Um estudo da relevância da cultura *Guanxi* para empresas latino-americanas que fazem negócios com a China

A study on the relevance of *Guanxi* culture for Latin American companies doing business with China

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Abstract

The commercial exchange promoted by companies and/or by nations is based on tangible, but also on important intangible components that do not necessarily fit into the dynamics of economic-financial efficiency models or other measurable elements. This is particularly so in the case of China, where its traditional business culture is a predominant factor. There are many Chinese cultural traits that are expressed and interfere with commercial exchange and negotiations, but *guanxi*, the Chinese network of personal connections, plays one of the most relevant traits related to the way business agreements take place.

Acknowledging that China is a major commercial partner for several Latin American

countries, this paper presents basic ideas about *guanxi* and aims to seek and describe the trends on what has been published about *guanxi* in the last decade. The methodology used for that is a bibliometric analysis of the Web of Science database. Following a general view of each publication's profile, the study delivers a qualitative analysis of what has been issued considering only the 10 most cited publications. This paper may contribute to understand the cultural aspects of *guanxi* and hence hopes to improve business relationships of Latin American companies with Chinese partners.

Key Words: China, Latin America, *guanxi*, business culture, relationship, bibliometric analysis

1. Introduction

China's economic performance over the past three decades has led the country to be ranked second in the world economy and first as a producer and exporter of manufacturing goods. Observing its relevance to Latin American countries, particularly Brazil, The Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean (ECLAC) report, posted in May 2011, points out that the region has had China as one of their main sources of direct foreign investment since 2010. ECLAC studies show trends that China will surpass the European Union, as the second market destination of exports from the region within the next decade, only following the United States. As well, the Asiatic country is also likely to overcome the EU as a second origin of imports from the region (Bárcena, 2011).

In the last decade, and especially after entering the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, China has taken a leading role in international trade. In the same period, leading Latin America economies have expanded commercially, expressing important changes in foreign trade profiles, also due to the increasing trade with China (Mattos & Carcanholo, 2011).

Latin American countries like Chile, Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Costa Rica rely significantly on the Asian country as a trading partner. For Brazil, Chile Peru and Argentina, China is the main partner (Gutiérrez, 2011) and is the second major partner for Mexico (Rivera 2011, p.84). Chile, in particular, is currently the country in the region with the largest number of cooperative and facilitation trade instruments with the Chinese Government (Matta, 2011).

According to ECLAC Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena, major Chinese demand for food, energy, metals and

minerals makes the terms of exchange between Latin American countries and China to improve and promote its economic growth. "This business relationship was the key to partially explaining the high resistance that the sub region showed during the recent global financial crisis [in 2008]," says Bárcena.

Providing useful information about Chinese culture to Latin American entrepreneurs will certainly facilitate and increase the possibilities of achieving success in business endeavors with the Chinese. In fact, business culture, along with the economics, has fundamental importance in the establishment of long standing relationships. There are innumerable Chinese cultural traits that are expressed and interfere in commercial exchange and negotiations. *Guanxi*, the Chinese network of personal connections, is one of the most relevant Chinese traits directly linked to the way business is driven.

This paper is divided in five sections. The first takes the bilateral trade between China and Brazil as a significant example of the increasing development of the commercial relations in Latin America sub continent. The second section provides a conceptual and historical background on the Chinese network ties denominated *guanxi*. The third section explains the method of analysis using the Web of Science database to know what has been published and the sayings of the ten most cited articles. In sequence, the fourth section displays the results with the fifth section presenting the conclusion.

2. Brazil's figures concerning china

Among Latin American countries, Brazil is, without doubt, the country that has generated the greatest business volume with China. The development of these trade relations, in the first decade of the

second millennium, has shown superior growth in comparison to the rise of trade between Brazil and the rest of the world, resulting in the increased share of Brazilian exportation to and importation from China. Between 2001 and 2010, Brazilian imports from China increased from US\$1.32 billion – a 2.19% share, to US\$26.32 billion – a 14.49% share, and the number of companies importing from China grew from 4,437 to 20,837 (see Table 1). At the same period, Brazilian exports to China skyrocketed from US\$1,004 billion – a 2.37% share– to US\$30,785 billion – a 15.25% share, and the number of trade companies exporting to China rose from 1,004 to 2,446 (see Table 2). For this reason, there is a growing universe of companies in Brazil, as well as in other Latin American countries, trading with Chinese companies.

The figures on turnover and the companies involved fail to express the diversity of experiences and the difficulties faced by these companies. It is hard to measure certain variables, among other issues, which are not technically, economically or logistically related.

There are numerous reports of companies with different sizes, in a wide range of segments and from distinct nationalities that continuously face enormous difficulty to operate in China and negotiate with the Chinese. Although companies may allocate a great amount of resources – including the delegation of executives, consultants and experienced technicians – to ensure successful business in China, often they experience considerable roadblocks due to lack of expectation alignment. “In addition to the language barrier, there is also a cultural barrier. As it is known, different cultures

have different ways of coordinating and executing their work. In fact, in the history of major corporate disasters, one will often find ethnocentric blindness, marked by the management’s ineptitude or insensitivity in relation to the differences between organizational cultures” (Wood, 2006).

With the rise of China shifting the world trade order established in the last fifteen years, business culture becomes central to all who deal with Chinese institutions. When it comes to Latin America, despite the cultural proximity between these nations, there are considerable numbers of cases listing business failure for reasons stemming from the inefficiency of Chinese-related intercultural management. Once again, the aspects of cultural order gain even more significant weight. At first sight, China is highly different from Western or Latin American countries. Disregarding or underestimating these differences can cause great risk to a potential business transaction and even, in some situations, overall business strategy.

Entrepreneurs, their companies and their front-line teams are usually trained and qualified to follow the standard practices, daily operation and rules of conduct from their own countries and also from the countries in which they do business. Also, it is not atypical that departments of these companies dominate and manage quiet well all stages that involve the import and export of products. However, aside from all these “knowledge”, there are intangible elements of the supply chain that affect the quality of international transactions and, to some extent, may be determinant to the maintenance and development of successful operations. According to

Feldman (2010: 2), “a great deal of analysis has been conducted on the Latin American economy, [...] from a structural point of view, and especially from a macroeconomic perspective; yet, there are very few attempts to explain the backwardness of our continent through the eyes of its companies, and the way those companies are managed”.

Culture has a vital role in defining the capacity a country has to develop and progress, as well as shaping and influencing the way individuals think about risk, rewards and opportunities (Fairbank & Lindsay, 2000: 112). Such influence is felt in the way companies are structured and managed. Some aspects, such as relationships with authorities, rules of personal interaction, employees’ behavior to managers and vice versa, as well as social rules on group, individual and professional behavior, are issues that “arise from the educational system, social history and religion, in addition to family structures and many others national, yet singular, conditions often left unweighted” (Porter, 1993). Thus, if a people’s culture (i.e.: values, beliefs, customs and traditions) is present in the way they conduct business and manage their companies, it is fundamental for intercultural management to be a part of these company strategies.

Regarding China, management has strong influence. There is a gap in the perception of this country, its history, geography, and language. There is the perception of a large breach between cultures, as the cultural exchanges between the countries of Latin America and China are especially irrelevant.

3. Conceptual and historical *guanxi* background

In light of the global macroeconomic scenario, China is and will remain one of the most important trading partners of

countries like Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Peru, among others. Beginning, developing and maintaining commercial relations and direct foreign investment with this country requires conscious effort to understand its culture. Such an effort implies recognizing that Chinese culture is the result of more than 5,000 years of uninterrupted history, written, lived and built upon the organization of peasant communities.

In spite of China’s steady-going process of economic growth, urban industrialization and adoption of modern technologies in professionalizing agriculture, most of its population is still not urbanized and is involved in small-scale farming and corollary activities.

With a geography that is not compatible with extensive use of the land, the Chinese people have always faced the challenge of seeding and harvesting food in large - or sufficient - quantities. China has had to endure natural disasters, social distress, and guarantee the survival of a growing population counting on the same amount of disposable arable land.

The history of Chinese civilization has promoted the buildup of an agricultural population, threatened by starvation, in which cooperation and collective spirit were the cornerstones that shaped the configuration as a nation as well as the basis for assuring the life and individuality of its inhabitants. The term *guanxi* is born in this context: a scenario in which the dependence on the immediate family was often not enough, calling for an extension of bonds beyond family support, which would include the participation of the entire village, workgroups, or kindred groups. The Chinese method of articulating this extension of family support outside the domestic family is called *guanxi* (Bell, 2000). Thus, the significance of *guanxi* is linked to the way the Chinese articulated

and established rules of conduct to extend family support beyond the domestic ambience. It is a complex networking system that is rooted in ancient, historical grounds, and that, at certain times, was also used to address or enforce the interests of a group, family, or clan vis-à-vis the Government. Peasant survival in China, albeit physical, economic or social, has always depended on the cooperation ties among their individuals, especially in the family and in the community. *Guanxi* remained working and effective even during the stricter periods of the communist regime before the beginning of economic reforms, in 1978. Today, *guanxi* is used in different kinds of activities and has deep impact in its business culture. The relevance of this article is based on the importance and the role of Chinese interpersonal relationships and cooperative networks, to be understood by those doing business with China.

Grossman (2010) notices that the study of interpersonal relationship networks has a long tradition in academic research, considering various disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, organizational behavior and management. Although the topic is not new, there is a growing interest in the role of social networks in relation to business and economic activities. Business networks related to ethnic groups – usually, not formally institutionalized – work towards reducing international trade barriers and facilitating the transnational flow of knowledge (Grossman, 2010). The discussion contemplated in this article rests on the importance and the role of interpersonal relationships – networks of reciprocity and mutual assistance – as an engine of the economic and social processes that

culminate in the current Chinese economic development through industrialization and internationalization. Even though traditional Chinese culture is composed of several schools of thought, including Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, the development of Chinese culture and society is closely influenced by Confucianism, which has guided the behavior of people from all social classes, since the Han dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD) (Ambler, Witzel & Chao Xi, 2009). According to Rego and Cunha (2009), the Confucian doctrine is basically behavioral and moral teachings guiding human relations, social structures, virtuous behavior and work ethics. The rules spread by Confucianism focus on the social behavior of all individuals and governs a wide range of human interaction in society (Rego & Cunha, 2009). Holding ethics and politics as its main focus, Confucianism is about guiding the “way to live”, in the personal and social arena (Strathern, 1998). Interpersonal relationships have an important role in this system of thought. Under these rules, the responsibilities of each individual are based on five key relationships: ruler and subject, husband and wife, father and son, sibling and sibling, and friend and friend. Seligman (1999) makes use of an analogy and proposes to consider an imaginary circle around every Chinese individual. People who surround this individual will fall into one of two categories: either inside or outside the circle. Those inside the circle are relatives, friends, neighbors, classmates, coworkers, or anyone one who was presented by anyone belonging to the inside group. Those inside the circle will have some kind of *guanxi* – network of relationships which requires

some sort of commitment. Those who remain outside the circle are unknown and, therefore, those with whom the individual has no sort of obligation. Grossman (2010) highlights the following text, attributed to a Chinese scholar, in which he precisely describes the system as a sequence of concentric circles that expand, holding the family in the core and social connections as the radius: "The entire Chinese ethics network consists of numerous circles. A Chinese businessman would seek a business partner from the nearest circle. The circle will expand as the business expands" (Peng, 2000: 232). Bell (2000), Hwang (1987) and King (1991) use Confucianism to explain the meanings, categories and rules of behavior in *guanxi*. Thus, *guanxi* is a special mechanism in Chinese socialization holding deep cultural importance (Zhu & Hong, 2008).

As pointed out by Hamilton and Zheng (1992) in the introduction to their translation of Fei's work (1992: 21-22), "Every networking of a Chinese person is defined as a tied scored... (...) in the dynamics of the social ties (*gang*). These interpersonal ties are known in Chinese as *guanxi*". In a footnote to this statement, the authors argue that "the word relationship in English (...) fails to capture the quality of connection suggested by the Chinese term. *Gang* is the term used to define the three closest relationships, *sangang*: ties between father and son, the emperor and his ruled subjects, and husband and wife." Therefore, *guanxi* refers to relationships in a deeper sense of the term, with implications that go beyond the meaning given by the term in English – which are modeled by father-son and husband-wife relationships. According to Bell (2000), in Confucianism logic, there are five *gang* in relation to which rules of behavior are significantly applied, each of which

having its archetypical manifestation within the domestic family group. These five cardinal relationships are called *wu-lun*. Clearly these relationships are not "connections". The structuring of interpersonal relationships, on the intra-family basis of *gang* is very far from instrumentalism giving rise to the notion of "connections" in the Occident. In saying that *guanxi* is not an instrumental link (in its suitable manifestation), does not suggest that *guanxi* is not presumed to be greatly useful. Quite the contrary, it holds a value that greatly surpasses the value of connections. For the most part, if not in all cultures, there is a *wu-lun* counterbalance to orientate inter-family behavior. A special characteristic of Confucianism thinking is that *wu-lun* and its rules of conduct ate extended beyond the domestic group in all others forms of ethically sustainable relationships, and since the rules of *wun-lun* are expressed in other collective groups, family borders become surrounded by a broad, almost family, structure of duty and responsibility. *Guanxi* is the term for this mechanism (Bell, 2000).

As such, there is no exact, appropriate translation for the concept, yet it may be understood as a network of interpersonal relationships, one of the more dynamic cultural traits of Chinese society. It is a system of complex networking, embodying thousands of historical roots that, in determined moments, were also used as a form of facing and adding value to the interest of a group, a family, a clan, before the State and its Government. This went on functioning even in toughest period of the communist regime, prior to beginning the economic reforms in 1978. When the reforms were implanted, this system gained life, and continues to be used in numerous spheres of Chinese activities, particularly in business. Indeed, *guanxi* is an important and informal

relationship agreement between individuals that can be extended to the world of business and to the matrix of relationships between Chinese companies and institutions. It implies social reciprocity and, according to Nitsch and Diebfe (2010) is based on mutual emotions (*ganqing*) between two or more individuals who, in cultivating friendship, also seek personal benefits. In order to understand this concept more precisely, four essential terms that refer to *guanxi* in a broader sense must be highlighted: social relationships (*guanxi*), emotions (*ganqing*), favors (*renqing*) and face (*mianzi*), (Nitsch & Diebfe, 2010). *Guanxi* is established on the basis of mutual trust. For the Chinese, any important relationship of trust among agents of the national economy is basically a matter of informal social relationships. According to Luo Yadong from Miami University, the term *guanxi* points to a type of support in connections aimed at guaranteeing favors in personal relationships. It forms an intricate, widespread network of relationships, which the Chinese engagingly and creatively cultivate. It entails codes of ethics, implicit mutual obligations, guarantees and understandings, and governs Chinese attitudes in relation to long-term social and business relationships (Luo, 2000:2). Hsia Hua Sheng (2008) in his article on the experiences of Chinese entrepreneurs in Brazil and the relationship-based financing models asserts that: "An essential characteristic that compiles part of the *Guanxi* relationship is *xinyon* (trust). Business with trustworthy people is conducted without rules and formal contracts. Formalities are only applied to those people who are not family members or trustworthy (Kao, 1991).

The greater the *guanxi* relationships, the easier it is for entrepreneurs, business owners and administrators to achieve success in the business environment. Multiple *Guanxi* relationships not only increase the opportunity for interaction, but the common feelings between the parties as well, facilitating the development of trust. Multiple *guanxi* are also much more consolidated than a single *guanxi* "(Jacobs, 1979).

Guanxi has been seen as one of the variables explaining the success of Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) developing and expanding in China that, in their turn, have contributed in maintaining elevated rates of economic growth and development in China (average annual 8.1% growth of per capita GDP), after the economic reform in 1978. According to China's Statistics Department, in 2003, SMEs correspond to 99% of the total number of registered companies, produce 60% of industrial production value, generate 60% total export value and supply 75% of all formal jobs in rural and urban areas (Sheng, 2008) .Also, Sheng (2008) explains that one of the reasons for such success is that *guanxi*, by means of informal financing, buffered the problem of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) capital shortage in China. A variety of *guanxi*-based financing modalities are used, according to research at the Central University of Finances and Economics (2001), which analyzed a sample gathered in 20 Chinese provinces, the volume afforded by the informal credit market is responsible for 30% to 40% of the total credit used by SMEs. However, it is important to point out that *guanxi* may also be used for engaging illegal transactions, bribes, and favoritism. On the dark side, it finds ways of

circumventing the law, privileging members of the network without considering merit, inducing the granting of favors in detriment to society as a whole. The network can be set up anywhere in the world, for both positive as well as negative activities. Unlike occidental networking, *guanxi* implies other dimensions from the human being as a member of a society in building relationships. It involves time, sense of social living and establishing bonds of trust. One may say it represents certain equity. Building and counting on this network may be decisive in doing business in China, since “doing business” is also relating. This might be why Occidentals feel that the time required in dealings with the Chinese is too much: after all, establishing bonds of trust and building long-lasting relationships demands another great deal of time. Numerous dinners, lunches, lots of meetings and conversation, happy-hours flooded with tea and invitations to bath houses are elements that afford other forms of community living and can enable approximation and mutual knowledge: a base for developing cooperative relationships. In negotiations with the Chinese, a formal agreement is generally considered a start to business. Establishing a bond of trust and of harmony have been and continue to be much more important to Chinese businessmen and businesswomen than any piece of paper, in spite of the rising presence of formal contracts since the entrance of China at the WTO in 2001. Rauch points out the difficulty of enforcing or executing agreements in the area of international trade and says that the networks facilitate the trade between communities through the building of bonds, or the substitution of trust, when contract enforcement is weak or inexistent. Should ethical compromises

fail due to any member of the network, Weidenbaum and Hughes (1996: 51), in relation to the Chinese overseas, for example, explain that “If a business owner violates an agreement, He is blacklisted. This is far worse than being sued, because the entire Chinese network will refrain from doing business with the guilty party”. On the other, the transnational networks, for example, within a determined foreign market, can also contribute in conjunction with consumer goods producers, in seeking suitable distributors, assemblers, components suppliers, as well as assisting investors in meeting joint-venture partners (Rauch, 2001). Weidenbaum and Hughes (1996: 55) write about the Chinese abroad: “The members of the bamboo network operate in the interstices of the trading world. They make components, manufacture for others, and perform subassembly work. They are also heavily involved in wholesaling, financing, sourcing, and transporting. . . . The leading businessmen know each other personally and do deals together, with information spreading through an informal network rather than through more conventional channels.”

The networks create a circuit of obligation and of reciprocal assistance that be extended for an entire lifetime, in light that the awaited return comes about in the long run. In his book *The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism*, Gordan Redding states:

“Perhaps the most significant thing to be understood about China today is that it still shows many elements of a pre-modern society. It is still, in essence, patronizing. (...) China is dependent on ‘personalized officialization’. Without the use of *Guanxi*, nothing significant happens. (...) *Guanxi* is as important as it has always been.”(Redding,1993: 231-235)

4. Method of analysis and approach

Due to the relevance of the *guanxi* concept, the authors believe it is also important for Latin American companies, particularly Brazilian companies doing business with China, to understand this cultural trait in its great universe of meanings. Opting to develop a bibliometric analysis (or research) using the Web of Science database, this study looked for the most cited articles and their sayings, the periodicals and authors that were highlighted the most in these publications, as well as an investigation of the following variables: total publications, authors, subject areas, year of publications, institutions, languages and countries. The target was to find what has been issued - considering the 10 most cited articles - and also seek for Latin American publications.

Vanti (2002) asserts that bibliometrics is a set of research methods from the Information Sciences area, which uses quantitative data analysis to map the structure of a scientific field, and is also a tool for analyzing researchers in their decisions on building this knowledge. The gathering of information used in this research was conducted through the Web of Science system, which was published in the press for the first time in 1963, with data from citations as of 1961 (Garfield, 1963). According to Bar-Ilan (2010), in September of 2008 Thomson Reuters expanded the *ISI Web of Science* with indexed citations from the chronicles of conferences in the areas of Sciences, Social and Human Sciences. The *Web of Science* offers direct access to the flow of retrospective, multi-disciplinary informa-

tion from about 12,000 of the most prestigious periodicals, with high impact in the world of research (Thomson Scientific, 2010). The references from all of the indexed items are extracted and the interface of the cited references casts all the citations from articles of an author, independently of the cited items being indexed by the *Web of Science* (Bar-Ilan, 2008).

5. Results of the analysis and discussion

5.1. Studying the *guanxi* topic in Web of Science publications

Research *guanxi* on the Web of Science topic criteria resulted in 349 publications in varied types of documents, which were refined and among these, only the articles were considered, resulting in 306 publications. All of these were published in the English language. The five areas with the largest number of publications were: Business (138), followed by Management (126), Ethics (44), Economy (16) and Area studies (8), resulting in 230 considered articles, notice that an article may impact more than one area. The most prolific authors, countries, institutions and number of annual publications are listed from 1999 to 2012.

5.2. Research by authors

Disregarding unsigned publications, the following 4 authors were verified to have the largest number of publications: Wang, CL (11); Su, CT (8); Batjargal, B (8); and Barnes, BR (8). Notice that a majority of the publications were conceived by more than one author, and there is parity among authors in the amount of publications. None of them stands out with a considerably superior amount of

publications. During research, some authors appeared with the same name in different positions due to the composition, either by their name in full or abbreviated form. These were joined and the sum of the two positions held in the ranking by the same author was considered. A brief biography and explanation follows on the contribution to research in the areas of business, administration, finances and economy, of the four authors, in decreasing order, with the largest number of publications:

Dr. Lu Cheng Wang is an Associate Professor of the Department de International Marketing and Business at the University of New Haven, USA. His areas of research include international & inter-cultural marketing, and consumer behavior. His publications have appeared in the Journal of Consumer Psychology, Psychology and Marketing, European Journal of Marketing, Marketing International Review, Management International Review, among others. He has published 230 articles pertaining to the areas of business, administration, finances and economy, which have generated 1,180 citations.

Dr. Su Chenting a graduate degree in Mathematics, a Masters in Economy and a PhD in Marketing, from the City University of Hong Kong, where he is currently head of the marketing department. His research area is concentrated in: Chinese commercialization, governance channels, theory of group decisions and business ethics. He has published 71 articles, in 16 years of research, which have generated 671 citations.

Dr. Bat Batjargal holds a PhD in Political Science from Oxford University, is the assistant professor of Strategy and Entrepreneurship, *Guanghua* School of Management, Beijing University, and Teaches Social Sciences at Harvard

University. Research interests: The role of social networks and social capital in the birth and growth of new enterprise in the comparative contexts of different countries and industries. He specifically focuses on the effects of social network interaction, on one hand, and institutions, national cultures, human capital, sex, knowledge, religion, ethnics and cognitions, on the other hand, on the performance of new enterprises in the comparative contexts of China, Japan, India, France, Mongolia, Russia and the United States. As for industry, he has concentrated on risk capital, the Internet industry, software, nanotechnology, family companies and international businesses. He has thirty-three articles that have generated 469 citations.

Dr. Bradley R. Barnes is Head of the Marketing, Strategy & IB Division at Sheffield University Management School. He has published extensively in the areas of international management and marketing and his work has appeared in leading magazines, including the Journal of international Business Studies, Journal of International Marketing, Industrial Marketing Management, European Journal of Marketing, among others. As the author of "Contributing to Marketing: "Real People, Real Decisions" - European First Edition, he won the Financial Times Pearson Book of the Year in 2009. He works on the Editorial Board for Industrial Marketing Management, International Marketing Analysis, International Journal of Advertising and the Journal of Marketing Medicine. His research interest is mainly in the area of international commercial relations, with special focus on the Chinese economy, with topics such as: Investigating the influence of *guanxi* in Chinese social networks; Internal Marketing in China; Internationalization of Universities in Malaysia; Analysis of social networks in

the Chinese academic business community; Motivating sales management in Hong Kong; the brand of "luxury commodities" in the Chinese economy. He has 72 articles that have generated 328 citations.

This study only found one article that had the participation (co-publication) of a Brazilian author. Nonetheless, this article was not ranked in the citation category: How Distinctive Are Indigenous Ways of Achieving Influence? A Comparative Study of *Guanxi*, *Wasta*, *Jeitinho*, and "Pulling Strings" Peter B. Smith, Hai Juan Huang, Charles Harb and Claudio Torres published by *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, online 17 January 2011.

5.3 Research by periodicals

The three periodicals with the largest number of publications in decreasing order are the Journal of Business Ethics (44); Industrial Marketing Management (21); and the International Journal of Human Resource Management (16). Table 3 displays the ranking of periodicals that published the most articles related to the term *guanxi*.

The periodical that holds the largest number of publications was the Journal of Business Ethics. Its website describes it in terms of the following activities: discusses business-related ethics issues, stemming from a wide variety of methodological and disciplinary perspectives, examines the moral aspects of production systems, the behavior of marketing, consumption, advertising, social and economic accountability, labor relations, as well as public and organizational relations. It only publishes original articles stemming from a wide variety of methodological and disciplinary perspectives on business-related

ethics issues that bring something new or original to the discussion in its field. Since its creation, the Journal has held the aim of improving human conditions, affording a public forum for discussing and debating business-related ethics issues, and is listed in the FT 40 – (one of the 40 magazines used by the Financial Times in compiling the prestigious research pole and School of Business). Editor-in-Chief: Alex C. Michalos, Brandon University Canada, receiving an impact factor in 2010 of 1.125.

Ranked second with the largest number of publications is Industrial Marketing Management, which is described on its site as: supplies theoretical and empirical research services based on cases oriented to the needs of marketing scholars and professionals who work in industrial research and business-to-business markets. An editorial board of review comprising main international scholars and professionals assures a balance between theory and practical application in all of the articles. Scholars from North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Asia and other regions of the globe offer the latest discoveries for improving the efficacy and the efficiency of industrial markets. This broad approach keeps readers up on more opportune data needed for current thinking in making better decisions in global marketing and industrial strategy. Editor-in-Chief: Peter LaPlaca, Hartford University, USA, Impact Factor: 1.694; 5-year impact factor: 2.780; number per year: 8.

The third ranked periodical is the International Journal of Human Resource Management and is described on its site as a forum for HR scholars and professionals from all over the world.

Concerned with the increasing role of strategic human resources management in a fast changing global environment, the magazine is concentrated on future trends in human resources management, based on empirical research in the areas of strategic management, international business, organizational behavior, personnel management and industrial relations that stem from internationalization, technological transformation, market integration, new concepts in line management, increased competition, business climate change. It is part of the Taylor & Francis Group, which operates through a network 20 global offices, including New York, Philadelphia, Oxford, Melbourne, Stockholm, Beijing, New Delhi, Jonesburg, Singapore and Tokyo. The Taylor & Francis Group publishes more than 1500 journals and 1800 new books a year, with a list of more than 20,000 specialists titles. The Journal is registered in England and Wales and the impact factor in 2010 was 0.869, ranking 89/140.

5.3. Research by countries

Out of 230 publications, the country that holds the largest share was the People's Republic of China (104); followed by the United States (76); England (34); Taiwan (24); Australia (22); Canada (16); Singapore (10); Hong Kong (8); South Korea (5); and New Zealand (4). Notice that the publications from Hong Kong, although the territory was returned to China in 1997, are from universities run by English entities. (Figure 1). No Latin American countries participated in this share.

5.4. Research by institutions

Raising the 10 Universities that published the most articles related to the term *guanxi* revealed 7 Chinese universities

situated in Hong-Kong totaling 73 publications, out of which 3 of these universities are front-runners, as follows: City University of Hong Kong (17); Chinese University of Hong Kong (14); Hong Kong Baptist University (13); Peking University – China (9); Hong Kong Polytech University (7); Xi'an Jiao Tong University – China (7); Lingnan University – Hong Kong (6); University of Hong Kong (6); Harvard University - USA (6); and National University of Singapore – Singapore (6). (Figure 2)

5.5. Research by publications along the past few years

On observing the timeline of publications (Figure 3), one may notice that there is no data from 2001, and 2004 and that publications peaked in 2011.

6. Subject areas

An article may impact more than one area. Table 4 shows the ranking of the 5 subject areas impacted most by the articles, and notice that a great majority of the articles has a strong relation with economy and business.

7. Hot-Topics

We can verify the predominance of the word China where the practice of *guanxi* evidently originated. On the other hand, agglutinating those words that obtain strong interrelation stand out with the large number of word occurrences related to business, companies and management, such as: performance, development, marketing, knowledge, network, integration, capital, employees, competitive, career, leadership, strategy, supplier, growth, finances, decisions, technology, investment and partners. Words linked to personal and social factors also stand out, which influence the way people behave in a business environment, such as: relationship, cultural, differences, behavior,

ethics, commitment, information, connections, corruption, conflict, environment, perception, family and interaction. (Table 5)

8. The 10 most cited articles and their sayings

The ten most cited articles are hereby organized in Table 6 according to their purpose, methodology and results. The only paper written with the participation of a Brazilian author is displayed in the table 7.

9. Final considerations

Regarding similarities observed among most important Latin American countries, there are at least two that seems to be most relevant: i) the growing importance of trade with China and Chinese FDI to these countries, and ii) the small number of internationalized companies with significant global expression. In relation to this last one, it should be pointed out that one of the reasons for such limited overseas presence involves the way of management of these companies that lack skills and are poorly prepared to face cultural differences. This seems to be due to lack of experience and knowledge in particular regarding the Chinese culture, and its way of doing business. Among the many and diverse Chinese cultural traits, *guanxi* was selected to be examined, as it is considered to be one of the most relevant concepts influencing the achievement of successful long-term benefits.

The importance of *guanxi* – or interpersonal networking – and the role it plays in business areas was actually confirmed by the bibliometric survey, which showed the frequency in which

such topic was addressed in the business field. A small but representative sample, consisting of the 10 most cited articles, has statements in common and is more controversial; actually on the abstracts of these articles one could find the majority of the 10 most frequent expressions namely (Table 5) - China, business, relationship, performance, cultural, social, differences and management - and several of them being used together. The following statements, collected in the sample, may contribute to understand 'networking' in China:

- a) It is difficult to do business in China due to the differences between Chinese and Western business practices. Particularly in relation to the way the social connections are evaluated and used.
- b) In the business administration field, *guanxi* refers to a Chinese system of doing business on the basis of personal relationships.
- c) *Guanxi* influences the performance of a company and it affects a company's strategic choices.
- d) The benefits of *guanxi* are related to cost reduction on several transactions.
- e) *Guanxi* requires the competence to build relationships based on trust. "Guanxi is found to be (extremely) important for business executives' trust in their connections."
- f) The role of *guanxi* is also observed in the loyalty between the employees and the supervisors as well as the level of organizational commitment. As *guanxi* is something developed between individuals, studies indicated that the connection to the organization is weaker than that one with the supervisors as an individual.
- g) Some articles bring the reflection about the perpetuation of China's *guanxi*-based

business practices in face of the increasing integration of China into the international market.

- h) *Guanxi* is also used as a illegal practice, giving advantage without merit and also facilitating corruption.
- i) It is possible that *guanxi* will have less importance in business as Chinese institutions and regulatory procedures become stronger and China attempts to move to a rule-based system.
- j) In order to develop and maintain *guanxi*, one must spend a considerable amount of time and resources.

This paper may help companies to understand the importance of preparing its executives to face cultural differences. The purpose for the studying *guanxi* and seeking papers related to this concept was to analyze “system interactivity”, giving the increasing relevance for Latin American economies of China as a rising world power. This paper reinforce the idea that building and maintaining strong

guanxi is a required tacit knowledge for people working at Chinese companies locally and also abroad. Moreover Latin American papers or Universities were not found in the Web of Science database; and hence the urgent need to develop this kind of research in the Latin American academic environment.

Finally, a suggestion for further research is to seek ways in which Latin American companies may better prepare their executives to deal with Chinese partners. No doubt, a great advantage would be to focus on understanding and developing skills for dealing and promoting *guanxi*,

Appendix

Table 1 – Values and number of importers – 2001-2010

Year	Importers in General		Importers from China	
	Companies	Value*	Companies	Value*
2001	28.807	55,6	4.437	1,32
2002	25.550	47,24	4.497	1,55
2003	22.324	48,33	4.737	2,14
2004		62,84	5.812	3,7
2005	22.628	73,6	7.158	5,35

2006	24.572	91,35	9.144	7,98
2007	28.911	120,62	12.325	12,62
2008	33.144	172,96	15.541	20,04
2009	34.044	127,72	16.852	15,9
2010	38.684	181,65	20.837	26,32

*US\$ billion

Source: SECEX/MDIC – Ministry do Development Industry and Foreign Trade

Table 2 – Values and number of exporters – 2001-2010

Ano	Exporters in general		Exporters to China	
	Companies	Value*	Companies	Value*
2001	18.254	58,29	1.004	1,9
2002	18.796	60,44	1.356	2,52
2003	19.741	73,2	1.635	4,53
2004	21.925	96,68	1.830	5,44
2005	21.252	118,53	1.952	6,83
2006	20.588	137,81	1.982	8,4
2007	20.888	160,65	2.160	10,75
2008	20.408	197,94	2.143	16,52
2009	19.823	153	2.263	21
2010	19.278	201,92	2.446	30,79

*(US\$ billion)

Fonte: SECEX/MDIC - Ministry do Development Industry and Foreign Trade

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Table 3- Ranking of periodicals that published the most articles related to the term *Guanxi*.

Source Titles	Record Count*	% of null
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS	44	19,13
INDUSTRIAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT	21	9,13
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	16	6,66
JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDIES	10	4,38
ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT	9	3,91
CHINESE MANAGEMENT STUDIES	9	3,91
MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION REVIEW	9	3,91
AFRICAN JOURNAL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	6	2,60
JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS	5	2,17
HUMAN RELATIONS	4	1,74
Total	133	57,50

*(21 Source Titles value(s) outside display options.)

Table 3: Ranking of Journals – Source: Web Of Science

Figure 1 – Ranking of Countries / Territories

*2 Countries/Territories value(s) outside display options.

Figure 1- Ranking of Countries / Territories – Source Web Of Science

Figure 2 – Ranking of Universities

*69 Institutions value(s) outside display options.

Figure 2 - Ranking of Universities - Source: Web of Science

Figure 3 – Number of publications per year.

Figure 3 – Number of publications per year – Source: Web of Science

Table 4 - Subject areas– *Guanxi*

Subject Areas	Record Count	% of null*
BUSINESS ECONOMICS	223	96.957
SOCIAL SCIENCES OTHER TOPICS	50	21.739
AREA STUDIES	8	3.478
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	7	3.043
PSYCHOLOGY	5	2.174
COMMUNICATION	2	0.870
COMPUTER SCIENCE	2	0.870
ENGINEERING	2	0.870
GEOGRAPHY	2	0.870
GOVERNMENT LAW	2	0.870

*Null – 230 articles

Table 4 – Subject areas – Source Web of Science

Table 5 - The most frequent 50 words in the abstracts of researched articles:

Ranking	Hot-Topics	Occurrences	Ranking	Hot-Topics	Occurrences
1 st	China	628	26 th	Change	31
2 nd	Business	238	27 th	Career	30
3 rd	Relationship	135	28 th	Leadership	30
4 th	Performance	108	29 th	Strategic	29
5 th	Development	107	30 th	Supplier	29
6 th	Cultural	103	31 st	Information	28
7 th	Social	103	32 nd	Connections	27
8 th	Differences	86	33 rd	Corruption	27
9 th	Management	77	34 th	Governance	24
10 th	Behavior	73	35 th	Conflict	23
11 th	Western	71	36 th	Corporate	22
12 th	Marketing	68	37 th	Environment	22
13 th	Companies	60	38 th	Exchange	22
14 th	Knowledge	59	39 th	Strong	22
15 th	Ethical	53	40 th	Decisions	21
16 th	Network	51	41 st	Perception	21
17 th	Capital	48	42 nd	Technology	21
18 th	Personal	47	43 rd	Emerging	20
19 th	Confucian	46	44 th	Growth	20
20 th	Integration	41	45 th	Finance	19
21 st	Commitment	37	46 th	Investment	19
22 nd	Economics	37	47 th	Partners	19
23 rd	External	36	48 th	Family	18
24 th	Employees	33	49 th	Interaction	17
25 th	Competitive	32	50 th	Unique	17

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Table 6 – Proposition, methodology and results of 10 most cited articles

	Journal, Title & Authors	Purpose of the paper	Research methodology	Results	Citations
1	ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT JOURNAL Guanxi: Connections as substitutes for formal institutional support Xin, KR; Pearce, JL	To study the reasons for executives to seek out connections and cultivate close personal relationships.	Interview data from China	The underdeveloped legal framework, as it is in China, makes executives from private-company more dependent on Guanxi than executives in stated-owned or collective-hybrid companies. Business connections are used for protection and to obtain resources, not otherwise available.	284
2	ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT JOURNAL Managerial ties and firm performance in a transition economy: The nature of a micro-macro link Peng, MW; Luo, YD	To demonstrate how managers' macro and micro connections work and the extent and limits to which these ties are beneficial in a transition economy.	Survey data from China	Managerial ties were found to be necessary, but not enough for good performance. There are other strategic variables that also count. Theoretically, the findings point to the importance of the social context in which managerial ties are embedded. Empirically, this study provides the first set of quantitative data demonstrating both the extent and limits to which managerial ties are beneficial in transition economy.	247
3	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS Guanxi and organizational dynamics in China: a link between individual and organizational levels Zhang, Yi; Zhang, Zigang	To study how Guanxi is shifted to a firm from the individual level and how it affects the organizational dynamics of that firm.	First reclassifies Guanxi into obligatory, reciprocal, and utilitarian types at the individual level. It then provides a conceptual framework in which to systematically characterize the link between Guanxi at the individual level and organizational dynamics.	The three types of Guanxi and the link between individual connections and its transference to a firm provided a deeper understanding of the financial implications of Guanxi to business firms in China.	185
4	ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS Achieving business success in Confucian societies: The importance of Guanxi (connections) Yeung, IYM; Tung, RL	To investigate the importance of guanxi by exploring i) the difference from western networking and friendship, ii) the reason why Guanxi assumes such significance in Confucian societies, iii) the effects of Guanxi in long-term business success in China, iv) how to build and maintain guanxi.	Literature review and an empirical study of guanxi on the financial performance of 19 firms that have business dealings with China.	There is indeed a correlation between the possession of "right and strong" Guanxi and a firm's financial performance. Having good connections is equally important to business success in other Confucian societies, such as Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and overseas Chinese communities.	122
5	JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STUDIES 10 Guanxi versus the market: Ethics and efficiency Lovett, S; Simmons, LC; Kali, R	To evaluate guanxi from an ethical perspective and to determine the circumstances in which guanxi might be most efficient, pointing out similarities between the ancient system of guanxi and emerging western business practices.	The use of a simple mathematical model to consider the conditions under which guanxi systems may be more or less economically efficient than market systems.	Guanxi-type systems, despite having evolved under different circumstances and being based on different ethical principles, can be legit alternatives to our western market system. The eastern and western business practices may already be converging toward a systems based on more complete models of trust to deal with conditions of progress coupled with <u>uncertainty that form our new economic reality.</u>	105
	Journal, Title & Authors	Purpose of the paper	Research methodology	Results	Citations

6	<p>INDUSTRIAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT 21</p> <p>The Benefits of Guanxi - The Value of Relationships in Developing the Chinese Market</p> <p>Davies, H; Leung, TKP; Luk, STK; Wong, YH</p>	<p>To identify the perceptions regarding the benefits that arise from guanxi and their relative importance as per Hong Kong Chinese executives data.</p>	<p>Data gathered from Hong Kong Chinese executives experienced in Chinese business practices</p>	<p>The results provide a ranking of benefits and suggest that there is an underlying structure of four factors, which may be characterized as procurement, information, bureaucracy, and transaction-smoothing.</p>	96
7	<p>ENTREPRENEURSHIP THEORY AND PRACTICE</p> <p>Corporate governance and competitive advantage in family-controlled firms</p> <p>Carney, M</p>	<p>Assuming that the basis of family-controlled firms' competitive advantage has drawn upon the resource-based view of the firm this article supplements the efforts and advances the argument that family-controlled firms' competitive advantage arises from their system of corporate governance.</p>	<p>Literature review on the experience of family-controlled firms in emerging markets.</p>	<p>The impact of a family's control rights over a firm's assets generates three dominant propensities (parsimony, personalism and particularism). These propensities give advantages in scarce environments, facilitate the creation and use of social capital, and engender opportunistic investment processes.</p>	86
8	<p>ORGANIZATION SCIENCE</p> <p>The influence of relational demography and guanxi: The Chinese case</p> <p>Farh, JL; Tsui, AS; Xin, K; Cheng, BS</p>	<p>To investigate the concept of guanxi and its applications in the Chinese context in reference to the idea of relational demography: similarities or differences between an individual and others on such factors as age, gender, race, religion, education, and occupation.</p>	<p>The two studies focused on the importance of guanxi and relational demography in Chinese employment settings. In study I, used a sample of 560 vertical dyads (i.e., between supervisor and subordinate) in Taiwan. In study 2, the effects were analyzed in a sample of 205 horizontal dyads, specifically between business executives and their important business connections (e.g., key customers, suppliers, bankers, government officials) in mainland China.</p>	<p>Results support the importance of both guanxi and relational demography for subordinate trust in the supervisor, but only guanxi is found to be (extremely) important for business executives' trust in their connections. Implications for future cross-cultural research on the effect of common ties are discussed.</p>	80
9	<p>JOURNAL OF OCCUPATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY</p> <p>Loyalty to supervisor vs. organizational commitment: Relationships to employee performance in China</p> <p>Chen, ZX; Tsui, AS; Farh, JL</p>	<p>To investigate the relationship between loyalty to supervisor and employee's in-role and extra-role performance in comparison with that of organizational commitment in the People's Republic of China.</p>	<p>Two studies were conducted. In the first study, a five-dimension loyalty to supervisor scale was developed and validated. In the second study, the relationships between loyalty to supervisor, organizational commitment and employee performance were examined.</p>	<p>Results indicated that loyalty to supervisor was strongly associated with both in-role and extra-role performance than organizational commitment. The findings are discussed in terms of their implications for future research and management practices in cross-cultural settings.</p>	67

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10	<p>JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS</p> <p>The transaction cost advantage of guanxi-based business practices</p> <p>Standifird, SS; Marshall, RS</p>	<p>To provide a theoretical explanation of the perpetuation of China's guanxi-based business practices seeking to demonstrate the perseverance and relevance of guanxi in terms of the transaction cost advantages it offers.</p>	<p>Literature review</p>	<p>Where the guanxi network is well developed, the transaction cost advantages of guanxi-based exchange are sufficient to warrant the integration of guanxi- and market-based exchange mechanisms.</p>	<p>58</p>
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Table 7 - Proposition, methodology and results of Brazilian author participation

	Journal, Title & Authors	Purpose of the paper	Research methodology	Results	Citations
197	<p>JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY</p> <p>How Distinctive are indigenous ways of achieving influence? A comparative study of Guanxi, Wasta, jeitinho and "Pulling Strings"</p> <p>Smith, P.B.; Huang, HJ; Harb, C. Torres, C.</p>	To investigate the cultural specificity of guanxi, wasta and jeitinho, each of which has been identified as an indigenous process of informal influence.	Pilot study based on students respondents in the same four universities. 147 British university students, 220 Chinese university students, 290 Lebanese university students and 226 Brazilian university students participated.	The types of informal social influence that have been studied are less unique to specific cultural contexts than is implied by the ways in which these concepts have most frequently been discussed in the literature. They are recognizable elsewhere.	0

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