta puede convertirse en un recurso estratégico que contribuya al fortalecimiento de la competitividad empresarial.</p>   |
| <p>La investigación se desarrolla bajo un enfoque cualitativo, mediante:</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Entrevistas semiestructuradas a actores clave (directivos, personal estratégico y expertos académicos).</li><li>• Revisión documental y análisis teórico relacionado con cultura organizacional, comunicación intercultural y competitividad.</li><li>• Análisis interpretativo de los testimonios recopilados.</li></ul>  |
| <p>Las entrevistas permitirán:</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identificar prácticas de comunicación intercultural dentro de la organización.</li><li>• Analizar desafíos y oportunidades derivados de la diversidad cultural.</li><li>• Comprender la relación entre cultura organizacional y desempeño competitivo.</li><li>• Explorar si la comunicación intercultural puede constituirse en una ventaja competitiva sostenible</li></ul>  |
| <p><b>Palabras clave</b></p>   |
| <p>Comunicación intercultural, ventaja competitiva, empresas multinacionales, diversidad cultural</p>  |
| <p>Se espera que las entrevistas permitan un diálogo que conduzca a la recopilación de narrativas, experiencias anecdóticas, indagaciones y profundizaciones en el área, que puedan representar una novedad y un aporte para la comunidad académica.</p>   |
| <p>La recopilación de la investigación documental será luego revisada para concluir con la redacción y edición de la tesis:</p>  |

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent

#### "COMUNICACIÓN INTERCULTURAL COMO VENTAJA COMPETITIVA EN EMPRESAS MULTINACIONALES CASO: SAN MIGUEL INDUSTRIAS ECUADOR SANMINDEC S.A (SMI SOLUTIONS)"

A través de este documento, extendemos a usted la invitación a participar en una entrevista que se llevará a cabo el 12 de marzo del 2026 de manera presencial, a las 12:00 pm respectivamente en las aulas de la universidad.

Garantizamos que la información por este medio obtenida será recopilada de manera confidencial. Los datos serán analizados de manera cuidadosa y serán publicados con autorización del entrevistado, quien podrá revisar los datos previos a la publicación de la tesis, para expresar su conformidad con el material a ser publicado. Las personas que participan en la investigación tendrán la oportunidad de conocer los borradores de los productos de la investigación que contengan cualquier conclusión extraída de los datos que han proporcionado. Al conocer estos borradores, tendrán la oportunidad de solicitar modificaciones de sus intervenciones.

En caso de no estar de acuerdo con partes o la totalidad de la entrevista o los datos a publicarse, el entrevistado podrá abstenerse de participar y la parte correspondiente a los datos recogidos y la información serán retirados de la publicación. De igual manera, el entrevistado podrá abstenerse de contestar cualquier pregunta o solicitar el retiro de información en cualquier momento mientras dure esta investigación. Una copia de los datos recogidos y hallazgos, en caso de haberlos, estarán disponibles para revisión del entrevistado bajo su pedido expreso, y luego los resultados finales serán disponibles con la publicación de la investigación.

Cabe indicar que únicamente el equipo designado, es decir la doctoranda y el profesor director de esta investigación que suscriben, tendrán acceso a los datos recopilados.

Se prevé que la duración de la entrevista sea de aproximadamente 40 minutos.

En cuanto a los dispositivos que se utilizarán para la realización de la entrevista, se utilizará el dispositivo de grabación de Zoom y un dispositivo de registro adicional a través de teléfono celular a fin de garantizar la transcripción fidedigna de los datos. Además, se tomará nota de aspectos fundamentales de la entrevista.

El entrevistado podrá pedir que se apaguen los dispositivos de grabación en cualquier momento durante la entrevista, si así lo creyera conveniente.

Los datos recopilados serán analizados posteriormente mediante su transcripción. Los datos recopilados serán examinados y se procederá a seleccionar la información pertinente para incluirla en la investigación a publicarse.

Katherine Marcela Ochoa Maldonado

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#### Hoja de Consentimiento Informado

Nosotros, Katherine Marcela Ochoa Maldonado y Mg. Mónica Martínez Sojos, queremos asegurarnos de que las personas entrevistadas como parte del trabajo de titulación **"COMUNICACIÓN**

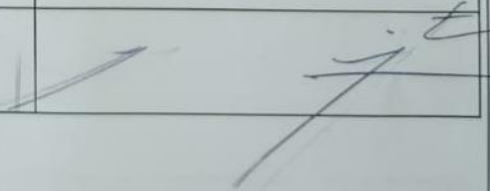
## Appendix D

Transcribed interviews, videos, audios, and informed consent documents

**INTERCULTURAL COMO VENTAJA COMPETITIVA EN EMPRESAS MULTINACIONALES CASO: SAN MIGUEL INDUSTRIAS ECUADOR SANMINDEC S.A (SMI SOLUTIONS)"**

están completamente informadas acerca de implicaciones de participar. Por favor, marque las casillas a continuación si cree que tiene toda la información relevante. Si no, háganoslo saber.

- He leído y comprendido la hoja de información del proyecto.
- Se me ha dado la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto.
- Estoy de acuerdo en participar en una entrevista.
- Entiendo que la entrevista tomará aproximadamente 45 minutos, pero podría extenderse o acortarse dependiendo de mi disponibilidad.
- Estoy participando voluntariamente.
- Entiendo que puedo negarme a responder cualquier pregunta, por cualquier motivo.
- Entiendo que puedo retirarme de la entrevista en cualquier momento, por cualquier motivo.
- Acepto que se grabe el audio de mi entrevista.
- Acepto que el investigador tome notas durante la entrevista.
- Entiendo que mis palabras pueden ser citadas en documentos académicos, informes de investigación y otros resultados de investigación.
- Entiendo que, aunque no se publicarán nombres reales en los resultados de investigación, dado que el tamaño de la muestra de judiciales entrevistados es modesto, existe una posibilidad mínima de que alguien pueda identificarme. Los investigadores tomarán medidas de anonimización para reducir esta posibilidad.
- Entiendo que la información proporcionada será utilizada exclusivamente para fines académicos.
- Entiendo que puedo solicitar retirarme del proyecto dentro de 15 días hábiles a partir de esta fecha, comunicándome con el equipo de investigación cuyos datos de contacto están en la hoja informativa. En tal caso mi información será retirada y destruida.

| Nombre del participante         | Firma  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Gerente General Francisco Toñal |  |

Fecha: 12 del marzo del 2026