

# THE INTERRELATED EFFECTS OF CULTURE AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN PORTUGUESE EXPORTERS AND ANGOLAN DISTRIBUTORS

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## Abstract

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*The objective of this research is to investigate the role of the relationship quality and culture between Portuguese companies and their export market intermediaries in Angola. In particular, we aim to understand the importance that the quality of the relationship has and the role of cultures in export activities.*

*In terms of methodology we opted for a qualitative analysis; we present the results of two case studies of Portuguese exporting companies and one case study on an Angolan intermediate.*

*In general, the results show that the business relationships are influenced by trust, commitment, culture and similar values. As known, Angola was once a Portuguese colony, so communication is easy because these countries share some common cultural traits. Such factors will influence the trade relations between Portuguese exporters and their Angolan distributors.*

**Keywords:** Angola, Portugal, exporter, distributor, relationship marketing, culture

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, companies are not confined to the domestic market but they seek new markets to ensure their survival. Using a relationship marketing approach, we will analyze the relations between the Portuguese export companies and their intermediaries in the Angolan market. The choice of the An-

golan market is due to the fact that it is an expanding market, and also one of the most promising countries in the African continent. The trade balance in terms of Portuguese exports to Angola, from January to May 2011, is about € 787,923 thousand, according to data provided by the Portuguese National Institute of Statistics (INE).

In addition, Angola currently is a major destination for the Portuguese exports outside the EU,

being the fifth in the ranking of destination countries, accounting for an output of 4.55%, according to data provided by INE.

The objective of this research is to investigate the role of the relationship quality and culture between Portuguese companies and their export market intermediaries in Angola. In particular, we aim to understand the importance that the quality of these external relationships has and the role of cultures in export activities, within this context.

An important aspect of this study is precisely the fact that it includes an African country, in which, in terms of the marketing literature, there is a strong lack of studies. Our aim is to disclose the interrelated effects of culture and relationship quality on the business relationships between exporting companies from a colonizer country and importing companies from a former colonized country.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

A growing liberalization, integration and competition in world economies since the post-war period has been responsible for the increasing engagement of companies in exporting activities (Douglas & Craig, 1995), because foreign trade plays a vital role in the world economic affairs and its importance is expected to grow further as markets become more globalized.

Export development has been highly regarded by both public and corporate policy-makers. From a macroeconomic perspective, exporting enables national economies to enrich their foreign exchange reserves, provide employment, create backward and forward linkages, and, ultimately, lead to a higher standard of living (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 1992). In microeconomic terms, exporting gives individual companies a competitive advantage, improve their financial position, increase capacity utilization, and raise technological standards (Terpstra & Sarathy, 1994).

The interest in the impact of buyer-seller relationships in business markets has increased over the past decades. This interest reflects the importance of distribution in the value chain and the relevance of social networks and personal relationships of the

employees involved for many conductive exchange transactions (Dwyer & Oh, 1987).

In the same way, Achrol (1991: 78-89) forecasts the rise of ‘true marketing companies’ within networks of functionally specialized organizations whose interrelationships are “held together and coordinated by market driven focal organizations” by means of “norms of sharing and commitment based on trust”.

### **2.1 Relationship Marketing**

According to Dwyer et al. (1987); Palmatier et al. (2007); Sheth & Parvatiyar (1995) as cited in Gupta and Sahu (2012), the evolution of relationship marketing has been one of the most significant developments in marketing over decades, particularly regarding to industrial marketing.

A relationship describes “the pattern of interactions and the mutual conditioning of behaviours over time, between a company and a customer, a supplier or another organisation” (Ford, Gadde, Hakansson & Snehota, 2003: 38). The quality of a relationship may be seen as a superior order construct, comprising satisfaction, commitment, trust and conflict (Van Bruggen et al., 2005).

Relationship marketing refers to all business activities directed towards establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), bringing stability and decreased uncertainty to business, acting as a barrier to potential entrants and maintaining a stable and solid base (Alexander & Colgate (2000) as cited in Gupta & Sahu, 2012).

According to Grönroos (1994), relationship marketing aims to establish, maintain and improve relationships with customers and other partners as well as the maintenance and growth of corporate profit, so that all objectives of all parties are satisfied. That is, there is a mutual exchange and fulfilment of reciprocal promises.

Chien and Moutinho (2000) argue that the level of involvement in relationships and information exchange are instrumental to the development and maintenance of marketing relationships and for buying behaviour and legitimacy.

In the case of bilateral relationships, the actors in exchange episodes are often committed to continuing relationships which involve neither a unified hierarchy nor necessarily comprehensive and detailed contractual obligations (Heide & Stump, 1994). This type of business relationship is driven by shared behavioural norms which allow for the adoption of common business behaviour, wherein opportunistic motives are constrained because of the long term benefits of conforming to system norms and other social pressures (Dwyer & Oh, 1987). Marketing represents how important it is to develop and nurture relationships, especially in the international arena.

According to Morgan and Hunt (1994) the expectation of reducing overall costs is a reason to build a committed relationship. The partners, in turn, should prevent opportunistic behaviour that would be detrimental to one of the parties.

The theory of Morgan and Hunt (1994) is assumed to be relevant in explaining the relationship between exporters and local intermediaries based on the concepts of trust and commitment, which are central to the development of business activities based on the establishment, development and maintenance of successful relational exchanges. Thus, it can be concluded that whenever they are successful, relational exchanges contribute to cooperation between the parties involved.

Gupta and Sahu (2012: 63) state that an "effective relationship marketing programme provides better results in terms of increased customer base, sales and profitability". They underline that commitment, trust, cooperation etc., are very important for inclusion in any company's marketing program.

## **2.2 Trust**

Within relationship marketing, trust has been recognized as an important concept (Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2012). Morgan and Hunt (1994) conceptualize trust as existing when one party has confidence in the reliability and integrity of the other exchange partner.

For Nicholson and Sethi (2001), trust is the security in the reliability and integrity of the other party.

According to Abosag and Lewis (2006), trust is based on emotion. These authors consider that

trust that one party puts in the other party is based on feelings and emotions generated by love, empathy, politeness, similarity and concern for the other part, which is demonstrated in their interaction.

In Marshall's (2003) view, as cited in Blau (1994), trust is the belief that another person will fulfil its obligations and generally do what he can. To Hakansson (1982), trust increase is a social process that takes time and must be based on personal experience.

According to Boersma, Buckley and Ghauri (2003), trust is on the expectation that one of the parties will be reliable in the fulfilment of the agreements, will play its role in a competent manner and will act honourably even when promises or guarantees of performance have been given. Relational trust is the perceived ability and willingness of the other party to act in order to consider the interest of parties in the relationship (Selnes & Sallies, 2003). According to Abosag et al. (2006), trust emerges from the foresight of a part on his partner as for meeting future actions/behaviours to fulfil the promises (Zaheer et al., 1998), forecasts being based on an accumulated knowledge gained through interaction of the parties (Harris & Dibben, 1999) or based on the reputation of the partner or on other relationships (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). When the trust level is high, the expectations can be predicted with confidence as all parties feel secure in their interaction. But when trust is low, expectations will be clouded by uncertainties.

Blois (2003) as cited in Baier (1986), states that trust is the acceptance of vulnerability to possible but not expected bad faith (or lack of good faith). To Marshall (2003), as cited in Carnevale and Carrington (1982), trust is a concomitant expectation that the other (in a dyad) will reciprocate.

Next we present some testimonies that corroborate that trust is crucial in business relationships.

Berry and Parasuraman (1991: 144) argue that the "company-client relationship requires trust in marketing services, since the customer generally buys first and then experiences."

Considering the level of individualism of a country (Hofstede, 1980; Abosag et al., 2006) state that this perspective is crucial because people from an

individualistic culture give more room for professional interaction and give little room for personal interaction.

A common feature to several definitions is that trust involves a part that depends on the other part to fulfil its obligations. Trust was conceptualized in several ways. Some studies have conceptualized it as a one-dimensional concept (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Jap, 1999; Gabarino & Johnson, 1999) while others conceive trust as a two-dimensional construct (Geyskens et al., 1996; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Joshi & Stump, 1999; Nicholson et al., 2001). Still others propose a multidimensional approach to the study of trust (Rodriguez & Wilson, 1995; Brahear et al., 2003; Miyamoto & Rexha, 2004; Johnson & Grayson, 2005).

According to Obadia (2008), an international organization, wherein the legal differences between countries make it difficult to enforce contracts (Zhang et al., 2003), the existence of trust is even more important, because one partner needs to trust the promises made by the other partner (MacNeil, 1980). In this sense, trust is central to all relational exchanges overseas. In short, trust exists when a partner has faith, hopes and believes he can deliver (something) to someone without fear of loss or damage, that is, to indulge in full security.

### **2.3 Commitment**

According to Berghäll (2003), the concept of commitment, in business relationships, regards a phenomenon in which one side of the social interaction limits its behavioural alternatives, due to the presence of a long-term orientation.

To Morgan and Hunt (1994), committed relationships exist only when there is an enduring desire to maintain a relationship considered as important.

The level of commitment a partner feels towards a relationship is of major importance in relationship development and subsequent success (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Wilson, 1995).

To Abosag et al. (2006), commitment is like an asset, a good and/or an intention to continue to maintain a relationship in the future. A committed relationship is known as an enduring desire to maintain

a relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987; Geyskens et al., 1996; Mooman et al., 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Commitment is often seen as an ongoing "investment" into activities which are expected to maintain the relationship (Blois, 1998). Commitment has also been found to be reciprocal in nature, and that successful relationships rely on commitment from both parties (O'Malley, Patterson & Evans, 1997). According to Selnes and Sallis (2003), a commitment to collaboration is defined as the joint belief that the relationship is important enough to ensure joint efforts to maintain and strengthen the relationship. To Abosag et al. (2006), a committed relationship is increasingly important; as suggested by Gundlach et al. (1995: 78), commitment "may very well become a focal point of explanation in marketing" and can be seen as an intention to continue the course of an action or activity or desire to maintain a relationship (Conway & Swift, 2000). Berry and Parasuraman (1991: 139), argue that "relationships are built on a mutual commitment." According to Kim and Oh (2002), commitment is the extent to which a company is dedicated to a close and lasting relationship with the channel partner.

As mentioned by Abosag et al. (2006), a transaction specific investment highlights the commitment at the exploration phase and has a positive effect during the decline phase of relationships. According to these authors, the parties recognize the need to maintain their relationship, due to the high costs associated with termination or the continuous, safe access to important benefits. Since relationships require investments, the parties recognize the need to maintain their relationship, since the costs associated with termination of these and looking for new partners are very high. According to Abosag et al. (2006), the parties' ability to exercise greater social interaction reduces uncertainty (Achrol & Stern, 1988) acts as a barrier against opportunism of the partner, improves the quality of the relationship, helps to build satisfaction in the relationship (Selnes, 1998), increases the attractiveness of the relationship (Harris et al., 2003), and leads to better cooperation.

Besides the analysis of the instrumental dimension (financial commitment) it is also relevant to study the affective commitment. As it is reported by

Gundlanch et al. (1995), the behavioural aspect of the affective commitment is critical in terms of developing trust, reciprocity, integrity and solidarity, which are required to maintain long-term relationships. Meyer and Allen (1991) argue that the level of emotional commitment in a relationship does not affect the degree of calculation commitment and vice versa, which may be controversial. The key factor in the early development of affective commitment, according to Abosag et al. (2006), is the social bond/emotion. A social bond leads to the creation of the emotional dimension and the cognitive dimension of commitment, which are important antecedents of affective commitment (Sanchez & Iniesta, 2004).

Personal relationships may however have a negative impact on trade relations in some situations. Alajoutsijarvi et al. (2000) report the damaging impacts of personal conflicts in trade relations. They point out that the costs of the emotions at the end of relationships can be high when the level of affective commitment is high (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Trust and commitment are key elements for relationship marketing strategy success (Siguaw & Baker, 1998). Moreover, Tellefsen and Thomas (2005) argue that the link between personal trust and personal commitment has not been fully examined or tested in the literature.

## **2.4 Culture**

Culture is an element of paramount importance when a company decides to internationalize. There isn't much agreement on how culture should be defined. The choice of a theoretical and conceptual frame means the choice of different objects, methods and research instruments and perspectives. Next we present several views for this concept.

Parsons (1951, 1954, 1960, 1964) considers the culture of human societies as a coherent whole, harmonious and functional in relation to the imperatives of the social system and he believes that the social order will eventually be formed whenever the symbolic values are formulated in a coherent and harmonious manner and internalized by social actors.

Hall (1973, 1977, 1990) identifies three behavioural criteria which are significant in terms of the

impact on the approaches to work and to professional relationships. The first criterion encompasses "polychromic (p-time) cultures" (meaning that a number of actions are fulfilled at the same time or in the same period) and "monochromic (m-time) cultures" (refers essentially to the performance of an activity at a time) The second criterion is about the "reference to the context" (organization of information), meaning that the content of messages may be implied (high context cultures) or explicit (low context countries). According to this author, Portugal and Africa fit into the "high context" category. The third criterion is "territoriality", which may, high or low, express the degree of concern people have with the property and with the territory.

National culture is like a collective mental program of the human mind or a system of patterns and meanings about the way of thinking, feeling and acting on common problems that characterizes and distinguishes one group or category of people from another group or category (Hofstede, 1980, 1991).

Hofstede, Trompenaars and other authors use an onion diagram, wherein culture is depicted as consisting of several layers, in which centre, in the main and deeper level, are the values, while the external layers are more visible, namely the level of symbols, heroes and rituals.

In Hofstede's research, Portugal exhibits the following scores: average/high power distance (63), low individualism (27), low masculinity (31), very strong need to control uncertainty (104) and short-term orientation (30). Angola exhibits the following scores: Power distance (80), low individualism (25), masculinity (45) and need for control of uncertainty (85). The long-term orientation score is not available for Angola.

Skarmeas et al. (2001) suggest that the constructs reflecting cultural differences should be included in studies about the relations between exporters and importers. Conway and Swift (2000) reported that, when there is a high level of psychic distance, the establishment and/or development of business relationships can be damaged. Swift (1999) mentions studies that address the impact of culture on the interaction process between buyers and sellers. Kale and Barnes (1992) suggest that international interactions should be affected by aspects of the na-

tional culture. Shankarmahesh et al. (2003) conclude that a strong organizational culture, characterized by low level of individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity, favour the maintenance of international relations. Mehta et al. (2003) add that it is necessary to include aspects of cultures when the research deals with feelings and behaviours of actors belonging to different countries, since underlying the culture of each country are "systematic differences in behaviour" (Steenkamp, 2001). Companies with international operations need to evaluate the possible impact of cultural differences on the partners' reaction to the marketing strategies. Rodriguez and Wilson (2002) argue that, on one hand, cultural distance contributes to the emergence of communication problems, distrust and distant interpersonal relationships, and, on the other hand, an intercultural adjustment is required for the development of commitment in the relationship.

### **3. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The objective of this research is to investigate the role of the relationship quality and culture, between Portuguese companies and their export market intermediaries in Angola, in the way these relationships develop over time. This objective can be deployed into two research questions:

**RQ1)** How do the differences and the similarities between Portuguese and Angolan cultures and the values influence the quality of the relationship in trade relations between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributor(s)?

**RQ2)** How does trust and commitment influence business relationships between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributor(s)?

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that one of the advantages of using a qualitative methodology is that the analysis may focus around phenomena in their natural environment, and therefore the data collection occurs close to the situation under consideration.

According to Yin (1994) the case study methodology is more suitable when the research questions involve the "how" and "why", as it happens in this research, allowing to greater contact with the players involved, resulting in a more detailed and thorough analysis, which allows us to highlight details that might otherwise go unnoticed.

This methodology has been applied to the field of international strategic management, since one has access to information from those involved in decision making, which results in being able to better analyze, and in more depth, one's options (Rialp, 1998).

According to Morse and Richards (2002), in areas where the skills are not well cemented or where existing theories seem inadequate, it is appropriate to opt for this type of analysis.

According to Huberman (1994), the selection of the cases should be guided by theory, in order to establish a reference from which one can meet the objectives of the investigation, not to mention the limitations of time and resources. To Dubois and Gadde (2002) more interesting than the similarities to be found among the cases, are the differences and their possible explanations. In this sense, it will be interesting to study contrasting cases.

In summary, cases should be relevant (George & Bennett, 2005) and with a potential for learning (Dubois & Gadde, 2002), in order to be able to build a more complete and noticeable mosaic. The criteria for the selection of the case studies were: To be successful Portuguese export companies to the Angolan market have to export to the Angolan market through a locally based distributor.

#### **4.1 Population and sampling**

The sampling process is not random and is based on the list of the top 50 Portuguese exporters and their respective Angolan counterparts. Companies were not selected randomly, nor intended to be a representative sample of any manufacturing business.

The Agency for Investment and External Commerce of Portugal (AICEP, EPE), made available, in August 2011, the most recent list of the fifty largest Portuguese companies exporting to Angola.

The sample was selected according to the criteria of external validity/reliability. We opted for companies belonging to different sectors of the market, in order to get as much information about manufacturer-distributor relations in different businesses, therefore increasing this study validity.

The sample was made up by two case studies of Portuguese export companies (Galp Energia and Unicer Bebidas, S.A.) and one case study of an Angolan distributor (Mota & Tavares Lda.).

Unicer Bebidas, SA. **[Unicer]** actually is the Portuguese company, in all the sectors of activity that exports more to Angola. Mota & Tavares Lda. **[M&T]** was founded 50 years ago and it imports from Portugal since 1970. Galp Energia **[GE]** founded in 1976, belongs to the oil and power sector, is present in Angola since 1982.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The **first research question** investigates how the differences and the similarities between Portuguese and Angolan cultures and the values influence the quality of the relationship in trade relations between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributor(s)

The following interviewees' statements, and the respective theoretical explanations, will help us to understand the influence of culture and values in this context

Both Portuguese and Angolans speak the same language, which may represent "a trade facilitator" (Ghemawat, 2001).

*"The **Lusophone component** of Galp Energia operates as a further **facilitating factor** of the relation of cultural affinity between the parties," [GE]*

*"...the same language, other easiness." [M&T]*

Although the Portuguese and the Angolans share the same language, the way to communicate must be adapted to the local culture.

*"Unicer made a huge effort to communicate locally either by **the use of local expressions** in language, or through the **"Angolanisation"** of events. [Unicer]*

There are many common habits and customs:

*"Portuguese companies at this time, some Angolans have **bought from Portuguese companies for a simple reason: habits and customs**, there were 500 years. And Portugal and Angola created a family of 500 years that is almost difficult to separate." [M&T]*

*... "The culture is the same, because the Portuguese have a culture of long years of qualities and customs of Angola, the food, habits of dressing, are equal. But **the culture is the same**, no differences. Habits, customs of the Angolan and Portuguese are the same." [M&T]*

Other important cultural traits are the notion of time (Hall, 1977) social hierarchies and national pride and nationalism.

*"The African concept of time is completely different from the European one. There is a **bias for the short term**. The African reality is more oriented living day after day and the moment without a long-term referential. This fact often leads to misunderstandings as for a benchmark for the **assessment of investments**".*

Angola may be considered a p-time country (Hall, 1977) since "there is an established tolerance for delays and non-fulfilments." [Unicer]

As for distinct social hierarchies, "it still prevails **the importance of age and position** in the family as a benchmark of social relations. For example, the **importance of the elder** in decision making and in social relations."

Angola is a low individualism country, and status oriented and so, the "**recognition by the group** is determining of the individuals' attitudes". [Unicer]

National pride and nationalism are quite obvious in the following statement: "There is an extreme **sense of belonging to the Angolan nationality and patriotism**; therefore, the business behaviours must take into consideration this sense of belonging. It is easy to adopt **behaviours that offend the notion of "Angolanity"** which can have severe negative repercussions on business and on brands. It's easy to be **perceived as neo-colonial**." [Unicer]

These statements show the importance of cultural empathy. As maintained by LaBahn and Harich

(1997), cultural sensitivity is needed to succeed in international markets, since importers may be susceptible to behaviours they deem inappropriate. Sensitivity to time conception differences, to a stressed sense of nationalism and to social hierarchies is of paramount importance in doing business in Angola.

An expression of nationalism is the landlord behaviour, which is very deeply rooted in the Angolans' beliefs and business practices, maybe due to the several centuries of colonization:

*"The Angolan deems to be the owner of his country and therefore he thinks he can take possession of some income from foreign business operating in his country. This leads, for example, to the requirement of quotas and shares in companies without capital inflows".* |Unicer|

The influence of values like honesty, credibility and transparency on trade relations success, between Portuguese and Angolan companies, is quite clear from the following statements:

*"One of the main bases is honesty..." "...because of this aspect Angola prefers to work with the Portuguese than with any other, this is known. ... "Most of moral values are honesty from both parties ... don't sell to the customer a pig in a poke. This is the main base in moral values."* |M&T|

*A business with a Portuguese is always faster. And if there is understanding and honesty from both parties it is always much, much faster than with any other foreign business."* |M&T|

Being transparent in trade relations, in this context, is also important to succeed:

*Will to share market knowledge and a philosophy of information share about the market, customers and business conditions in order to enable maximum efficiency of the joint operation and maximizing value.* |Unicer|

Understanding the importance of local values, like masculinity and status recognition, and social practices, like rumour spreading, and being able to convert them into strategies may represent the difference between product success or failure.

*"Crucial to the success of the product has also been the creation of myths about the brand. The*

*Super Bock became known in the Angolan market as the GTI, beer with power to the riot troop. That is, through "rappers" and expressions of contemporary Angolan popular music a myth was created that responds to the desires of masculinity in society and that corresponds to the diffusion of the belief that Super Bock is a strong beer only for those who have power, those who are manly... Displays of virility are a form of trust building or of coming together with partners. This is an example of how the knowledge of cultural realities can be used for the communication strategy for a product/brand. This however requires the knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of local consumers and of the culture that shapes their behaviours."* |Unicer|

*"The rumour spreads very fast and can be used as a weapon of guerrillas to positively influence the performance of the company's products, as well as, if not controlled, it can cause irreparable damage to a business relationship with a distributor."* |Unicer|

Understanding local business ethics idiosyncrasies and being able to cope with them is of paramount importance.

*"Most relationships, in Angola, are defined outside the current legal context. There is a prevalence of personal relationships and plots. They set up creative ways to make money that sustain an entire subsistence economy. Without knowledge of the rules in force in the informal sector, on which substantial part of the distribution networks of consumer products is based, you cannot successfully do business in Angola."* |Unicer|

Summing up, the common language, the habits, customs and social practices, the notion of time, the social hierarchies, the national pride and its expression, the existence of cultural empathy, the people's values, the masculinity expression and the business ethics, strongly influence the trade relations between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributors.

The **second research question** investigates how trust and commitment influence the relationships between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributors. The following interviewees' statements help us to understand how to build trust and commitment, and their influence on business relationships, within this context.

“... **trust must exist** between both parties. The activity of Galp Energia in the Angolan market has demonstrated the existence of this perennial feature, and **both parties have fulfilled their commitments.**” |GE|

“Exactly. This is **the main base**, there has to be **trust and commitment.**” |M&T|

“I have been working with Portugal **for many years**, I have good relationships, and they all are **my friends.**”... “He is a friend of mine and when I come to Portugal, I have all cars, I have to go to the factories, so I can only say good things about Portugal. **In every corner I have a friend, friend.**” |M&T|

“Most important, from both parties, not just one. If both parties have this behaviour, **the deal will go far and builds friendships.**” |M&T|

“... the relationships with our partners are based on **mutual trust** which has proved to be robust **over the years.**” |GE|

The trust dimension “benevolence” aims to assess whether the customer sees the exporter as a friend and believes that he is on his side (Siguaw et al., 1998). These statements show the importance attached to affective trust and its role in building relationships that last “for many years” |M&T| and “robust over the years” |GE|. The commitment dimensions portrayed here are the continuity commitment and the affective commitment. From the statements, one may confirm that trust is a precondition for increased commitment (Mietilla & Moller, 1990) and, like commitment, it is often stated as a vital factor in successful relationships, mutual trust being a main factor in long-term relationships (Takala & Uusitalo, 1996).

Opportunistic behaviours can damage trust. Li and Ng (2002) state that there may be opportunistic behaviours in export channels, when the cultural gap and psychic distance hinder communication. This may explain why the Angolan importer M&T trusts more the Portuguese exporters:

“**Pig in a poke.** And in Portugal, throughout this time **I have no problem.** I do not mean that there are no individuals, but I have no problem.” |M&T|

“It helps a lot, **because the culture is the same**, the habits are the same and there is an understand-

ing and **doing business is fast** because that is what sometimes, when you are going to do business for example **with a Chinese guy**, with an individual of another country **that has not the same language, it is not the same culture**, the same customs and habits, it is always **more difficult, more time consuming.**” |M&T|

Confirming the interviewee’s statement, Harris and Ghauri (2000) note that sharing the same language, beliefs and understandings is required for high quality interactions and trust development to occur.

The level of trust in a relationship has been assessed by evaluating in what extent: One partner is on the other’s side (Siguaw et al., 1998), a partner is concerned with the other partner’s business (Johnson et al., 1996) and one partner can count on the other when circumstances change or in an emergency situation (Sanzo et al., 2003). All these trust items are recognizable in the following M&T’s statement:

“...he phoned me to say **he was troubled with the payment** of things, it was not much, \$30 000 or \$45 000 and **if I could help out.** I sent, I transferred that money and I told him not to send the goods, to keep them until we see how it goes in the next 15 days; a week later there was a withdrawal then the goods were settled **within the price they could sell.** Therefore **it was this help that I gave** because otherwise he said he would have been obliged to shut down the factory.” |M&T|

The following statements show the importance of the dimension “competence” (Walter et al., 2003) in building trust:

“You have to develop a climate of **mutual trust**, so that Unicer has **confidence in the ability of the entity distributor to meet its commitments** and to respect the values of the brand, not causing any damage to its image and possessing **the ability to distribute products with success.**” |Unicer|

“...distributors **must demonstrate their ability** by repeatedly placing orders.” |Unicer|

Reputation is also a process of building calculation trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997), that is, a company may be trusted “because they are who they are” (Conway & Swift, 2000). Elg (2002) argues that

trust may be based on the general reputation of the company

(To build reputation) *“the distributor and/or its members **must have to demonstrate an enduring presence in the market and to be able to attest by his reputation the medium/long-term commitment to the market.**”* |Unicer|

The demonstration of commitment in relationships should be a priority, in order to build partners' trust (Buttle, 1996) since commitment serves to discriminate between those "who stay" and those "who leave" (Mummalaneni, 1987, as cited in Wilson, 1995).

*“I was in debt in the market square here in Porto, \$ 7 million, it was a supply to the (Angolan) state and the state did not pay me, then tomorrow, we will pay tomorrow. And then they decided to pay **and I paid** by two or three instalments, here in Porto, **I had no problems ...”*** |M&T|

*“(In) Portugal, if one pays in advance, they fulfil (the contract). It is very difficult (for them) to miss their commitments. I appreciate that, in all the imports.”* |M&T|

The fulfilment of one's obligations can build trust. This is quite obvious from these statements. Cognition based trust may result from the perception of performance behaviours and achievements of the partner, such as the fulfilment of the responsibilities of a part towards the other (Chen et al., 1998). Trust may be conceived as a belief in the reliability of the partner and the fulfilment of its obligations (Schurr & Ozane, 1985).

*Over the years I have credit, a friendship with all the companies, all give me credit. We have a great friendship, over 30 or 40 years.”* |M&T|

Parkhe (1998) identified three common issues in trust definitions: trust is related to uncertainty about the future, trust entails vulnerability and it is granted to someone whose behaviour is not under one's control. This being said, credit granting means that you trust the other party, since you don't know for sure that you'll receive the money.

Granting distribution exclusivity creates the conditions to build calculation commitment (Gilliland & Bello, 2002) as it becomes apparent from the following statements:

*“Firstly, **commitment to the UNICER brand and products and desire to work in exclusive with company's brands...**”.* |Unicer|

**Summing up**, the statements above reveal the great importance of building trust and commitment in the relationships with the Angolan importers. Friendship is valued and it leads to long lasting relationships, i.e., benevolence trust builds continuity commitment and affective commitment.

Between Portugal and Angola the psychic distance is low, which may explain why mutual trust is higher comparatively to other markets, for both countries, allowing for faster and easier business negotiations and giving rise to less frequent opportunistic behaviours.

If a partner shows he is concerned with the other partner's business and is helpful when an emergency occurs, this may be a path to trust building and a catalyst to sound relationships.

While the regular fulfilment of obligations, the exhibition of ability and credit granting are trust builders, granting distribution exclusivity may be a way to build calculation commitment.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The general objective of this paper is to investigate the role of relationship quality and culture between the Portuguese export companies and their intermediaries in the Angolan market.

A common cultural issue is the language. It became apparent that language facilitates the relationship, although the knowledge and the use of Angolan expressions may be necessary. Common habits and customs, acquired by the Angolans through centuries of Portuguese colonization, may influence the Angolans' choice of Portuguese suppliers over suppliers from other countries. Even though, a certain “Angolanisation” may be required.

The African concept of time is completely different from the European one. There is a bias for the short term which may hamper business objectives setting, the assessment of investments, definition of strategies, etc.

Angola is a new born independent country which may partially explain the existence of a very strong sense of belonging to the Angolan nationality and patriotism. Thus, it is very important to avoid behaviours that offend the notion of "Angolanity". An expression of this is the landlord behaviour, the Angolans claiming they can take possession of some income from foreign business operating locally, somehow reducing the attractiveness of the market.

Other cultural traits are the respect for elder people, the importance attached to social position and to recognition by the group. The knowledge of these realities may help in having a proper social behaviour, in carrying out business negotiations and in choosing the right advertising messages and opinion makers.

Values like honesty, credibility and transparency on trade relations are valued and are of paramount importance in doing business with local partners besides hastening business. Portuguese business partners are generally viewed by the Angolan importers as honest and credible. Other values, like masculinity, may be used in advertising campaigns to successfully position brands. Fast rumour spreading is a local reality that, if properly used, may benefit companies.

Understanding business ethics idiosyncrasies, like creative ways to make money, and being able to cope with them, may represent the business success or failure

Another objective of this paper was to understand why trust and commitment influence the relationships between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributors. From the interviewees' statements, one may confirm that trust and commitment are the main bases to build and develop relationships within this context and the former is a precondition for the later. It is also clear that affective trust has an important role within this process.

The cultural gap between Portugal and Angola is small, which may prevent opportunistic behaviours and reinforce the level of trust in business relationships between these countries.

Several trust builders were identified, such as being concerned with the partner's business, assistance when an emergency situation occur, perceiv-

ing the other partner as a friend, knowing that the other party is on one's side, credit grant and exclusive distribution grant.

The dimensions "competence", "reputation", "fulfilment of the obligations" and "reliability" are also evident.

In general, the results show that trust, commitment, culture and similar values affect the way how relationships are managed and its outcomes. It is also evident that the knowledge of some market idiosyncrasies is indispensable to succeed in the Angolan market.

The implications of this study for management are very important since managers can realize how they can do business in Angola. However the study's results should be interpreted with caution. Given its qualitative nature, there are limits to their generalization. Future investigation can replicate this study in other colonizer/colonized pair of countries in order to assess if the results hold.

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## ANNEXS

Table 1: Summary of the data collection in relation to the research question (RQ 1) – Exporting Companies

	RQ 1) How do the differences and the similarities between Portuguese and Angolan cultures, and the values, influence the quality of the relationship in trade relations between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributor(s)?
<b>Petróleos de Portugal - Petrogal, SA-Galp Energia, SGPS, SA</b>	<i>"The Lusophone component of Galp Energia operates more as a facilitator of the relationship of cultural affinity between the parties ..."</i>  GE
<b>Unicer - União Cervejeira, SA</b>	<p><i>"Crucial to the success of the product has also been the creation of myths about the brand. The Super Bock brand became known in Angola as the GTI, beer with power to riot. That is through "rappers" and expressions of contemporary Angolan popular music created a myth that responds to the desires of masculinity in society and which corresponds to the diffusion of the belief that Super Bock is a strong beer, only for those who have power, those who are manly, hence Super Bock to riot ... Views of virility are a way of building trust or of approaching partners. This is an example of how knowledge of cultural realities, at the consumer level, can be used in the strategy communication of a product / brand. This however requires the knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of local consumers and culture that shapes their behaviour."</i>  Unicer </p> <p><i>"Most relationships in Angola are defined outside of the legal framework in force. There is a prevalence of personal relationships and plots. They devised creative ways to make money that sustain an entire subsistence economy. Without the knowledge of the rules in force in the informal sector, where a substantial part of the distribution networks for consumer products is based, you cannot succeed in business in Angola."</i>  Unicer </p>

Source: Self elaboration

Table 2: Summary of the data collection in relation to the research question (RQ 1) - distributor (s) Angolan (s)

RQ 1) How do the differences and the similarities between Portuguese and Angolan cultures, and the values, influence the quality of the relationship in trade relations between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributor(s)?	
<b>Mota &amp; Tavares Lda.</b>	<p>... "The culture is the same, because the Portuguese have a culture of many (long) years of qualities and customs of Angola, the food, dressing habits, are the same. Now, what happens is that sometimes both on one side as on the other, are not properly prepared to make things easier, and then things go wrong. But the culture is the same, no difference. Habits, customs of the Angolan and Portuguese are the same and you cannot change them."  M &amp; T </p> <p>"One of the main bases is honesty ... " ... "Because of this, Angola prefers to work with the Portuguese than any other, this is known ...." Most moral values are honesty of both parties. Knowing that I'm going to deliver a product and the customer will be satisfied with the product, he will not be ill-served: This is the main base, not to sell the customer a pig in a poke. This is the main basis of moral values."  M &amp; T </p>

Source: Self elaboration

Table 3: Summary of the data collection in relation to the research question (RQ 2) - Exporting Companies

RQ 2) How do trust and commitment influence business relationships between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributor(s)?	
<b>Petróleos de Portugal - Petrogal, SA-Galp Energia, SGPS, SA</b>	<p>"... There must be trust between both parties. The activity of Galp Energia in the Angolan market has demonstrated the existence of perennial feature and both parties have fulfilled their commitments."  GE </p> <p>"... Relationships with our partners are based on mutual trust, which has proven to be robust relationships over the years."  GE </p>
<b>Unicer - União Cervejeira, SA</b>	<p>(To build a reputation) "the distributor and / or its members have to demonstrate a lasting presence in the market and be able to vouch for their reputation commitment to medium / long term with the market."  Unicer </p> <p>"Firstly, the commitment to the brand and UNICER products and the desire to work exclusively with the company's brands ... reflection of the desire to develop the distributor's brands UNICER."  Unicer </p> <p>"You have to develop a climate of mutual trust, so that Unicer has confidence in the ability of the distributing entity to honour their commitments and respect the values of the brand, not causing any damage to its image and who possess the ability to distribute products successfully."  Unicer </p>

Source: Self elaboration

Table 4: Summary of the data collection in relation to the research question (RQ 2) - Angolan distributor (s)

RQ 2) How do trust and commitment influence business relationships between the Portuguese exporting companies and their Angolan distributor(s)?	
<b>Mota &amp; Tavares Lda.</b>	<p>"This is the main base, there has to be trust and commitment."  M &amp; T </p> <p>"The most important, of both parties, and not just one. If both parties have this behaviour, the business is successful and builds friendships."  M &amp; T </p>

Source: Self elaboration