



Chinese Business Immigrants in Portugal: challenges, coping and identity  
portrayal arising from the decision to move to Portugal

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## Biographic Note

Xinyan Li was born on the 16th, January 1989, in Qingtian, China. She started her independent and conventional life since the high school.

In 2007, she majored in English Language and Literature in Zhejiang University City College. The four-year study in Hangzhou broadened her horizon and gave her an important chance to live and work in Indonesia after graduation.

As an assistant to the GM in an international coal trading company in Indonesia, she was constantly exposed to a professional environment, worked in teams on multiple projects at different trading stages, and cooperated with employees and buyers from different nationalities, various religions and different areas of expertise. The 2.5-year working experience completely altered and renovated her worldview, and the idea of entrepreneurship was slowly generated.

In early of 2014, she decided to start her own retail business in Poland with the support of her family. Going through the hard times at the beginning of individual entrepreneurship, she opened the first shop. However, she was forced out of the business because of the poor turnover and the lack of experience in the Polish retail industry. After the failure of the first start-up, she decided to systematically learn the professional business management skills and problem-solving techniques to enhance her operation and innovation capacity.

With the successful application to the master in management in the University of Porto in 2016, she began her master study in Portugal, and this choice, equalled to the one to Indonesia, made a huge difference for her further life.

## Acknowledgments

From the beginning of writing the paper to the end, I have been inspired by the sentences from *Ecclesiastes 3*, “For everything, there is a fixed time, and a time for every business under the sun.... What profit has the worker in the work which he/she does? I saw the work which God has put on the sons of man.” In the process of writing, I felt the greatest frustration and got a great deal of goodwill. At the same time, I discovered how similar and how different people are.

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## **Abstract**

This exploratory study examines the narratives of relocation of the Chinese business immigrants in Portugal. For this purpose, several in-depth, semi-structured interviews, with 15 Chinese immigrants were conducted to expose their narratives in terms of their understanding of the challenges, coping, prospects, and how these challenges shape their identity. The findings reveal that: (1) the main challenges of Chinese business immigrants are work and family related, being bidirectional and interconnected, and both sources of conflict and enrichment; (2) doing business is central and work issues are given priority over family; (3) the future prospects for family and work are bright and wishful; (4) immigration history, social expectations and family support have, together, shaped the identity of this particular group; 5) the economic ability of Chinese business immigrants is directly proportional to their satisfaction with work and life. Overall, the analysis shows that doing business is the main goal in life of Chinese immigrants in Portugal, which has been assisted by marriage and is beneficial to the family. Following the findings from this exploratory study, the Chinese business immigrants in Portugal are best understood, which has practical and theoretical implications that might trigger further research in other South European countries, such as Italy, Spain, and Greece.

**Keywords:** Chinese business immigrant in Portugal, work-family issues, coping skills, Chinese identity

## Resumo

Este estudo exploratório analisa as narrativas relacionadas com a mudança para Portugal dos imigrantes empresariais chineses. Para este propósito, várias entrevistas semiestruturadas e em profundidade foram realizadas com 15 imigrantes chineses, visando expor as suas narrativas sobre os desafios, coping e entendimento de como essas questões moldam a sua identidade. Os resultados revelam que: (1) os principais desafios relacionam-se com o trabalho e a família, dimensões que são bidirecionais e interconectadas: ambos os domínios são fontes de conflito e enriquecimento; (2) fazer negócios é central e as questões de trabalho têm prioridade sobre a família; (3) as perspetivas futuras para o trabalho e a família são positivas e prósperas; (4) a história da imigração, a expectativa social e o apoio familiar, em conjunto, moldaram a identidade deste grupo; 5) a capacidade económica dos imigrantes empresariais chineses é diretamente proporcional à sua satisfação com o trabalho e a vida em geral. No seu conjunto, esta análise mostra que fazer negócios é o objetivo principal destes imigrantes, apoiado pelo casamento e benéfico para a família. Este estudo exploratório permite uma compreensão mais profunda dos imigrantes empresariais chineses em Portugal, o que tem implicações práticas e teóricas para a gestão e pode incentivar pesquisas similares noutros países do Sul da Europa, como Itália, Espanha e Grécia.

**Palavras-chave:** Imigrantes empresariais chineses em Portugal, questões trabalho-família, competências de coping, identidade Chinesa

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# 1. Introduction

As one of the most relevant migratory nationalities to Portugal, the number of Chinese in the country tends to increase with the variants of economics and politics. Most researchers focused on subgroups, such as Macao, Chinese Mozambican, and the second-generation Chinese immigrants. Gonçalves (2017) had described the engagement of Chinese immigrants in entrepreneurship. Rodrigues (2012) had also described and analyzed Chinese immigrants' trajectories from China to Portugal, the main strategies to raise money, which were to be used as an investment. However, the subgroup of Chinese business immigrants nearly received no attention from the public and academics, especially regarding their relocation challenges, coping and identity issues, which is a research gap addressed in this study.

This study defines Chinese business immigrants as a group of people, mainly from Wenzhou and Qingtian (the south-eastern cities in China), whose career goal is to have their own business (regardless of the size and type of business) abroad. While Oliveira (2003) and Gonçalves (2017) examined the characteristics of Chinese business immigrants in Portugal, emphasizing their high self-employment and concentration in the textile and catering industry, fewer studies examined the challenges arising from their decision to relocate to the country, and how the engagement in multiple roles shape Chinese business immigrants' identity. Little is known about how Chinese business immigrants in Portugal cope with multiple roles, and how this process relates to the meaning and identity they attach to themselves. Therefore, this study focuses on the literature of the Chinese migratory history in Portugal, their demographic data, and their acculturation and ethnic identity to answer the following research questions:

- (1) How Chinese business immigrants in Portugal account for the challenges arising from their decision to move to Portugal?
- (2) How do they cope with these challenges?
- (3) How do they envision the future?
- (4) How Chinese business immigrants in Portugal portrait themselves in terms of identity?

To address these research questions, this document is organized in five sections. Section one includes the introduction of the study, and section two contains the literature review

describing the Chinese migration to Portugal, acculturation and ethnic identity. Section three presents the methodology and section four contains the results of the study. Finally, section five ends with a discussion of the findings, limitations and suggestions for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Chinese Migration to Portugal

According to Rodrigues (2012), the People's Republic of China lost its restrictions on the citizens' geographic mobility and made the first steps towards the "opening and reform" politics (*gaigekaiifang*) in the end of the 1970s and the beginning of 1980s, thereby giving rise to a new era of Chinese migratory flows across the globe. According to Guerassimoff and Pina-Guerassimoff (2006) this was perceived as a source of administrative and economic opportunity for Chinese citizens and Europe, particularly the Schengen Area, has increasingly become an attractive geopolitical area for Chinese citizens. There are specific pull factors for the rise in Chinese migration to Southern Europe. Laczko (2003) argues that, around the mid-1990s and 2000s, the increase in the number of Chinese citizens was greatly stimulated by a willingness to take in unauthorized, unskilled migrants to work in the informal economy and the existence of niche opportunities for self-employment. According to Laczko (2003) and Rodrigues (2012), Chinese immigration to Portugal had followed the same pattern of the Chinese migratory flow to Italy and Spain.

In Portugal, Gaspar (2017) claimed that there were two different migration flows related to historical, political and economic specificities. One referred to the early group dated from the historical momentum between Portugal and its former colonies (Mozambique and Macao) comprising those who relocated between 1975 and the 1990s; the other referred to the recent group immersed in a Southern European context after the 2000s. The latter group included many Chinese economic migrants (Zhejiang migration) and the mobility of Chinese students and business migrants. Despite the heterogeneity of these Chinese migratory groups, analysis of the sociodemographic, economic, and occupational data, from the 2011 Census, showed that Zhejiang migrants were the largest Chinese subgroup. Given their number in Portugal, this study targets this subgroup.

### **2.1.1 *Demographic Data of Chinese Migrants in Portugal***

The growth of Chinese immigrants' population in Portugal is significant. According to the official data from Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF, 1996, 2004), the Chinese immigrants reached a total of 2.202 citizens in the year of 1995, and 9.059 in 2003, representing around 2.3% of the official number of foreigners in Portugal. It is ranked as the largest Asian community and the twelfth largest migrant community. According to the report by SEF (2008, 2016), the number of Chinese citizens mounted from 10.448 in the year 2007, to 21.339 in 2015. Following the latest data released from SEF (2017), until the year 2016, Chinese citizens amounted a total of 22.503 (including 11.314 males and 11.189 females), becoming the fifth resident foreign community in Portugal. The trend towards an increase in the number of Chinese residents began in 1996, excepting the year of 2015, in which it was observed a slightly decreased of 0.30% in relation to the previous year. In the period of 2010-2016 it was observed an increase of 20.301 citizens of Chinese nationality, actually residing in Portugal.

López (2005) found that, while the Chinese Mozambicans and the Macanese immigrated mainly in the 1980s and 1990s, the more recent flows of Chinese immigrants intensified in the first decade of the twenty-first century, displaying similarities with the flows into other European countries. Guerassimoff and Pina-Guerassimoff (2006) noted that the most numerous group was composed of unskilled, relatively uneducated economic immigrants, from Zhejiang on the east coast of China. These immigrants had relocated at a steady rate, supported by family networks and peer groups that were already established in Portugal and served as a catalyst for transnational immigration. Oliveira (2004) noted that this immigrant profile was the most socially visible, since it was largely devoted to the small textile and restaurant trades. According to Fonseca and Malheiros (2004), this growth of Chinese migrants in Portugal was in accordance with the international migration trend in South Europe. The immigrants came directly from China or came from other European countries affected by the newly-modified migration policy.

For Oliveira et al. (2014), the consolidation of institutional relations between Portugal and Chinese universities had led to a substantial increase in the number of tertiary students from China and Macao in Portugal. Van Mol (2008) and Biao (2003) argued that their temporary

presence was a precursor of the flow of highly qualified immigrants with knowledge and skills acquired during studies who then achieved integration into the host country labour market and society.

With the economic and financial crisis of 2011 that affected several Southern European countries, Portugal had offered a Residence Permit for Investment Activities (ARI), as a way of attracting foreign investment (Quintela, 2014). ARI, commonly known as the “*Golden Visa*”, allowed investors from other countries to apply for a residence permit to start an investment activity involving: 1) capital transferred from abroad; 2) the creation of jobs in Portugal; or 3) the purchase of Portuguese real estate. Like any other foreign citizen who is legally resident in Portugal and subject to certain conditions, Golden Visa holders can apply for family reunification, a permanent residence permit, and after five years, apply for a Portuguese citizenship. Quintela (2014) found that Chinese business migrants in Portugal were mainly individuals who invested in strategic sectors of the economy (real estate, energy, banking, tourism) and took advantage of legal and fiscal benefits offered by these Portuguese policies. The latest data from SEF (2018) showed that 5.717 ARIS were issued from 8<sup>th</sup> October 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018, 3.645 (63.8%) of which were required by Chinese citizens.

As the data highlights, the total number of Chinese immigrants in Portugal has increased steadily and their average age is much lower than the average age of the locals. From the year 2005, the Chinese migrants in Portugal, below 40's, represented 68% of the total immigrant Chinese population: 29.6% were below 30 years old, while 24.7% were between 41 to 50 years (Oliveira, 2003).

Chinese immigrants are geographically concentrated in Portugal. Data from SEF (2016) showed that over three quarters located in the three main cities of Lisbon, Porto, and Faro, which in total represent 76.1% of the community. Li (2012) concluded that Chinese immigrants are mainly living in Lisbon, and then dispersed to other main municipalities, such as Porto, Coimbra, and Gaia. Oliveira (2004) argued that Chinese immigrants' distribution had a positive relationship with the local economic situation. And the economic factor also influenced the migration flow, for instance, both Chinese and Portuguese businessmen may move seasonally from their living cities to the south to do tourist business. Li (2012) claimed that business opportunities generally determined the direction of this local geographic migration flow.

### ***2.1.2 The Zhejiang Migrants in Portugal***

A considerable proportion of Zhejiang migrants mainly from the origin of "Qingtian" and "Wenzhou" and with a low level of qualifications looked for work opportunities in Europe (Gaspar, 2017). They usually work on the traditional textile and catering industries and live in an endogamous social and family environment, which stimulates the continued use of a common language (Góis et al., 2005). Gaspar (2017) stated that with the support of every member of the family (such as the spouse and relatives), the family ownership of the businesses built up a clear organizational structure based on a gendered division of labour. This strategy was also reproduced in Portugal. Rodrigues (2012) wrote that the family ownership of the business built a semi-private environment, where the family spent most of its time including eating and leisure. López (2005) maintains that the Chinese family is a unit of production and consumption, making profitable use of the human and economic resources at its disposal to achieve labour autonomy within the host society by creating family businesses. López (2005) and Oliveira (2003, 2004) emphasize that all these aspects made up the remarkable success of Chinese immigration on an international scale.

In addition, Rodrigues (2012) argues that the characteristics of Zhejiang Migrants in Portugal show distinct ethnic features typically representative of overseas Chinese. Zapalska and Edwards (2001) highlight four major imprints of Chinese culture and history that include: (1) the importance attached by the Confucian culture to the family; (2) a strong tendency to promote the collective or the group; (3) a deep respect for age, hierarchy, and authority; and (4) the importance placed on the reputation achieved through hard work and successful enterprise. These core values are deeply embedded into every overseas Chinese (Zapalska & Edwards, 2001). The features and values mentioned among Zhejiang migrants and overseas Chinese are expected to be found among the participants of this study, which in turn, are likely to influence the formation and development of their ethnic identities.

## 2.2. Acculturation and Ethnic Identity

Bernal and George (1993) suggested acculturation and ethnic identity are related but separated constructs. *Acculturation* refers to how ethnic minority individuals adapt to the dominant culture and the changes in their beliefs, values, and behaviours that result from the contact with the new culture and its members. According to Berry (1993) model of acculturation, there were four strategies ethnic minorities can use in their daily encounters in the host culture: (1) *integration*, when individuals want to become bicultural by maintaining aspects of their own group while selectively acquiring some of the host cultures; (2) *assimilation*, characterized by the attempt to interact daily with other cultures discarding one's own cultural identity; (3) *separation*, when individuals identify solely with their own group and reject and avoid interaction with the host culture; (4) *marginalization*, when individuals rejected both their own and the host culture.

By contrast, Phinney (1990) argues that ethnic identity involves an individual's self-identification as a group member, a sense of belonging to an ethnic group, attitudes toward ethnic group membership, and a positive degree of ethnic group affiliation and involvement. Erikson (1994) referred that ethnic identity is one part of an individual's overall sense of self that began to develop in early childhood and traditionally crystallizes in late adolescence/ early adulthood. As Phinney (2003) stated, ethnic identity is "*a dynamic multi-dimensional construct that refers to one's identity... in terms of subgroups within a larger context that claim a common ancestry and share one or more of the following elements: culture, race, religion, kinship, and place of origin*"(p.63).

Phinney (1996) as well as Portes and Macleod (1996) referred that ethnic identity evolves from the awareness of differences to the integration of the ethnic differences into the broader context of personal identity. Phinney & Ong (2007) noted that ethnic identity develops through concurrent processes of exploration and commitment. Phinney (1996a, 1996b) model of ethnic identity has four statuses: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement. *Diffusion* corresponds to a stage of no examination and no commitment to an ethnic identity. *Foreclosure* refers to the commitment to an ethnic identity based on the message received by others. *Moratorium* refers to the state of actively exploring one's ethnicity without making a commitment. Finally, *achievement ethnic identity* corresponds to a secure commitment to one's group after a period of exploration that resulted in viewing it in a positive light. Includes a

sense of belonging, participation in traditional activities, and knowledge of one's group. Phinney (2003) proposed, due to its cyclical nature, that individuals are likely to re-examine their ethnic identity throughout the lifespan and might return to an earlier ethnic identity status. Similarly, individuals may remain in a single status throughout their lives. Given that ethnic identity becomes meaningful only in situations where two or more groups are in contact for an extended period of time, Phinney (1990) argues that ethnic identity might be more apparent among individuals who live in highly urbanized and ethnically diverse areas of a host country than among those who live in rural and less diverse communities.

Earlier research findings are mixed as to whether immigrants can be highly acculturated and could become strongly identified with their ethnic group. However, Berry's (1993) orthogonal model provided evidence that neither process is linear and both acculturation strategies and ethnic identity stages must be considered in understanding immigrant psychological functioning. For example, Schwartz et al. (2010) observed that members of ethnic groups often acknowledge their family culture(s) of origin regardless of their generation of immigration, while Pasupathi (2012) found ethnic identities typified by ethnic pride and examinations of cultural traditions are positively associated with well-being.

### **2.2.1 *Acculturation of Chinese Business Migrants in Portugal***

Rumbaut (1994) and Zhou and Bankston (1998) stated that the adaptation outcomes of immigrants' offspring might be affected by family socialization. Li (2012) addressed the living situation and social integration of second-generation Chinese immigrants in Portugal, by examining the implication of three influential factors of social integration: family, school, and community. The findings confirm that the second-generation of Chinese immigrants in Portugal were very well integrated in the local society. According to Rodrigues (2012), the first batch of Chinese business migrants in Portugal worked almost exclusively with a Chinese boss, and they were focused on their daily subsistence, therefore, social integration was not an initial issue. Integration become an issue only when they start having a stable economical and living situation. In terms of acculturation of Chinese business migrants, it will be further discussed in this study through the use of in-depth-interviews with all participants.



### ***2.2.2 Ethnic Identity of Chinese Business Migrants in Portugal***

Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) observed that low qualified immigrants are prone to find jobs in ethnic enclaves, where the cultural and linguistic knowledge of their origin countries are more valued than in the mainstream labour market. Woolcock and Narayan (2000) pointed out that immigrant families may keep strong ties and create exclusive ethnic identities within homogenous ethnic communities, just by keeping ethnic languages. Phinney et al.(2001) found that the language spoken at home was especially important to ethnic identity attainment in many aspects of family socialization and co-ethnic friendship was an important predictor of ethnic identity for the children of immigrants. Co-ethnic friendship can influence ethnic identity attainment for those living in vibrant and cohesive ethnic communities, as there were more contacts with co-ethnic friends within such communities (Phinney et al., 2001). Fong and Isajiw (2000) also referred that co-ethnic friends can provide cultural support and help minorities avoid discrimination.

In Portugal, Chinese business migrants are more prone to find jobs and do business in ethnic enclaves (such as Martim Moniz in Lisboa or Vila do Conde in Porto) and live in densely populated commercial cities, such as Lisboa, Porto and Faro (Li, 2012; Oliveira, 2003; Rodrigues, 2012). These families mostly speak a native dialect and mandarin at home and when trading businesses between Chinese. Oliveira (2003) argued that the Chinese entrepreneurs certainly obtained financial support from family, Chinese friends, and fellow countrymen. Especially in the trading industry: the fellow wholesalers send products on credit to the retailers in order to help them cope with the initial financial difficulties. The Chinese business immigrants also prefer to attend union activities run by fellow countrymen, religious activities (such as the Buddhism “Foguanghui” in ethnic enclaves) and attend Chinese schools, to keep strong ties and co-ethnic friendships.

### **2.3. The research focus: the relocation challenges of Chinese immigrants in Portugal**

Despite the aforementioned characteristics of Chinese immigrants in Portugal, less is known about how Chinese business immigrants in Portugal cope with multiple roles, and how this process relates to the meaning and identity they attach to themselves.

This study addresses these research gaps, by examining the challenges, coping and identity issues of Chinese immigrants, in particular by answering the following research questions:

- (1) How Chinese business immigrants in Portugal account for the challenges arising from their decision to move to Portugal?
- (2) How do they cope with these challenges?
- (3) How do they envision the future?
- (4) How Chinese business immigrants in Portugal portrait themselves in terms of identity?Methodology

## **2.4. Research Approach**

To answer the aforementioned research questions, this study employs a qualitative approach, to provide detailed descriptions of the themes addressed and yield culturally specific information on the values, opinions, behaviours and social background of Chinese business immigrants in Portugal.

In this study, data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, run face-to-face, and following an open-ended and discovery-oriented method. Mack et al. (2005) considers that the in-depth interview is an adequate technique to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on a research topic, which is an opportunity to gain insight into how people interpret and order the world. It is especially appropriate for addressing sensitive topics that people might be reluctant to discuss in a group setting. According to Edwards (2013), semi-structured interviews, which combine a pre-determined set of open questions with the opportunity for the participants to explore particular themes or responses further on, are widely used in qualitative research. Through a narrative approach, participants offer richer and unexpected insights, often unavailable by other methods, thus expanding our understanding of the contextual factors and individual's interpretations.

According to the literature, the researcher designed an initial version of the interview guide, pilot-tested with two Chinese acquaintances and later modified based on the feedback received and the aims of this research. The interview guide contained several broad open-ended questions, as follows: (1) Why/ When/ How did you come to Portugal? (2) How do you make sense of/how do you interpret the living and working experience in Portugal? (3) Did you meet any work issues arising from the decision to relocate to Portugal? Could you please

elaborate? (4) Did you meet any family issues arising from the decision to relocate to Portugal? Could you please elaborate? (5) How did/do you cope with these relocation issues? (6) What are the future prospects for your family and career? Finally, other questions addressed participants demographics, family immigration history and the process of entrepreneurship.

Given the conservative nature of business Chinese immigrants in Portugal and the sensitivity of the topics surveyed, it was difficult to establish sufficient trust with respondents in a short period of time. Therefore, the interviews began with acquaintances, and then a snowball sampling was used to find out more participants. The researcher started by explaining the research purpose and assuring privacy to all participants. As aforementioned, the purpose and related topics of the interview were first explained to all interviewees, who were reassured about their anonymity and data confidentiality. Then, an appointment was made, to meet with each participant at a fixed time and location that facilitated the interview process. Considering participants' busy working schedules, the location of the interviews was normally in a Café bar or restaurant. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin and Qingtian dialect, which created a better understanding of the questions for participants and a more relaxed atmosphere for them to express opinions and feelings, as well as a warmer environment to dig deeper cultural meanings.

## **2.5. Research Participants**

Portes (1999) suggests that the formation of an "ethnic enclave" requires a substantial number of immigrants, existing first "cohorts" with entrepreneurial experience, available capital to invest, and a stock of ethnic workers. Oliveira (2003), on the other hand, pointed out that Chinese immigrants in Portugal formed a new economic alternative called "transnational entrepreneurs". They searched for opportunities in the host society by combining local, regional, European and transnational connections and drawing on the inner-group resources.

In this study, the definition of Chinese business immigrants in Portugal followed this definition and target the Chinese originated from Wenzhou and Qingtian who accounted for the advantage of doing businesses in a single economic space as the European Union, by using inner-group resources and owning a local business (regardless of the size and type). Therefore, a non-probabilistic and purposeful method was used to target the research participants - Chinese business immigrants in Portugal- considering three relevant criteria: (1) being a

Chinese citizen, from Wenzhou and Qingtian, living in Portugal; (2) owning, having own and/or planning to own a business in Portugal, (3) having actual and/or earlier experience of working in Portugal for other countrymen.

The profile of research participants is presented in Table 1.

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marriage Status</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Foreign countries that have lived</b>
<b>A</b>	QT	M	27	Married	High School	Shareholder of retail	Spain, Portugal
<b>B</b>	QT	F	32	Married	High School	Shareholder of retail	Uganda., Portugal
<b>C</b>	QT	F	36	Divorced	High School	Shareholder of retail	Uganda, Spain., Portugal
<b>D</b>	QT	F	37	Married	High School	Owner of retail	Uganda, Spain., Portugal
<b>E</b>	QT	F	29	Single	Bachelor	Shareholder of retail	Spain., Poland., Portugal
<b>F</b>	QT	F	54	Married	Primary school	Shareholder of retail	Spain., Poland., Portugal
<b>G</b>	WZ	M	34	Married	High school	Wholesaler	Portugal
<b>H</b>	WZ	F	35	Married	Bachelor	Shareholder of retail	Portugal
<b>I</b>	QT	F	35	Married	High school	Wholesaler	Bulgaria, Portugal
<b>J</b>	QT	F	25	Single	High school	Clothing seller	Hungary, Portugal
<b>K</b>	WZ	F	40	Married	Middle school	Owner of retail	Netherlands., Portugal
<b>L</b>	WZ	F	28	Single	Bachelor	Clothing seller	Portugal
<b>M</b>	QT	F	22	Single	Master	Shareholder of retail	Portugal
<b>N</b>	QT	M	25	Single	Master	Shareholder of a dental clinic	Portugal
<b>O</b>	QT	M	25	Single	Bachelor	Owner of retail	Portugal

Table 1- Profiles of Participants: Chinese Business Migrants in Portugal

Of the 15 interviewees who participated in this research, four were male and eleven were female. All were from the south-eastern region of China: five were from Wenzhou and 10 were

from Qingtian. The age ranged from 22 to 54 years old, six were single and the remaining were married. Their educational background covered primary school to master's degree, and the trend shows that the youngest received higher education. Their occupations included shareholder of retail store (7 out of 15), shareholder of a dental clinic (1 out of 15), owner of a retail store (3 out of 15), wholesaler (2 out of 15), and clothing seller (2 out of 15). Most of them had living and working experience in multiple foreign countries: four out of 15 had lived and worked in three foreign countries, and five out of 15 lived in two foreign countries. Only six (out of 15) are living in Portugal as their first foreign country. They went to different countries of destination because of the suggestion and support of family and relatives, and most of them still have relatives and parents in those destinations. In any case, Portugal seemed to be a transit country, not chosen as a first or final destination.

## **2.6. Data Analysis**

The interview consisted of a series of questions, which were expanded when needed. Each interview took about 60-90 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded and notes were taken in Chinese. After each interview, the recording of the tape was transcribed and translated, and a codebook was created for each participant with a demographic summary, working and living status, family immigration history, entrepreneurship process, and researcher notes and impressions. Theme books, built from the coded transcripts, were separately created and illustrative quotes from each participant were selected. The observations of the investigator were put into a spreadsheet organized by theme. The transcripts quoted in this document were translated and back translated by two Chinese-English bilingual native speakers to ascertain the accuracy of the translation and respect for the original meaning.

### 3. Results

This chapter presents the main research findings, addressing each research question: (1) How Chinese business immigrants in Portugal account for the challenges arising from their decision to move to Portugal? (2) How do they cope with these challenges? (3) How do they envision the future? (4) How Chinese business immigrants in Portugal portrait themselves in terms of identity?

#### 3.1. How Chinese business immigrants in Portugal account for the challenges arising from their decision to move to Portugal?

To answer these research question, the respondents were asked to elaborate on their arrival in Portugal (why/when and how), on how they made sense of their living and working experience in the country, and the main work and family challenges.

##### 3.1.1 *Why/ When/ How was the arrival in Portugal?*

The description of the main themes addressed by each participant is presented inTable 2.

Participants	Why	When	How
	did you come to Portugal?		
<b>A</b>	Relatives did business in Portugal.	2008	Bus from Spain.
<b>B</b>	Husband worked in Portugal.	2013	Family reunion.
<b>C</b>	Relatives did business in Portugal.	2008	Bus from Spain.
<b>D</b>	A married man who did retail in Portugal.	2004	Bus from Spain.
<b>E</b>	Relatives did business in Portugal.	2004	Flight from Poland.
<b>F</b>	Relatives did business in Portugal.	2006	Bus from Spain.
<b>G</b>	Relatives did business in Portugal.	2008	Working visa from China.
<b>H</b>	A married man who did retail in Portugal.	2014	Family reunion.
<b>I</b>	Husband worked in Portugal.	2004	Family reunion.
<b>J</b>	Relatives did business in Portugal.	2013	Flight from Hungary.
<b>K</b>	Relatives did business in Portugal.	2004	Flight from Netherland
<b>L</b>	Relatives did business in Portugal.	2011	Working visa from China.
<b>M</b>	Father worked in Portugal.	2004	Family reunion.
<b>N</b>	Parents worked in Portugal.	2000	Family reunion.
<b>O</b>	Mother did retail in Portugal.	2000	Family reunion.

Table 2- Why/When/How did you come to Portugal?

As observed in Table 2, four out of 15 participants had living and working experience in three foreign countries, and five out of 15 were in two foreign countries before, while the remaining are in Portugal for the first time. They all came to Portugal because they had relatives who did business here. However, there were other reasons why the participants relocated to Portugal, which could be divided into several categories: (1) a higher salary and a better potential chance for business than China; (2) a better chance for starting a profitable business than in other European countries; (3) family reunion, mainly with the husband; (4) family reunion with parents.

More specifically, the first category was represented by participants G, J, and L, who had relatives who had businesses in Portugal, and for whom it would be easier to get a job and effective market information about Portugal. Participant L, who came to Portugal in the year of 2011 with a working visa, commented: *"After graduated from university, I worked as an accountant in a company for one year, both wages and benefits were good, and I loved this job. But my mother insisted that working in Portugal for an uncle who had a retail store would be a better opportunity (...). Working and living in a European country sounded more commendable in my hometown.(...) At that time, both my big brother and I applied for the working visa to Portugal, only I got it... my mother considered that she needed one child to stay by and take care of her, so my brother discontinued to apply.... that is why I am here now... I will start a business with my husband when I will get married"*. Participant G, evoked a similar reason, despite having a different life story: *"It was impossible for me to find a GOOD job (high payment and good benefits) with the certificate of high school, but going to Portugal.....it means higher salary and better chance for entrepreneurship."*; while participant J, went to Hungary first and then transited to Portugal in the year of 2013: *"I went to Portugal for relatives.....next year I will marry my boyfriend in Austria, and then help in his Chinese restaurant."*

Participants A, C, E, F, and K represent the second category: they transited from other European countries to Portugal because of their relatives' keen market message. As participant C noted: *"I come to Portugal in 2006, because my sister was here..... as a single mother, alone, I have no way to start a business in Spain, whether in finance or human resource.... In Spain, no one would help me..... the only kinship will wholeheartedly help me....and in the year of 2006, the Chinese retail industry of Portugal did not reach saturation."* Participants A, E, F and K had no-money-making businesses (buzhuanqian) in previous countries and came to Portugal to seek a better business chance. As participant F, who came to Portugal at 2008, noted: *"the economic crisis in Spain, in 2008, heavily*

*attacked my small food shop in Madrid, which was instantly from slight profitable to in loss....there was no way out for me, I can only seek refuge with my sister's daughter who was in Portugal, from being an employee for her until now partnered with her in running retail stores.... There is a saying in China that a tree moves to die, and a man moves to live..... Businessmen must always be alert to the local market and be flexible enough.....only in this way, can we live and have food to eat (making money).”* Participant K continued: *“The living environment and benefits in the Netherlands were better than those in Portugal, but running a Chinese restaurant there made slight profits. With the increasingly stringent labour policies, only regular employees could be hired....Illegal workers.....impossible.....which made business easily in the loss. Under such circumstances, I travelled to Portugal in 2004 after the suggestion of my brother who had a retail store in Portugal.....he said it would be much easier to make money in Portugal than in the Netherlands.....that was indeed the case, in the year 2004, there were very few Chinese in Portugal, even fewer businessmen in the retail industry....making money was much easier than it is now. ”*

The third category is represented by participants B, D, H and I who come to Portugal to join their husbands. As B and H said in detail: *“The long-term separation between husband and wife is not conducive to family stability. Once I had the opportunity to reunite with my husband, there was no doubt I would reunite..... The family can only be taken care of by wife.... men, they do not know to take care of themselves, to say nothing of gathering and keeping money.... don't have many sensible men in the world....only the wife joins and support him, he can start a business.... the man goes out to work while the woman looks after the house, such an arrangement could result in a blissful family and successful business.”* Participant D came to Portugal in 2004 because she married a man who was in Portugal, *“I knew him by marriage interview (xiangqin)... in Madrid, my husband and I first met on a blind date arranged by his uncle who knew me in Uganda.... My diligence in the Chinese community of Uganda was famous, that was why his uncle suggested him to go to Madrid and had a look at me..... I worked in a Chinese restaurant then, and the working environment was bad.... I knew clearly that I have to consider marriage at the age of 22.... I did not have a rich family background, and parents helped me nothing....I wanted to leave the Chinese restaurant and changed my destiny through marriage, so I come to Portugal with him after the first blind date....”* Participant D also knew her husband by a marriage interview, and then came to Portugal, in 2004, after marriage.

The final category is represented by the second-generation of Chinese immigrants - participants M, N and O – who come to Portugal because of their parents. Participant O came to Portugal directly from China, in 2000, for parents' reunion, and M came for the same



reason, in 2004. M said: “I come to Portugal in 2004 for family reunion....I was eight years old then...and my parents had a retail store in Portugal.” Participant N added: “My parents moved to Portugal from Italy, maybe for a better business opportunity in Portugal.... After they started a retail store, I went to Portugal for a family reunion in 2000.... I was 5 years old then....”

All in all, the 15 participants came to Portugal for similar reasons. On the one hand, all had relatives' network in Portugal and wanted to find a better business chance; on the other hand, they sought family reunion, resulting in a blissful family and a better business chance.

### 3.1.2 Making sense of the living and working experience in Portugal

Table 3 summarizes the main understanding of living and working in Portugal, among the surveyed participants.

Participants	Profession	In Portugal, how do you make sense of...	
		the living experiences? (Weather; safety healthy eating;)	the working experience?
A	Shareholder of retail	Computer games. For money	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
B	Shareholder of retail	variety shows. For money	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
C	Shareholder of retail	fitness; kids; for money.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
D	Owner of retail	fitness; kids; for money.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
E	Shareholder of retail	fitness; variety shows; for money.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
F	Shareholder of retail	variety shows; for money.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
G	Wholesaler	For money.	Busy; fiercer competition.
H	Shareholder of retail	variety shows; for money.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
I	Wholesaler	For money.	Busy; fiercer competition.
J	Clothing seller	variety shows; for money.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors, fiercer competition.
K	Owner of retail	kids; for money.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
L	Clothing seller	Fitness; variety shows.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
M	Shareholder of retail	Boring; computer games; variety shows.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.
N	Shareholder	Boring; fitness; variety	Busy; fiercer competition.

Participants	Profession	In Portugal, how do you make sense of...	
		the living experiences? (Weather; safety healthy eating;)	the working experience?
	of dental clinic	shows.	
<b>O</b>	Owner of retail	for money.	Busy; customers; employees; vendors; fiercer competition.

Table 3 - Participants' understanding of the living and working experience in Portugal

Regarding the living experience in Portugal, all participants mentioned the good weather, healthy food, and safety in Portugal. Another consistent theme mentioned by 13 participants, about the experience of living in Portugal, was making money. The 13 participants said their work were almost equal to their life. When asked about leisure and entertainment, participants who had no kids preferred to search the internet (playing computer games or watching Chinese variety shows) to waste time and relaxing. The participants who had kids would take care of them during their non-working time. Participants C, D, E, L, and N mentioned fitness in their spare time, and participants C and D emphasized: *“as a foreigner in Portugal, making money is important for me to a better life, but health is more important.... Not few Chinese migrants have worked hard to make money, and suddenly found they had cancer.....such kind of cases were heard too much....I do not want to make money with my life, so fitness is a daily routine for me.”*

Participants I and O illustrate the extreme examples for whom life equals work. Participant O explained: *“Everyday I open the store from 9:00 in the morning and close it around 21:00. It will be 22:00 when I arrive at home. When I finish all and lie on the bed, it is around 23:00. Every day is the same and keeps repeating.”* Participant I further described his job: *“(be a) vendor is not easy, the fiercer competition pushes me forward, and heavy stress tortures me to insomnia every night.”* Participants M and N, as Chinese second-generation immigrants, go back to China every year. Contrasting with their monotonous life in Portugal, the rich and colourful stay in China make them feel boring in Portugal. Participant M described: *“the life in Portugal is so, so, so boring that I can only play a computer game and watch variety shows to waste time.... it is so boring in Portugal that I am always thinking about going back to China when I finish the master's degree in Porto.”*

About their understanding of the working experience in Portugal, all participants mentioned a busy experience and fiercer competition. Twelve out of 15 participants run retail

stores in Portugal, and two out of 15 were wholesalers, while only one was a shareholder of a dental clinic.

In the retail stores, the participants mentioned the complicated relationship with customers and employees, which were full of hidden and complex cultural differences. Participants A, B, E, F, H, J, K, L, and O mentioned the difficulty in dealing with customers' relationships: *"the complicated customers trying to call the police at every turn.....actually nobody does it at China.....theft occurs every day in store, we bear the loss, while the thief does not assume any responsibility even if the police arrives..... the invisible discrimination has always existed in the store, for instance, people call us Chinoca.....and customers urinate in the dressingroom..."* However, participant D interpreted these working issues differently, *"the Chinese retail stores in Portugal belong to the low-end service industry. We work in this industry, whether in China or in Portugal, so the unfair treatment or contradictions with customers are inevitable, which cannot be all classified as a race issue. And most of the contradictions are caused by language communicating obstacles."*

Regarding the employees, participant D mentioned: *"it is not easy to keep human resources now. Even though I want to continue a working contract with a Portuguese employee, for instance, he would reject..... according to my 10-years retail experience, it is easier to find Brazilian employees working longer than Portuguese...."* In terms of employment, Participant A added: *"It is not easy to recruit Chinese employees now....the young Chinese are reluctant to leave China to work in foreign countries.... China is keeping a rapid development, even though overseas Chinese are constantly looking for opportunities to return home....Chinese employees are demanding a higher salary now...."* Participant C added: *"we Chinese employers clearly know that Chinese employees will not always work for us. Whenever there is an opportunity, they will think about starting their own business.... Marriage often means a great possibility of leaving....Most Chinese couple will try their best to start a business, even a small one...."* Participant F continued the topic: *"We Chinese, especially Qingtianness and Wenzhouness, no one would think of working for others.... Even if being an employee, it is temporary... being a boss is the goal...."*

About the fiercer competition in the retail industry, participant B mentioned that: *"the Chinese retail industry has long been saturated, but the same type of stores have kept running.....in addition to the competition among Chinese peers, there are more and more branded cheap stores, for instance, Primark in clothing, and Tiger in daily necessities, and KIKO in cosmetic.....these branded cheap stores will easily take away our customers with low price, good service, and brand effect...."* About the wholesaler, the fiercer competition was not only from Portugal and China but also from Spain. Participant G, who is

a wholesaler of a Spanish pet brand, described: *"the competition among same collections are from China, Portugal, and Spain. I have to try my best to lower the price and keep the quality to retain my customers...."* Participants I, who is a Chinese jewellery wholesaler in Lisboa, described her working experience in Portugal: *"the economy in Portugal was not as good as before, the small retail stores are unable to exist while the big Chinese retail stores are keeping increase running.....most of my customers are small retail stores..... explore new customers is my difficulty...."* Another issue mentioned by the wholesalers is the customers' debt, which participant G felt deeply: *"Since it is normal for the retail sellers delay payment on, how to skilfully get back the arrears is also very challenging for us vendors.... If improperly handling, the trading relationship will be broken."* Participants also mentioned the debts of retailers: *"That is why I reject debts from customers, and small retailers often buy collections with cash....except the big customer (dakehu), I will consider owning for him/her to establish a stable relationship...."*

As the only participant in a different industry, participant N described his work in Lisboa as follows: *"the performance is unstable....the dental clinic need to stabilize a large number of customers, and all of these require accumulation of time and reputation.....the dental clinics are saturated in Portugal, it is not easy to take away and keep customers."*

All in all, participants described their living and working experience in Portugal by emphasizing the challenges to succeed and the fierce competition.

### **3.1.3 Main working challenges arising from the decision to relocate to Portugal**

The answer to this question overlapped the themes previously addressed, for instance, the busy working status, the fiercer competition, the complicated relationship with three different national employees (Portuguese, Chinese and Brazilian), and customers. Therefore, only the supplementary data is herein detailed.

Participant F said: *"The most important thing was to find a job when I decided to relocate to Portugal.... Even if I worked for relatives or friends, I was very afraid of being hated and lose the job.....As a woman arriving in a strange foreign country, I knew nothing and spoke nothing..... I knew I had no advantage in the job....Therefore, in addition to the fixed working hours, I had to cook for everyone, wash the boss families' clothes, and clean the house....as far as possible to please my employer..... just if I wanted to keep my job...."*

Participant J continued: *“The most difficult thing for me was the (Portuguese) language... as a clothing seller, I have to deal with all customers’ problems...how to quickly learn to speak Portuguese was a big challenge for me since I decided to relocate to Portugal. Even now, having worked here for 5 years, how to effectively communicate with customers is also an issue that I have to face from time to time. For troubled customers, I can only let the Portuguese staff solve their problems, after all, the language is very important.”*

Participant E elaborates on the differences between Chinese and Portuguese: *“Frequently, I have to chat with Portuguese customers to make them think that I am nice and friendly.....However, in China, we usually talk to people when there are situations.... Everyone is busy.... Chatting is not so popular in China....I have to change my thinking and chat with them to cater to their needs and culture....”*

Participant B, as a store manager of a certain Chinese retail chain store, expressed her working concerns: *“It is impossible for me to go back to China except for retirement....I am only familiar with tasks in a retail store. If... I say.... If I went back to China, what can I do?Without any knowledge, or other working experience, and high education background, finding a good job seems an idiotic nonsense. At least, in Portugal, Chinese employers are facing an imminent Chinese labour shortage as Chinese youth are unwillingly to cometo Portugal for working, therefore the existing Chinese employees, compared with the same job in China, get a better treatment.”*

All participants clearly knew that going abroad was a road of no return. Participant F explained: *“There is no turning back....Most overseas Chinese know that.... If I went to go back to China, what can I do in China? Yes, I heard that some overseas Chinese went back to China, they made investments or started another industry.... But the end of the returning story was ultimately the need to find another way to go abroad again beforethey lost all money.... Society is very realistic, they cannot make money in China, where the business rules are completely different.... Making money in China is harder than in Europe.... ”*

Participant K, who moved from being a shareholder of a Chinese chain of retail stores to owner of an independent retail store, described: *“(we) cooperated with my husband five friends, and opened 15 retail stores in different cities, from 2006 to 2009.... The main advantage of this partnership was lessening the burden and financial risk at the initial stage. However, the more shops we opened, the more conflicts we had.... Some shareholders were busy with all the stores, while others did nothing except taking dividends.... In Chinese idioms, the empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. The joint-stock cooperation, will not remain the same, will change in someday.... After a period of conflict, we decided to separate and pick up branches.... Now my husband and I run this retail store independently, and my family enjoys more freedom than partnership stores... And we are still best friends with the other shareholders....”*

Participant A, B, C, E, F, and H, as chain store partners, expressed the same concern as participant K experienced: *"In the details, sometimes there will be disagreements among our shareholders, but until now, we are in the same direction."* Participant C added: *"Currently, every shareholder has money to make, balance and peace are kept by money.... Once stores cannot make profits, everything will be less simple as now....We all know, peace brings money, however, when money cannot be made, peace will be broken..."*

In summary, all participants added a few otherworking issues they facedwhen they decided to moveto Portugal. In addition tothe busy working status, fiercer competition, complicated relationship with employees and customers, they also namedthe hardship of early integration without knowing the local language, the difficulty in effectivelycommunicatewith customers, the changes in the capital investment toopen new stores, and finally, the certainty that they have chosen a road of no return.

### **3.1.4 Main family challenges arising from the decision to relocate to Portugal**

The participants mentioned several familychallenges since they arrived in Portugal: marriage, growing-up, childreducation, and support to the elderly. The issue of couples' (husband and wife) separation, had been described previously, so it is no longer repeated.

Fora Chinese immigrant, the family is a non-divisible part of life. All participants mentioned that generally, it was their parents/relatives whostrongly suggested, supported and arranged their way to go abroad. Participant F said: *"When I was around twenty years old if an overseas man was introduced to me by interview marriage (xiangqin), it would be a matter of great pride....At that time, I had no idea of how hard it was to make money in Europe until arriving in Madrid...."* Participant E, L, and M, who are still single girls, expressed thesame opinion, *"I will not consider going back China except if I marry a man who lives in China.... Definitely, I will first consider the Chinese businessmen who are in Europe, especially in Portugal...."* Participant L addeddetails: *"When I chatted with my mom by Wechat (weixin), sometimes I expressed my intentionto return to China but my mom always disagrees....for her, she has a girl abroad, which is a pride...but I am around 28 years old, I have to consider my marriage.... It is so hard to find a good man fora relationship, especially in Portugal, a country with a small Chinese community..."* Participant J, who had a boyfriend in Austria, also shared some information about her boyfriend and the plan for marriage: *"He is Qingtianness, too.... Both of us are Qingtianness, having the same outlook on life, values, and family, and these will be easier for us to*

*communicate and understand each other....he is running a Chinese restaurant there....we knew each other by computer game.... We plan to marry next year, and then I will go to Austria and join his family and business....Wherever my husband is, and I will follow....*” Participant N, who had been in Portugal since he was five years old, expressed his standard for a wife: *“I never take a foreigner into consideration.... I love Chinese girls.... it will be better if she was from Qingtian or Wenzhou, and then we could understand each other easily.... ”*

During the interviews, participants with kids mentioned the difficulties of children's growing-up and education: *“I am not expected her to take the old road (laolu) as my mother and I did,”* said participant B from Qingtian, a Chinese shareholder and store manager of one Chinese chain of retail stores, who arrived in Portugal on the year of 2013 for family reunion with the husband: *“I prefer her to grow up and work in China, and never go to other country, only stay in China. Going abroad.... it is a road of no return to China.”* She was sitting on the table of a restaurant in Vila doConde and had lunch in a hurry to continue to replenish stocks: *“My husband and I will no doubt go back to China when retirement, if... I mean ... my daughter grew up in Portugal with us, she would have a great possibility to stay in Portugal, for more familiar friends and living environment. She would not like China, where she is not familiar with and has no friends, and the result is that she is likely to be alone in Portugal, without us!”* Participant I also kept two sons in China and expressed the same concerns as participant B: *“I have no idea of how long I will stay in Portugal since the business is so unsatisfactory..... It will be more secure for my sons to be educated in China..... if we find a better business chance in other foreign country or China, we will relocate to...In addition, it would not be easy for my sons to be educated on a road for academic or profession, except if they are very diligent and excellent.... In the aspect of children's studying at school, to be honest, I know nothing and help nothing..... My friend's son, finishing the education of high school in Lisboa, was unable to find a good job and finally worked at his mother's whole store....I don't think it is a good way for children school in Portugal....”*

However, some participants, notably participants C, D, and K, shared completely different ideas. Participant K, reported some family changes after they start running their own independent store: *“during the period of partnership stores, I was so busy with stores' expansion that I had no time to take care of all three children, thus I had to return three kids to China and let my parents take care of them....now, I took my three children back to Portugal without hesitation..... The family must be together.... Even though I am always worrying about their behaviour at school, I have tried my best to help them.... They are arranged to take part in the after-school tutorial to catch up learning.... With the*

*professional teachers' coaching, my absence from their study will be made up....I got little education from school, do not want my children to be like me...."* Participants C and D, whose children were studying at the Oporto British School, continued the topic:*"It was not bad to foster kids in China when they were little babies. Now they are growing up and should be educated at school, as parents, we must accompany with them, especially the girl.... we knew nothing about the education of Portuguese school, only provided the best quality of education as possible as we could.... Sought to accompany for children's study from the after-school counselling.... That's all that I can do for them.... How to study at school was only on their own.... I experienced the difficulties without good education.... I cannot speak English and good Portuguese, I need frequently Portuguese help for my business and daily life.... It is an obstacle for my business development that I am not proficient in Portuguese.... I do not have a high expectation for my children's studying, but at least, he/she should be a master in Portuguese, English, and Mandarin, and has the ability to feed himself/herself...."*

During the interviews, it was found that the combination of stores (an independent store or a partnership store) may heavily affect the relationship between parents and children (living together or apart). Participant B, as a shareholder of a Chinese chain retail store, experienced this initial dilemma:*"Every day, I am so busy with the operation of the store that really has no time.... Another shareholder will have a disagreement if I kept my daughter around and was unable to keep the working hours.... after all, it is still because there's no money.... I was unable to run an independent store by myself...."*

In terms of support to the elderly, Participants B, C, and K, expressed their guilty for their parents (at least one has passed away). When mentioning the mother, participants B's eyes always kept red:*"When my mother got cancer, I did not know that and had no accompanied and care for her.... Her first surgery was without children' accompanying, only her sister.... Even though I accompanied her in seeking treatment and several operations during the rest of her life, I am still full of guilty for her.... I did not accompany her well.... my mother was only 54 years old and when she died, too young...."* Participant C mentioned that she usually goes to China every summer holiday, with children:*"I went back to China, not only for children's mandarin studying but also for accompanying my father.... After I knew my father got sick in 2015, going back to China in each summer holiday has been a fixed schedule for me.... I won't regret...."* Participant F added:*"When my parent was sick, I was unable to accompany and take care of him, I felt filial.... but men's eyes only focus on the next generation with limited energy....about parents, only full of guilty...."* Participant J expressed her higher understanding of her mother since



being abroad: *"When I was in China, I never considered the difficulty of my mother.... Only when I separated from her, having to face all the difficulties from life and work, and then I deeply understood her.... Going abroad and living alone made me grow up....really grow up..... Every day, I will contact with mom by Wechat, and talk everything with her....the long distance did not mean the separation between spirits...."*

All in all, there are a few differences regarding family challenges, depending on the marital status. For the young generation, marriage seemed to be a key issue, not only for the single but also for the family. For the Chinese business migrants, marriage always meant another start, often combined with the start of a business. For the participants with kids, concerns related to how to educate children seem to be the main issue. Lastly, most participants felt guilty for the separation of parents and tried their best to accompanying their parents in China.

### **3.2. How do Chinese business immigrants cope with the challenges?**

All respondents experienced difficulties in finding a job and learning Portuguese. Therefore, coping with these two main challenges were frequently referred.

To find a job, all participants referred that they would never considered moving to Portugal until their relatives did business in the country, such they did not worry about finding a job upon arrival. There was a close relationship between family and work for Chinese migrants in Portugal, especially the Chinese business migrants. Only husband and wife living together, could afford to start a new business. Participant B said: *"My husband never considered to start a business until I reunited with him.... After I worked and lived in Portugal for 2 years, I knew how to manage a retail store, and then we cooperated with a relative and started a partnership store...."* Participants H and I had the same experience: the family reunion between husband and wife inspired their enthusiasm to start a business.

However, participants A, E, M, N and O, the young generation started a business with the support from parents, not from a spouse. The parents of five participants also lived and worked in Portugal, so they offered social, financial and human resources support to the young generation. Participant A said: *"Without my parents' help, I would have no ability to run the retail business, especially at the initial stage....Without my parents' social interaction with shareholders, I would have no chance to cooperate with the partnership store...."* Participant K continued: *"My husband and I terminated the management of partnership stores, but the cooperation completed capital accumulation and laid the financial foundation for running our independent store.... At this point, I need to thank, my partners...."*

Regarding the learning of Portuguese, participants A, B, E, H, J, and K said: "*I learned Portuguese by myself. I communicated with Portuguese and Brazilian workmates one by one to learn the language. In the beginning, it was not easy.... Learning a new language needs time.... after one year, I was familiar with the Portuguese used in the shop....*" Participant E, who took part in Portuguese classes said: "*Learning Portuguese should be in daily life, the Portuguese class saved the time to learn the new language....*"

When solving the problems with customers, all participants expressed their method, "*Let Portuguese employees solve it, they know how to communicate with them.... Never calculated on the small part with customers....*"

Family challenges were also critical and marriage was often a coping tool. In referring to marriage, single girls expressed their focus on men's family background, especially financial status. Participant E, J, L, and M expressed a similar opinion: "*I won't consider a man whose family financial status is lower than mine.... I have to consider starting a business since marriage.... If the man was unable to get any financial support from family, it would be a nonsense....*" Participant J added: "*I want to marry my boyfriend in Austria, not only because he is caring for me and diligent in the job, but also because I do not need to continue working for others.... I will have my own business to run with new family....*" Participant E continued the topic: "*Marriage is the second reincarnation, I knew clearly life cannot rely on anyone. But as a migrant, I want to seek a spouse who could support both family and business....If I had the chance to make a choice, I hope to find a better one....his family, his personality, his financial status.... The family financial status decides the level of difficulties of starting-up at the initial stage....we don't need to consider bank loan or borrow money from relatives and friends....*"

Participants E and L expressed their expectation for the interview marriages arranged by parents, relatives, and friends. Participant L said: "*I am busy with working every day, and the social network is so narrow that I do not have a chance to know new friends. It is a better way to know new boys by interview marriages....*" Participant E continued: "*I have no expectation to my marriage, I can predict that I will marry one man by interview marriage, he will be a businessman, and then I will join him after marriage....*"

The participants with kids expressed the relationship between their financial status and the children's education, noting the power of money to cope with the integration challenges. Participant D, as the owner of five stores, felt deeply the power of money: "*When my three kids were young, I do not have enough finance to support their good education in Portugal. After several years' hard*

*working, I was able to take care of them around.... I am able to hire a babysitter (ayi) to cook, send two kids to CLIP – Oporto International School.... Now they are all around me and get the best care and education.... Money can exchange family reunion....Life looks like a wheel to run, and money is a lubricant.” Many contradictions can be solved by money...” Participant K continued:“Now my husband and I are running an independent store, and I am able to manage my time to take care of kids. In terms of human resource of the store, I just hire one more Chinese employee to take care of the store operation of store....”*

In terms of parents’ support, participants not only offered the financial support, but also provided companionship and love. Participants C and D, whose parents got cancer, referred: *“If I did not make enough money, how can I keep my parent get good treatment in hospital? Money is not all powerful, but it gives me the confidence and belief to face the difficulties of life..... Money kept my parent's life longer.... Making money is a way to protect family....”* Participant K mentioned: *“Every year, I invite my parents to Portugal, and enjoy the family time.... My children and I also go back to China, accompanying my parents....”* Participants B and C said: *“Each summer holiday, I will return to China to accompany my father..... working diligently gives me the time to accompany him....”*

Facing the issues of family and working, it seemed that all participants clearly knew how to cope with them. The Chinese business migrants, having their own social network and unique outlook of value, coped with all issues step by step. The process of starting a business and making money were prioritized, which also laid the financial foundation for them to solve the other issues.

### **3.3. How do they envision the future?**

When we talked about this topic, all participants expressed no ideas firstly. Participant D mentioned: *“Time has gone day by day, and life is uneventful.... My task is to foster my three children, maintain the elderly, take care of the stores and keep healthy.... I have no big ambition, and I know my ability..... I simply help my husband to keep a blissful family and a good business, that's all.... As for my three children, I try my best to offer a good education for them, only expect they are able to feed themselves in the future.... My girl, I hope she can help her husband in both family and career in the future by what she has learned .... as for my father, I want him to be healthy and living longer, so that I can accompany with him more time...I know clearly that the Chinese retail business in Portugal will be more and more difficult, but I have the self-belief that I am able to seek other opportunity and chance in Portugal before the crisis.... the past*

*experience in Africa showed me that I have the strong ability to adapt to difficulties and crisis.... Finally, I need to do fitness to keep healthy.... my sick father and sick friends vividly told me the importance of keeping healthy.... I cannot be sick; my family and business need me.... I won't consider moving to other countries or go back to China now, Portugal is a good country for the retired life...."*

Participant K continued: *"I expect my kids to finish the bachelor's degree at least, I did not receive a good education and went through the sufferings... I don't want my kids to go through this disadvantage.... when they grow up and go to other countries, maybe I will leave Portugal to live with them.... Portugal is a good country suitable for the elderly..."*

Participant C, as a single mother, said: *"re-marriage is not an attractive topic to me now.... I just want to focus on working and making money, and my son needs me.... A woman needs a job and economic independence... I love working, and it brings the self-confidence and self-independence.... the past experience told me that I can only be self-reliant when facing difficulties, and money gives me the safety.... I am always keeping alert to the changes in the Chinese retail market of Portugal.... seeking more chance to be stronger.... In addition, keeping healthy is very important for me, I do not want to be stopped because of sickness...."*

Single participants (E, J, L, and M) similarly noted: *"Marriage seems to be the primary issue to be solved in my current stage..... marriage interviews are so frequent that I am panic..... felt the oppression caught by time...."* Participant J planned to move to Austria with the boyfriend next year, and Participant E and L will continue marriage interviews until marriage. Participants N and O, as single boys in the interviews, expressed their prospects: *"All single guys have the same problem, finding a girl/ boy to marry.... I want to find a girl who can help me in both in family and business...."*

Participant F expressed her anxiety: *"I am satisfied with the current life, only expect my daughter's marriage....the business is not so bad, and I am healthy...."*

Participant G, as an ambitious businessman, planned to expand his wholesaling in three years: *"I want to maintain the old customers and explore a new one, hire more employees, and make profits with all guys.... All my spare time is fulfilled with work, luckily, I have the support of my wife and family...."*

Participants A, B, and H, as the shareholders of the Chinese chain retail stores, expressed their prospects to do business and real estate: *"I hope the business keep stable, so I can have enough money to buy a real estate in my hometown...."*

Participant I, who has been facing poor business performance, prospected: *"I hope the economy of Portugal will be better, and then I can continue the business in Portugal. No businessman wants to*

*leave familiar market and customers.... I am making efforts to explore new customers and create all kinds of channels to communicate with customers in time, such as the online orders and APP of stores....”*

All participants, except the single girls, had no intention to return to China. All participants expressed: *“I am familiar with all in Portugal now... China is developing rapidly and has lots of chances..... the chances are not ready for me, I know my ability.... What I can do is more integrated into the society of Portugal, to seek a better chance here...”* Participant H also said: *“I hope Portugal always keep safe.... the economy keeps stable and developing...such we could do the business longer....”*

In the interviews, it was found a positive relationship between interviewees' current economic status and future prospects. The highest the economic level of the respondents, the more comfortable they were to deal with the problems encountered in their work and life, and the higher their expectations for the future. As participant D emphasized: *“Money is a lubricant, and many contradictions in life and work could be solved with it.”*

Consistently with the challenges, future prospects referred to the business, family, children's education, and marriage, which constitute most of their lives. They generally kept a positive and optimistic attitude towards life and work.

### **3.4. How Chinese business immigrants in Portugal portrait themselves in terms of identity?**

Interestingly, personal growing and level of education were related to this issue. When the question in terms of identity was raised among the Chinese in Portugal, most interviewees asked the question: *“Where is your hometown?”* and *“What do you do (for living)?”*. However, when the issue was extended to the comparison between Chinese and foreigners, the question in terms of identity was easily changed to: *“What is your nationality?”*. Therefore, in this study, this identity issues will be related to participants' profession and living and growing-up experience in the host country.

When asked about *“How do you portrait yourself in terms of identity with a long living and working experience in Portugal?”* most participants (except M, N and O) replied that they never considered it because for them it was not a question that they would consider: *“The Asian face determines I am Chinese, not Portuguese. And I never consider to change my nationality, and forget where I am from...for the local, I am a Chinese; for my friends and relatives in China, I am an overseas Chinese; for me, I am a Chinese*

*working in Portugal to make money (zhuangqian)... nobody preferred to stay in Portugal without making money...except family members working together in the same shop. I almost have no time to socialize with anyone... in the only spare time, I socialize with my friends in China or in other countries with Wechat... Wechat and business take up most of my life... We contact with business partners including Portuguese and Chinese vendors with Wechat too..."*Participants M and N, who thought about the question, continued: *"Even though I am able to speak fluent Portuguese as the native, I am Chinese without any doubt... I never consider to marry Portuguese, and it must be Chinese..."*

Only Participant O, focusing on the topic, expressed his consideration in terms of identity, *"I have been growing up and studying in Portugal from 6 years old. When I was a kid, I did not find any difference from other Portuguese kids, I thought I was the same as them. When I started to go to school especially university, I slowly realized the difference... I was not totally Portuguese nor totally Chinese...I was unable to speak fluent mandarin as Portuguese...I have no Chinese friends except family members and relatives...I had been lost for a long time... and then I am learning Mandarin by Chinese TV series from internet now... try to know more about China...How to define myself? At first, I am Chinese without any doubt. Secondly, I knew both Chinese and Portuguese cultures, I do not need to define myself as belonging to only one side... I take the essence and discard the dregs from both cultures, and combine them... I am the combination of both Chinese and Portuguese, or I prefer to define myself as the international citizen besides as Chinese...I have a Portuguese girlfriend, and want to marry her... but my parents did not agree and thought we were from the different world, it was not easy to live together... my parents cannot understand, but I will stick to my own ideas..."*

Participant E also expressed her opinion in terms of identity: *"When I was firstly engaged in the retail business in Portugal, I did not realize any issues with the facial difference... In my mind, I thought it was just a job, I tried to find cheaper goods and sold for the local... however, when the conflict happened between the shop and the customers, the bad customers preferred to shout at me and let me roll back to China... When the thief stole away goods and we called the police, the policeman always arrived at the scene after one hour... the police station is next to my shop... when the local called the police, they could arrive at the scene in 10 minutes... by the strong contrast and unfairness, I realized, I am Chinese, never and ever will be Portuguese or any other foreigner... Why I tried my best to make money? In foreign countries, any small setbacks could crack my life, and then nobody will help me only money..."* Participant M continued, *"I grew up in Portugal and spoke fluent Portuguese as native, but I am still Chinese. Now the economic development of China is so rapid that I will go back China to find a job after graduation...the life in Portugal is so boring..."*

All in all, all interviewees clearly expressed that they are Chinese, or overseas Chinese in Portugal, in spite of their differences about the language, growing-up and education background, and occupation.

## 4. Discussion

The findings of this research reveal that: (1) this group of Chinese business immigrants in Portugal had a tendency to promote the collective, had a deep respect for age, and placed importance on the reputation achieved through hard work and successful enterprise; (2) their occupation determined that they had to be exposed to interact daily with the host culture and selectively acquire some of its behaviours, while maintaining their own culture, social networks and custom. This approach is consistent with “*integration*” stage from Berry (1993) model of acculturation; (3) in terms of identity, most of the interviewees (13 of 15 participants) were working in retail stores and living in ethnically diverse areas, and they were in a stable period of the achievement ethnic identity, which is consistent with Phinney (1996a, 1996b)’s statement. The experience of participant O confirms that ethnic identity is part of an individual’s overall sense of self that began to develop in early childhood and traditionally crystallizes in late adolescence/early adulthood, as described by Erikson (1994).

However, either in Berry (1993)’s model of acculturation or in Phinney (1996a, 1996b)’s model of ethnic identity, the ethnic discrimination and individuals’ occupation are two dimensions that were ignored in shaping acculturation and ethnic identity. By exposing the narratives of Chinese business immigrants in Portugal, in terms of their understanding of the challenges, coping, prospects, and identity, this study adds to the existing knowledge two contributions. The first, is the confirmation that all interviewees are regularly (and daily) exposed to the host culture, because of the nature of their occupation. Second, is the observation that daily disputes between Chinese businessmen and customers entail ethnic discrimination. Thus, the issues of occupation and ethnic discrimination have to be taken into account when studying the acculturation and ethnic identity of immigrants and have to be included in future research models.



## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1. Limitations and Future Research**

While the research findings are informative and advance the understanding of Chinese business immigrants in Portugal, some limitations should be noted. Firstly, the findings are limited to the sample size and composition. The 15 participants are mainly from Qingtian and Wenzhou, and other Chinese immigrants who also run business in Portugal from other Chinese region were ignored in this study. Thus, the narratives of these 15 participants do not represent all Chinese business immigrants in Portugal, only reflecting some characteristics of this group.

Secondly, another limitation of this study refers to the design of the interview guide. Due to the openness of the questions, many family and work issues might have been ignored and not mentioned, simply because the interviewees were not asked about.

Thirdly, the author of this research is a Qingtianness in Portugal who is currently working in a retail business. While this direct immersion into the context and ethnic group was helpful to target the research participants and collect the data, which would not be available otherwise, it might be a limitation in terms of data interpretation.

Given these limitations, future research may extend the findings of this study by further examining the differences between the first-generation of Chinese immigrants and the second-generation of Chinese immigrants in Portugal. Also, a similar approach might examine the Chinese business immigrants in other European countries. Furthermore, the return of migrants to China can be a future research. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of this group and provide the host country more in-depth information to understand and support them.

### **5.2. Practical Implications**

The findings of this study have also some practical implications for different stakeholders.

For Portuguese migrant authorities (for instant regarding the Golden Visa given to Chinese or other foreigners), the basic level of Portuguese (such as A1) could be taken into consideration to renew the residence card. As shown, the knowledge of the local language is a key issue in dealing with daily challenges and pursuing businesses. In addition, additional

training in English, Portuguese, French and Chinese could be provided, for free and online (through SEF website), regarding the main cultural and legal issues related to the host country.

For Chinese immigrants in Portugal, such as the Chinese business immigrants and Chinese students, the findings of this study suggest that they should strengthen the mutual information exchange and communication. Given the emphasis that all participants gave to the local networks, and the use of Wechat, the use of this instrument can be improved. For instance, “Portuguese BaoMaJie”, as a Wechat official account, publishes all kinds of information, provides immigration investment, offers travelling services, and establishes communication groups for Chinese immigrants in Portugal, which provide a channel for Chinese immigrants to exchange information and integrate quickly into the host country. “Portuguese BaoMaJie” is an excellent example for the Chinese students in Portugal.

For the Chinese families/newcomers still in China, the findings of this study warn for the importance of learning the host language, for the relevance of family support and work, and the meaning of hard work. In terms of ethnic discrimination, the data are informative about some of the negative experiences faced by the Chinese community in Portugal. This hidden discrimination was reported by all immigrants and perceived as inevitable, harming their successful integration. Portuguese community, schools and families are better work together to prevent it. For instance, the schools could organize different cultural exchange courses to strengthen the understanding among students with multicultural background. And the families, should keep children’s learning their own as well as the host culture and languages, encouraging the interaction with all ethnic friends.

As a management dissertation, the managerial implications are also relevant, including remittances, return migration, employment and diaphora. Firstly, remittances and return migration provide significant contribution to the economic development of immigrants’ hometown. Fangduoduo (2017) reported on the website, that Qingtian was ranked as the foreign exchange country top 1 in China, and the number of return migration from Qingtian was nearly 100,000. The total investment and trade capital were about 200 billion RMB, and the total donation of social welfare funds was more than 300 million RMB. These figures show the economic relevance of Chinese immigration from the region.

Secondly, Chinese immigration in Portugal arbitrages employment opportunities and contributes to the labor force in the host country. From the interviews, it was found that the Chinese retailers preferred to hire Portuguese employees to make positive relationship

with local customers and get environmental changes rapidly. As shown, local employees were in a better position to adapt their business and marketing strategies to suite the changing consumer behaviour. Thirdly, for Chinese migrants, migration is not a random process. They are often attracted to destinations where have been settled previously by family members or ethnic friends, thus to reduce uncertainty, increase the provision of home country “cultural goods” and exploit home-based networks. For instance, Vila do Conde in Porto and Martim Moniz in Lisbon, represent two niches of Chinese location. Lots of Chinese migrants are living there and doing Portugal-China trades, building a positive cooperation and links between Chinese and Portuguese governments: “the Belt and Road” brings greater confidence for private Chinese companies in Portugal.

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