



« International Market Entry Strategies: Facilitating Factors and Challenges »

Master degree in International Business

« Sara Simões Martins »

Leiria, « September » of « 2025 »



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Internship Report under the supervision of Professor Ana Catarina Cadima Lisboa from the School of Technology and Management of Polytechnic University of Leiria and Dr. Marilina Louro, head of Marketing at Riber Alves, S.A

Leiria, « September » of « 2025 »

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Dedication

To my family and friends, who guided me the best through this journey

“If you can dream it, you can do it.”

- Enzo Ferrari

Acknowledgments

Throughout this master's program, I was supported by many people who were eager to help and guide me through every stage. Unfortunately, there are no specific words, hugs, or enough time to thank all of them (I think everyone will understand this). First, I want to thank my supervisor, Professor Ana Catarina Cadima Lisboa. I am grateful for all the guidance and advice, as well as for your consistent availability. Thank you, Professor, for acknowledging my worth and capabilities.

I want to thank all the professors who guided and supported me from the very first day of my master's. It could not have been better.

I would also like to thank the company that welcomed me, Riberalves, as well as everyone involved, who made me feel welcome every single day. A special thank you to Marilina Louro and Miguel Pimenta for accepting me as an intern in the first place and for providing me with valuable guidance throughout the internship, as well as for sharing their valuable advice and insights about the professional world. I am also grateful to Inês Almeida and Pedro Botas, who were there with me from day one, making everything softer.

I also want to thank my parents, Ana and Nelson, and my sister, Eva, for all the love and support they have given me throughout my life, both personally and professionally. May you continue to guide me so I can always be the best version of myself. Thank you for always being my foundation.

I also want to thank all my friends, those who have been with me since the very first day I left my hometown to pursue higher education, and those I met along the way who, after five years, a bachelor's degree, and a master's, are still by my side as we support each other on this beautiful journey that is life. It is impossible to name everyone, but may it be forever.

Lastly, I would like to extend a very special thank you to my friend and colleague, Joana Tomé, for being by my side throughout these five years and for helping keep each other sane along the way. No matter how many lows this journey may have had, there was always a moment for us to rise together, whether here or somewhere else in the world. Thank you all.

Resumo

Este relatório analisa os fatores facilitadores e os desafios associados às estratégias de entrada em mercados internacionais a partir da experiência prática adquirida durante o estágio de mestrado na empresa Riber Alves, Comércio e Indústria de Produtos Alimentares, S.A. As atividades abrangeram tarefas de apoio à internacionalização, incluindo a elaboração de materiais de comunicação em marketing, pesquisa de mercado, conformidade regulatória e campanhas promocionais, permitindo uma aplicação prática de conceitos-chave de negócios internacionais. A análise foi estruturada em termos de dimensões estratégicas, como adaptação ao mercado, modos de entrada, posicionamento da marca e Comunicação Integrada de Marketing (IMC). A reflexão crítica evidencia a necessidade de equilibrar consistência global com capacidade de resposta local, salientando a pertinência de estratégias híbridas e culturalmente adaptáveis.

O relatório apresenta ainda recomendações orientadas para otimização da coordenação interfuncional e para implementação de ciclos sistemáticos de feedback, de modo a reforçar o aprendizado organizacional e a flexibilidade estratégica. No seu conjunto, o estágio proporcionou uma oportunidade de integração entre a formação académica e a prática empresarial, contribuindo para o desenvolvimento de competências na gestão de processos de internacionalização no setor alimentar.

Palavras-chave: Internacionalização; Estratégias de Entrada em Mercados; Globalização; Exportação; Adaptação Estratégica; Indústria do Bacalhau

Abstract

This report, analyzes the facilitating factors and challenges associated with international market entry strategies based on first-hand experience gained during a master's internship at Riberalves, Comércio e Indústria de Produtos Alimentares, S.A. The activities carried out included supporting tasks in the internationalization process, such as the development marketing communication materials, market research, regulatory compliance and promotional campaigns, which allowed for the practical application of key international business concepts. The analysis was structured around strategic dimensions such as market adaptation, entry modes, brand positioning and Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). The critical highlights the need to balance global consistency with local responsiveness, emphasizing the relevance of hybrid and culturally adaptable strategies.

The report also provides recommendations for optimizing cross-functional coordination and implementing systematic feedback cycles to strengthen organizational learning and strategic flexibility. Overall, internship represented a valuable opportunity to bridge academic knowledge and business practice, contributing to the development of skills in managing internationalization processes in the food sector.

Keywords: Internationalization; Market Entry Strategies; Glocalization; Export; Marketing; Strategic Adaptation; Codfish Industry

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

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ESTG	School of Technology and Management
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1. Introduction

In today's globalized economy, international market entry has transitioned from a mere option to a strategic imperative for firms seeking sustained growth, improved competitiveness, and long-term resilience (Cavusgil et al., 2020). Businesses are increasingly expanding beyond their borders to access new consumer markets, mitigate risks, and capitalize on global demand (Meyer et al., 2023). However, this expansion is inherently complex, demanding navigation of a challenging confluence of institutional heterogeneity, cultural discrepancies, and intricate operational demands (Morschett et al., 2015), which requires more than simply importing home-market strategies. Instead, firms must execute knowledge-based adaptive strategies that provide global consistency while responding locally (Pfajjar et al., 2024; Zou & Cavusgil, 2002).

The choice of "International Market Entry Strategies: Facilitating Factors and Challenges" as the general theme is both in line with the Master's in International Business and the international aspect of the internship. The theme is particularly relevant given the mounting pressure on firms to expand responsibly, taking into account diverse consumer preferences, legislation, and market competition (Dunning, 1998; Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). The internship provided a unique lens through which to observe these theoretical tenets in real-world application, making this specific area of study particularly pertinent and insightful for a comprehensive analysis.

The internship, conducted from October 2024 to March 2025, aimed to enhance International Business academic education by exposing students to real-world issues in export marketing, brand positioning, and executing global strategy. The primary purpose of this report is to analyze how market entry strategy concepts (choice of entry mode, market adaptation, communication targeting consumers, and coordinated marketing) were used and tested during the internship.

The report also purports to critically analyze the correspondence between theoretical knowledge and real-life decision-making in international growth cases. This report consists of six major chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical foundations underpinning international market entry strategies. Chapter 3 presents a clear outline of the host organization, its organizational structure, markets, and positioning

strategy. Chapter 4 outlines the internship program, emphasizing particular tasks and responsibilities. Chapter 5 presents a critical assessment of the experience and offers suggestions for improvement. Chapter 6 presents general conclusions and personal reflections on the professional skills acquired.

This analysis aims to bridge the gap between practice and theory, providing insight into the practical implementation of global strategy in the food export industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Internationalization

Internationalization is a dynamic and multifaceted process that compels firms to navigate institutional heterogeneity, cultural discrepancy, and operating complexity (Bai et al., 2022; Beugelsdijk et al., 2018). To understand it fully, it is important to examine what drives firms to consider expanding into foreign markets. With this in mind, existing literature suggests frameworks that offer valuable insights into why firms navigate global complexity. Cavusgil, Knight, and Riesenberger (2020) argue that in today's globalized environment, internationalization has become essential for firms to survive, expand and improve profitability. They highlight market access, economies of scale and opportunities for learning as central drivers behind this process. Firms often expand internationally to access larger and more diverse customer bases, which allows them to exploit growth opportunities beyond their domestic markets (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). Economies of scale are another central motivator, as international expansion enables firms to spread fixed costs over larger production volumes, improving efficiency and competitiveness (Hitt et al., 2019). Finally, learning advantages arise from exposure to diverse markets and competitive environments, fostering innovation, knowledge transfer, and capability development, which can enhance long-term performance (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Together, these drivers explain why firms pursue internationalization as a strategic growth path, balancing risk with potential benefits from global engagement.

One other enlightening insight is the pathway used by firms to internationalize. In that regard, there are several theoretical models proposed in the literature. Johanson and Vahlne's Uppsala Model (1977; 2009), explains internationalization as a gradual, knowledge-based process, where firms begin with low-risk-entry modes like exporting and increase their commitment as they accumulate experiential learning. This perspective emphasizes incremental commitment and experiential learning.

Dunning's Eclectic Paradigm (1998) provides an explanation for entry mode decisions, arguing that ownership-specific advantages, location-specific advantages, and internationalization benefits (OLI) determine the most suitable internationalization pathway. It highlights the interplay of ownership, location, and internalization advantages in entry mode choice. This paradigm remains central in assessing why firms may choose low-

commitment strategies such as exports of partnerships, as opposed to high-commitment modes like foreign direct investment.

More recent contributions, such as the Born Global perspective (e.g. Cavusgil & Knight, 2009), underscore the ability of smaller and younger firms to internationalize rapidly, leveraging knowledge and networks. This perspective focuses on firms that from inception, or very early stages, pursue international markets as a central part of their strategy, rather than gradually internationalizing after establishing a domestic base. Unlike traditional models posit (for instance, the Uppsala, which emphasize incremental learning and gradual market expansion), born globals leverage unique resources, technological capabilities and entrepreneurial orientation to overcome the liabilities of foreignness quickly and internationalize from an early stage (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004)

Together, these theories highlight that internationalization is a resource-dependent, strategic, and dynamic process that must be aligned with firm-specific capabilities and the heterogeneous conditions of foreign markets.

2.2.Facilitating Factor and Challenges

Internationalization process, namely market entry, encloses challenges, but can also benefit from some facilitating factors.

2.2.1. Facilitating Factors

Research on international business identifies a range of facilitating factors that shape successful market entry. Resources such as human capital, financial strength, brand reputation, and managerial commitment are critical enablers of internationalization (Javalgi & Grossman, 2014). Further, the ability to foster hybrid organizational cultures and intercultural learning, facilitate the effective transfer and adaptation of management practices across borders (Bausch et al., 2022). For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), additional aspects such as entrepreneur characteristics appear to influence the likelihood and intensity of cross-border engagement (Milevoj et al., 2021).

External market conditions, including host country market size, trade openness, institutional quality, and political stability, also play a decisive role in foreign operations (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2015; Whitelock & Jobber, 2004). Finally, institutional support in the form of favorable government policies, trade agreements, and infrastructural

development provides a crucial external foundation for firms pursuing international growth (Luo & Tung, 2007).

2.2.2. Challenges

The literature also pinpoints significant challenges that constrain international market entry. Cultural and institutional distance, that is, differences in language, norms, regulations, and business practices, pose adaptation difficulties that can undermine performance and increase transaction costs (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999; Luo & Shenkar, 2011). Host country risks, including political instability, regulatory unpredictability, and weak legal frameworks further complicate foreign operations (e.g. Meyer et al., 2009). Operational barriers such as supply chain complexity, infrastructure gaps, and challenges of maintaining quality control across dispersed markets add to the burden of internationalization (Cavusgil et al., 2020). Variations in legal frameworks, regulatory regimes, infrastructure, and cultural norms represent challenges in understanding and entering foreign markets (Morschett et al., 2015). Issues as the liability of foreignness also need to be considered (Denk et al., 2012).

2.3. Dimensions

Considering the multidimensionality of internationalization, it is crucial to acknowledge these different dimensions. Analyzing internationalization through a multidimensional theoretical lens, including strategic, operational, and cultural dimensions of internationalization, not only highlights the process as resource-dependent, dynamic, and path-dependent. but also provides a more appropriate view of the phenomenon.

2.3.1. Strategic Dimension

2.3.1.1. Market Entry Strategic Approaches

From a strategic perspective, entry mode selection remains a central decision, as firms balance risk, resource commitment, and market opportunities (Agarwal & Ramaswami, 1992; Datta et al., 2002). Options range from low-commitment exports to high-commitment foreign direct investment, with choices influenced by firm-specific capabilities and contextual conditions.

Choosing an effective entry strategy is a building block for all firms wanting to internationalize. The selection of an entry mode (exports, alliances, or greenfield investment) has significant implications for the level of control, exposure to risk, upfront costs, and the

ability to respond to local circumstances (Lin & Ho, 2019). However, these strategic decisions are not made in isolation; they are influenced by a complex environment characterized by institutional uncertainty, cultural engagement, logistical limitations, and resource weaknesses within. The following section analyzes the classic and contemporary approaches to market entry strategy and identifies the primary challenges that hinder firms during global expansion.

Traditional internationalization theory prescribes specific entry modes, including exporting, licensing, franchising, joint ventures, and wholly owned subsidiaries (Brouthers & Hennart, 2007). Each of these differs in terms of degree of investment, control, risk, and flexibility. Exporting offers low risk but limits control over brand experience and distribution, Licensing and Franchising ease operating burdens but require close contractual control to ensure quality and strategic fit (Erramilli et al., 2002). Joint ventures are granted access to local market expertise and institutional legitimacy, but they also entail relational risks due to shared decision-making (Chetty et al. 2024). Greenfield investments enable complete control and synergy with corporate objectives, but they require substantial capital and longer timeframes to achieve their objectives (Wan et al., 2023).

This gradual, experience-based growth mirrors the logic of the Uppsala Model of Internationalization (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977), which posits that firms gradually enter foreign markets through low-commitment modes, such as exporting, and develop the capacity to make higher-commitment investments as experiential learning accumulates. The new model focuses on the liability of outsidership rather than the liability of foreignness, and the relevant context of internationalization is the network (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). According to this view, success abroad increasingly depends on winning insider positions in the right local networks based on trust, mutual learning, and relationships.

The internationalization theory (Buckley & Casson, 1998) suggests that firms internalize activities when external market transactions are costlier or riskier than internal governance. While still relevant, this theory has evolved in tandem with new strategic models that are better suited to today's dynamic global markets.

Strategic planning is essential for the long-term success of international market entry. Effective entry strategies must go beyond cost-benefit analysis and align closely with a firm's internal resources, competitive positioning, and long-term international objectives (Buckley & Casson, 1998). A robust strategic plan typically considers market segmentation,

timing, resource allocation, and scalability to ensure sustainable growth on an international level.

Brouthers et al. (2008) highlight the value of the real options perspective, which enables organizations to modify investments incrementally as uncertainties unfold, making it especially useful during turbulent market conditions. Likewise, the integration of internal resources with external market data provides an organization more leeway and efficiency (Tuominen et al., 2022).

Strategic planning nowadays must be adaptive and dynamic, embracing market forces. It must balance global uniformity with local responsiveness, often through a transitional approach that weds standardization and adaptation in pursuit of greater efficiency and market fit.

2.3.1.2. Adaptation vs. Standardization

Once the market entry mode is determined and researchers have overcome initial hurdles, firms must decide how to structure their marketing efforts to position themselves appropriately within the local context. A recurring debate in international marketing concerns the trade-off and tension between adaptation and standardization. While standardized approaches involve reusing the same marketing efforts across every nation, promising efficiency and brand consistency, adaptation involves modifying efforts better to match local institutions, cultures, and consumer preferences, which is often required to address cultural differences, institutional voids, and consumer preferences (Mandler et al., 2021; Ryans et al., 2003; Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003). Zou and Cavusgil (2002) propose that a successful global marketing strategy entails a balance between adaptation and standardization. Their framework stresses that firms must align their internal resources with the external market environment to achieve superior performance, underlining the importance of tailoring product offerings and promotional strategies to local market characteristics while safeguarding brand coherence.

Adaptation is the process of conforming the elements of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion) to the individualized needs and situations of the local market (Powers & Loyka, 2010). It occurs through the deliberate modification of marketing programs, product design, pricing, promotion, and distribution to meet the cultural, legal, and economic

characteristics of the target market. Such responsiveness creates consumer acceptance and improves competitive position (Power & Loyka, 2010).

The process of adaptation to foreign markets is at once a strategic adjustment and a tactical adaptation. As Martin et al. (2021) state, highly experienced organizations with robust network connections are better positioned to capture market intelligence and leverage it. This enhances the timeliness of decision-making in product-market fit, customer choice, and regulatory compliance. Adaptation also eliminates the likelihood of cultural dissonance, which damages brand image and arrests long-term growth (Martín, Chetty, & Bai, 2022).

The conceptual framework for adapting in this manner is rooted in contingency theory, which posits that organizational strategies must be tailored to environmental conditions to be effective. Powers and Loyka (2010) further argue that adaptation increases customer relevance, enhances perceived authenticity, and raises brand credibility in multicultural contexts.

This approach is especially relevant when entering culturally distant markets, where standardized campaigns fall short. Adaptation enables segmentation to be done more effectively, to communicate in culturally sensitive terms, and to provide a more tailored customer experience. It also allows firms to adapt to local laws, norms, and competitive practices, improving their chances of acceptance and longer-term survival (Powers & Loyka, 2010). Additionally, according to Martín et al. (2022) market adaptation has been shown to impact foreign performance by increasing customer satisfaction, loyalty, and market share penetration. It also encourages innovation since companies constantly need to improve their products and services to remain relevant in multicultural settings. Tactically managed, adaptation reinforces the firm's competitive advantage but also its capacity to internationalize durably.

Standardization, on its hand, pursues uniformity of product lines and brand communication across markets. Standardization enables firms to leverage economies of scale, lower marketing costs, and convey a consistent, global brand image (Steenkamp, 2020).

According to Steenkamp (2020), customers in the majority of countries increasingly seek familiarity, prestige, and credibility from strong global brands. Through the standardization of products, firms can establish brand equity, enhance awareness, and convey trustworthiness globally.

Standardization is most suitable when there are uniform customer preferences in the marketplace, or when the brand itself is the primary value proposition. However, when it overreaches, it can lead to a poor market fit, customer alienation, and subpar performance, particularly in cultures with unique identities or regulatory requirements (Steenkamp, 2020).

In practice, most firms adopt a hybrid strategy, referred to as glocalization, which attempts to reconcile global homogeneity and coherence with local adaptability and responsiveness.

Lin, Xiaoyu and Jianqiang (2023) define glocalization as the strategic adaptation of specific factors (such as packaging, pricing, and advertising content) without altering the core of the brand.

This adaptive approach enables firms to be operationally effective and simultaneously respond to the complexity of each market (Lin et al., 2023).

For example, an international food brand may retain its logo and product line, but modify flavor profiles or advertising language to align with local tastes and cultural norms. Glocalization has been particularly effective for businesses seeking to remain competitive in multiple international markets while preserving their brand identity (Lin et al., 2023).

2.3.1.3. Consumer and Positioning Strategic Decisions

Research demonstrates that firms implementing customer-focused strategies are more likely to drive innovation and achieve sustainable growth. A consumer-focused approach is particularly posited as a foundation of success in international marketing, particularly in new markets where consumers' needs, cultural values, and purchasing behaviors may differ significantly from those in domestic markets (Fernandes et al., 2020; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Mapping customer journeys further strengthens personalization and relationship building. In that regard, Kokins et al., (2021) show that identifying market-specific touchpoints allows firms to tailor experiences and deepen engagement. In addition, local customer flows' understanding and adaptation are essential for establishing trust, satisfaction, and loyalty in new contexts (Fernandes et al., 2020; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990).

Brand positioning in international markets requires creating a unique, consistent, and culturally relevant image. Competitive strength derives from multiple sources, including price-quality perceptions, innovation, symbolic value, and alignment with cultural narratives

(Della Lena & Timming, 2023). Successful positioning balances distinctiveness with familiarity, ensuring the brand stands out without alienating local consumers.

Firms that combine R&D and marketing investments achieve stronger differentiation, especially when these efforts are aligned (Koshksaray et al., 2023). Rua and Santos (2022) further argue that positional strength mediates the link between internal competencies (e.g., innovation, orientation) and competitive advantage. These findings suggest that positioning strategies must be integrated with broader organizational capabilities to sustain global competitiveness.

Positioning strategies must also be localized to reflect different interpretations of brand meanings in different contexts (Osmanoglu et al., 2024). For example, a French luxury brand may emphasize heritage or family tradition in one market, but high exclusivity and innovation in another. This contextualization fosters emotional resonance and differentiation enabling stronger connections with diverse consumer groups (Osmanoglu et al., 2024).

2.3.2. Operational Dimension

Operationally, several issues need to be taken into account in internationalization. International markets are characterized by heightened turbulence, especially in the current setting (Cavusgil et al., 2021; Ojha et al., 2021). Institutional uncertainty, or variability in legal structures, enforcement quality, and regulatory transparency, is one of the most troublesome risks, raising transaction costs and subjecting firms to sudden rule changes (Buckley & Casson, 1998). Thus, compliance with foreign market legal and regulatory frameworks further shapes operational feasibility (Peng, 2008). Considering business resilience plans (Apasrawirote and Yawised, 2024) or employing a modular approach, commencing internationalization through small pilots, partnerships, or project-based ventures that can be expanded over time (Martín, Chetty & Bai, 2022) can also be way of coping with the volatility. Agile methods, such as effectual decision-making models which focus on incremental learning, local networking, and flexible goal setting are likewise suited to dynamic or turbulent markets (Chetty et al., 2024). Furthermore, effective supply chain and logistics management is essential, as firms must navigate customs procedures, infrastructure limitations, and potential disruptions in global networks (Christopher, 2016).

Practical issues such as human resource management and balancing the recruitment, training, and integration of local employees with expatriates are a relevant challenge (Schuler et al., 2002).

Finally, operational issues related to marketing elements, quality control, and local partnerships must be addressed to align global standards with host market expectations (Leonidou & Hultman, 2019). Many SMEs adopt an experimental and effectual approach, venturing into markets with limited prior knowledge and relying on trial-and-error learning, heightening the risk of poor partner selection and inadequate responsiveness to institutional conditions (Martín, Chetty, & Bai, 2022). In fact, non-localizing firms, as reported by Tuominen et al. (2022), tend to suffer from poor brand interaction and superficial market penetration. These risks are particularly pronounced in industries dealing with perishable commodities, where firms must contend with complex logistical issues such as infrastructure bottlenecks, customs delays, and unreliable distribution networks, all of which can undermine product quality and inflate operational costs. Communication issues also become especially critical in international scenarios as brand communications must navigate language, cultural, and media differences (Porcu et al., 2019). Without integration, brands risk losing credibility or diluting brand equity. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) mitigates this risk by synchronizing timing, tone, and content of messages across platforms, ensuring consistency while respecting local nuances (Laurie & Mortimer, 2019; Porcu et al., 2019).

Butkouskaya et al. (2024) demonstrate that SMEs with strong IMC frameworks achieve greater strategic flexibility and market responsiveness, with IMC mediating the impact of market orientation on firm performance. Further, Butkouskaya et al. (2023) find that consistency, interactivity and connectivity within omnichannel IMC directly enhance product and service satisfaction. These results confirm that IMC not only supports coherent global messaging but also enables firms to personalize engagement at scale in diverse markets.

2.3.3. Cultural Dimension

Firms expanding internationally face institutional heterogeneity and cultural dissimilarity, which act as significant barriers to effective market entry and operations. Morschett et al. (2015) mention that internationalization is shaped by institutional differences, operational complexities and cultural dissimilarities. Institutional heterogeneity refers to differences in

formal rules, regulations, governance structures, and enforcement across countries, which can create uncertainty and increase transaction costs (Peng, 2003). As such, firms may rely on trusted local partners, adapt supply chains to local infrastructure gaps, or modify marketing approaches to suit local institutional and cultural contexts (Khanna & Palepu, 1997; Meyer & Nguyen, 2005). Additionally, cultural dissimilarity encompasses differences in values, norms, and behaviors that influence business practices, communication, and consumer preferences (Hofstede, 2001). This leads to potentially different expectations around trust, satisfaction, and service. Such cultural dissimilarities evidence relational factors such as tone, transparency and authenticity as critical for customer acceptance across borders. Hence, businesses must adapt not only their content but also their customer service structure and communication styles to fulfill culturally ingrained expectations (Hopkins et al., 2009; Yang & Battocchio, 2020). The importance of cultural sensitivity is, thus, key to accelerate market take-up, enhance brand distinctiveness, and strengthen relationship performance over time (Hopkins et al., 2009; Yang & Battocchio, 2020).

3. Characterization of the Host Institution

Riberalves, Comércio e Indústria de Produtos Alimentares, S.A. (Riberalves) is a public limited liability company specializing in the production and distribution of food products, with a primary focus on codfish. Headquartered in Turcifal, Torres Vedras, where its first factory is located, the company also manages a second factory in Moita, Setúbal. Established in 1985 by João Alves, Riberalves has evolved into a leading name in the codfish industry, renowned for its dedication to quality and innovation. What began as a small door-to-door codfish sales operation has grown into an international enterprise, recognized for its pioneering contributions to the processing and commercialization of codfish products.

3.1. Important Milestones in the History of Riberalves

Riberalves' evolution from a modest distribution company to a world leader in the codfish market is characterized by wise choices, revolutionary milestones, and an unwavering dedication to tradition and quality.

Riberalves began as a distribution company operating as a cash-and-carry business with a strong focus on the food sector. Over time, codfish became the centerpiece of its activities, leading the company to expand its services to include the renting of codfish dryers. This shift marked the early stages of Riberalves' evolution. In 1990, following the sale of its cash-and-carry business, João Alves strategically decided to dedicate itself solely to codfish processing sales. The company's first major investment was with this shift: the building of the Carvalhal industrial complex in Torres Vedras. This building, now the headquarters of Riberalves, became the core of the company's business and the springboard for future development.

The first steps away from home for Riberalves came in 1996, when the company entered Brazil, its largest export market to date. From there, the company continued to expand, entering Angola and other markets that speak Portuguese, typically referred to as the "Mercado da Saudade". Such actions prove the commitment of Riberalves to offering their products around the globe, particularly in those places that are culturally accustomed to or close to the cuisine prepared by the Portuguese.

A breakthrough was in 2002 when Comimba, a codfish processing factory at Moita, was acquired. The more than 20 million euros investment enabled Riberalves to innovate the Ready-to-Cook Codfish philosophy, a revolutionary method of offering pre-soaked codfish

for improved convenience. The development of the Moita plant aligns with the world's largest codfish processing factory, boasting a production area of 40,000 square meters, further solidifying the company's market leadership.

In 2007, Riberalves established Riberalves Angola and opened its first facilities in Luanda, marking another step in its international expansion. That same year, the company introduced Academia do Bacalhau within the Comimba industrial complex, a unique space celebrating Portuguese culture and the heritage of codfish. This initiative provided an opportunity for partners and friends to experience the production process and taste the company's iconic product.

Riberalves expanded further in 2008 when it founded Riberalves Brasil, creating a commercial structure to better serve its largest export market. With a dedicated team in Brazil, the company enhanced its strength in its whole distribution network and ability to meet its local consumer needs. Such is proof of Riberalves' continuous commitment to innovation, tradition, and global outreach.

Nowadays, Riberalves continues its legacy of innovation and expansion by entering new international markets and introducing cutting-edge products. To stay in touch with consumer needs, it continues to develop ready-to-cook boneless cod loins, which make preparation easier while retaining the essence of real Portuguese codfish. Furthermore, the company has entered the ready-to-eat market by introducing meals based on codfish to cater to the hectic lives of modern consumers. Such developments demonstrate Riberalves' commitment to combining tradition and innovation, making its products continue to be relevant and attractive to a wide, international group of clients. (Riberalves, 2025)

3.2. Vision, mission and values

Riberalves is committed to a well-defined mission, vision, and values that reflect its dedication to tradition, sustainability, and customer satisfaction.

The mission defined by Riberalves is to honor the history, tradition, quality, and flavor of Portuguese Codfish, sharing with families all over the world the passion for healthy food products, of sustainable origin, suited to the needs of consumers. Their vision is to be a company recognized globally for its passion and leadership in codfish production, as well as

the development of new, sustainable, and high-quality products. Riberalves' values are: the client focus, decision quality, and assuming responsibility with courage.

These values underscore Riberalves' dedication to upholding its leadership position in the codfish market and continuously innovating in order to address a global marketplace.

3.3.Human Resources

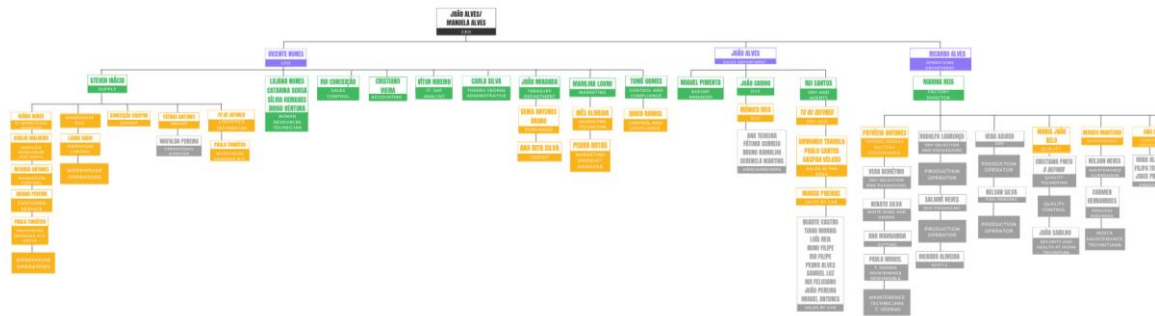


Figure 1 – Organizational Chart (Source: Own Elaboration).

Riberalves feeds on the commitment and expertise of its staff, which is instrumental in the company's achievement and its expansion around the world.

Riberalves has approximately 500 workers, divided into various job categories, including board and administration, managers and directors, technicians, and producers. Workers in administrative and management occupations mostly possess a bachelor's or master's level of education, showing the firm's dedication to keeping employees educated and experienced. The employees' age group ranges from 24 to 63 years, indicating the organization's willingness to accept diverse backgrounds and experiences. Riberalves is such a traditionally rooted company that highly values and respects the work of women across its operations.

I had my internship at the Marketing and Communication Department. This department is led by a dynamic team headed by Marilina Louro. Pedro Botas is the Marketing Product Manager, and Inês Almeida works as a Marketing Assistant here. During my stay with Riberalves, I was close to the collaboration with Miguel Pimenta, who is the Export Manager. His specific position crosses company marketing strategies with goals in international expansion. It gave me valuable insight into how close collaboration between departments can impact the overall management of a global brand.

The diverse and talented team at Riberalves reflects the company's commitment to fostering an inclusive and skilled workforce, enabling it to adapt to challenges and maintain its position as a leader in the codfish industry.

3.4. Client and Supplier Characterization

Riberalves' operations are deeply tangled with the clients it is serving and the suppliers on which it depends, both domestically and abroad. Such knowledge about its client mix and sourcing process provides insight into just why the company can adapt well to different markets. The next sections outline Riberalves's strategy in serving its diverse clients and its service delivery within the supply chain.

3.4.1. National Client Characterization

Riberalves' national market is diversified about the variety of clients, reflecting a multifaceted approach towards distribution and customer involvement.

The national market clients include Storekeepers, modern retail distributors such as Sonae, Dia, Lidl, Aldi, as well as other commercial areas, Agents (persons who devote themselves to selling to smaller commercial areas and restaurants), Sells-by-car (On-Trade channel), Final Customers, Retailers, and other clients.

This wide-ranging client base highlights Riberalves' adaptability and commitment to meeting the needs of various market segments, from large retail chains to individual consumers.

3.4.2. International Client Characterization

Riberalves has established itself as a significant player in international markets, leveraging its strong cultural and business connections to expand its global presence.

For the past 10 years, Riberalves has been expanding internationally. As I have said before, the company started in Brazil and Angola, where Riberalves sells 85% of its production. It already has offices and personnel to manage the business directly, mainly because the countries share a similar culture to Portugal.

They now export to over 20 countries, including France, Switzerland, the United States, Macao, China, Mozambique, the United Arab Emirates, the Dominican Republic, and others.

This extensive international reach underscores Riberalves' dedication to sharing its products worldwide, adapting to diverse markets while maintaining its commitment to quality and tradition.

3.4.3. Supplier Characterization

Riberalves places a strong emphasis on sourcing high-quality raw materials to ensure the excellence of its products while adhering to rigorous sustainability and safety standards.

Riberalves' raw material is frozen and sometimes salted green codfish, which can be sourced from different parts of the globe, depending on the species, ranging from the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans to the Pacific Ocean. 90% of the suppliers are Norwegian and Icelandic.

The company ensures that, from the receipt of raw materials to the dispatch of the finished product, this is implemented with a certified quality and food security system by ISF-Food. Furthermore, Riberalves is committed to sustainable practices by recognizing the MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) mark on its raw materials, which are sourced only through sustainable fishing methods.

This commitment to quality and responsibility reflects Riberalves' dedication to responsible practices and delivering premium products to its global customers.

3.5. Modernizing Tradition: Riberalves' Transition and Market Evolution

Riberalves, a traditionally rich company for its codfish activity, is nowadays undergoing deep change because of the new consumer demand and international opportunities. This note presents the latest strategic steps of the company, including internationalization, premium positioning of products, and an attempt to make the home consumer desire new codfish products. These operations transform Riberalves into an extremely solid company in these changing markets, while maintaining its cultural roots.

A key focus of Riberalves' recent activities has been its commitment to expanding internationally, targeting both culturally connected and high-potential markets. The company has strengthened its presence in Brazil, Angola, and the broader "Mercado da Saudade", while also exploring new opportunities in North America, Europe, and Asia. To this end, Riberalves has educated international consumers regarding the unique "Portuguese cure" for codfish, emphasizing its cultural and culinary heritage. It has engaged with local

distributors and retailers to build a robust market presence, thereby fueling long-term growth.

As part of its strategy, Riberalves elevated the positioning of its products to target high-income demographics. By emphasizing the premium quality, superior flavor, and ease of its products, the company has gained an edge in this competitive global market. This involves innovative items, such as boneless cod loins and ready-to-eat products, that cater to the changing tastes of consumers seeking luxury and convenience. These strategies form part of the corporation's vision for codfish to represent not only a standard but also something of quality and class.

Domestically, Riberalves is leading a transformative shift in Portuguese consumption habits. While dry codfish has been a traditional favorite, the company is actively promoting desalted frozen codfish as a modern alternative. This approach addresses the needs of contemporary households by offering a product that saves time and guarantees consistent quality without compromising the authenticity of Portuguese cuisine. Campaigns and educational programs have been implemented to increase awareness of these benefits; however, changing long-standing habits remains a significant challenge.

These developments were fueled by several factors, including increased global demand for high-quality, sustainably produced seafood products and the need to adapt to contemporary lifestyles. Consumers are increasingly demanding ready-to-cook and convenient-to-prepare meals, which make Riberalves' cutting-edge products especially timely. In addition, the company's initiatives to make international markets aware of Portuguese culinary traditions have enhanced its international brand reputation, generated new revenue streams, and increased its competitiveness. Through investments in market access strategies and product development, Riberalves has become a leader in the codfish industry, combining cultural heritage and contemporary consumer needs.

Riberalves' recent evolution reflects its commitment to striking a balance between tradition and innovation. By expanding internationally, positioning itself as a premium brand, and driving domestic transformation, the company is well-positioned for sustained growth. These strategic initiatives not only enhance Riberalves' market presence but also solidify its role as a pioneer in the codfish sector, offering lessons on how to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing global market.

3.6.SWOT and Critical Analysis

The SWOT analysis serves as a cornerstone for understanding Riberalves' strategic position and guiding its future direction. By systematically evaluating the company's internal capabilities and external environment, this tool provides a clear roadmap for sustainable growth. The following topic presents a detailed SWOT analysis, followed by a critical examination of how these insights shape Riberalves' strategic decisions and prospects.

3.6.1. SWOT

The SWOT Analysis (Figure 2) provides an in-depth picture of Riberalves' current situation by analyzing its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This model outlines the competitive edge of the firm, identifies weaknesses that need to be addressed, highlights expansion opportunities, and presents outside challenges, providing useful information to inform strategic choices. This SWOT Analysis was conducted based on a previous internship report by Cecilia Henriques (2008), completed in Riberalves, and personal notes taken during the internship period.



Figure 2 – SWOT Analysis (Source: Own Elaboration).

By leveraging its strengths, addressing weaknesses, capitalizing on opportunities, and mitigating potential threats, Riberalves can further strengthen its position in the global codfish market and continue its trajectory of sustainable growth and innovation.

3.6.2. Critical Analysis

Riberalves has an impressive competitive position in the global codfish industry, thanks to an articulated set of clear internal strengths, which also implies strategic constraints and risks that require proactive management. The long-term recognition of the brand and the company's extensive experience in codfish processing give it strong competitiveness, positioning the company in an excellent market position, especially among Portuguese-speaking markets. Investments in state-of-the-art facilities, including the largest codfish processing plant in the world, along with certifications such as MSC, reinforce both operational efficiency and its commitment to sustainability (an increasingly relevant value for consumers and regulatory bodies alike).

However, these strengths must be critically examined in light of internal limitations. Riberalves' high dependence on codfish as its sole product line restricts its ability to adapt to broader culinary trends or regional consumer preferences. While this focus ensures consistency and specialization, it also narrows the innovation potential and makes diversification more challenging. Moreover, the company's firm reliance on a few core export markets (namely Brazil and Angola) exposes it to considerable geopolitical and economic risks. Adding to these challenges is the company's structure as a family-owned business, which at times results in bureaucratic inefficiencies and reduced departmental autonomy. These operational limitations may hinder responsiveness and slow down decision-making in competitive international environments. To mitigate this, the company could strengthen its governance structure by introducing more professionalized management layers, reducing reliance on family-driven decision-making, and empowering departmental autonomy. Furthermore, diversification strategies, whether to expand into related seafood categories or develop new ready-to-eat product lines, are based on other existing products made by meat or other types of fish. Similarly, broadening the export portfolio beyond Lusophone markets to include culturally proximate European countries such as Spain or Italy would lessen exposure to the political and economic volatility of Brazil and Angola, which are countries with uncertain economies or politics.

From an external perspective, the company has several promising growth opportunities, particularly in the rising global demand for sustainable and health-conscious seafood products. Consumers increasingly seek convenience, nutrition, and authenticity —trends that align well with Riberalves’ capabilities. Expanding its product portfolio to include gourmet lines (such as boneless loins, fleur de sel, salted cod, and Portuguese specialties like Pastéis de Bacalhau or Pataniscas, as well as ready-to-eat and low-sodium formats, could help the company reach new market segments without compromising its traditional identity. Efforts to innovate through “Portuguese Cure” techniques applied to other fish species could also open additional market space.

Nonetheless, these opportunities must be seized with caution. Environmental concerns related to fish stocks, potential disruptions in the codfish supply chain, and rising raw material costs all pose significant threats to the industry. In the short term, the company has responded by exploring new markets and expanding its product offerings. However, there is still a less defined long-term approach to mitigating these risks, and this approach has not been systematically developed as part of corporate planning. While the SWOT analysis is invaluable in identifying these key issues, its effectiveness depends on translating insight into concrete action, a step that currently appears underdeveloped within Riberalves’ strategic approach.

Mitigation of these external risks involves a systematic approach to risk management. For example, taking long-term supply contracts and investing in collaborations with certified sustainable fisheries would decrease exposure to fluctuations in the stock. Venturing into aquaculture-based solutions or diversifying into other species of fish could also protect against dependence on the resources of codfish. Managing the rising costs of inputs could also be achieved by the company using hedging mechanisms, forging closer links with logistics suppliers, and maximizing processing efficiencies. Moreover, finally, integrating sustainability and traceability initiatives within the brand’s global narrative would serve both regulatory pressures and reinforce consumer confidence within ever more aware markets.

In summary, Riberalves’ strengths provide a solid foundation for growth, but long-term competitiveness will require a more diversified and agile strategy. Leveraging its brand credibility while addressing internal inefficiencies and expanding its product range through culturally resonant innovation will be critical to sustaining international expansion and reinforcing its leadership in the codfish sector.

4. Internship Programme

This chapter provides an overview of the most important work I performed during my internship with Riberalves, illustrating how I applied theoretical concepts from my study cycle to practice. Besides simply informing you about my responsibilities, I will illustrate how I applied principles of strategy, international business, and marketing to practical exercises, demonstrating my ability to transfer theoretical frameworks to practical operations.

4.1. Objectives of the Internship

The internship at Riberalves pursued two goals: on the one hand, to consolidate the theoretical knowledge acquired during the Master's in International Business through its application in a real corporate environment; on the other hand, to contribute actively to the company's internationalization strategy.

The specific objectives were to, strengthen technical and analytical skills in international marketing and export management, support the Marketing and Export Departments in market research, promotional activities and regulatory compliance, develop practical competencies in SAP and project management tools, facilitate, the adaptation of communication materials to different international markets and finally, gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and facilitating factors of market entry strategies, apply theoretical concepts of international market entry strategies and produce and analyze market data.

4.2. Approach

Throughout the internship several approaches were employed to ensure the systematic collection, analysis, and application of information to the company's internationalization projects. Archival secondary data collection and analysis was used, specifically from external sources (e.g. competitors' websites, or trade statistics), and internal documents (e.g. previous catalogs, sales records, and project reports). In addition, informal interviews and daily collaboration with the Marketing and Export Managers provided valuable insights into ongoing projects. At the same time, direct observation during meetings, events, and operational activities enabled a practical understanding of Riberalves' internal processes.

The criteria guiding the choice of analyzes and projects were based on the strategic importance of the markets for the company, particularly those with potential for entry (e.g., Spain), consolidation (e.g., Brazil), or brand strengthening (e.g., Dominican Republic and Angola). In parallel, tasks were prioritized according to the company's immediate operational needs, such as catalog updates, promotional material development, and compliance with regulatory requirements for international trade.

Analytical tools and theoretical frameworks were applied to reinforce the academic rigor of the internship activities. These included SWOT and PESTEL analyzes to evaluate market environments, benchmarking techniques to compare competitor strategies and mapping of distributors and retailers to understand the dynamics of foreign markets. Furthermore, the internship made use of internationalization theories such as the Uppsala Model, Dunning's Eclectic Paradigm and the Glocalization approach, which served as interpretative lenses to connect practical observations with the theoretical concepts learned during the Master's program.

4.3. Timeline of Activities

To complement the detailed description of the activities, the following timeline summarizes the internship month by month. This table provides a clear overview of the progression of tasks and responsibilities, highlighting how the work gradually evolved from initial research activities to the execution of more complex projects and participation in international events.

Table 1 – Timeline of the Activities (Source: Own Elaboration).

<i>Activities /Months</i>	September 2024	October 2024	November 2024	December 2024	January 2025	February 2025	March 2025
Onboarding							
Definition of the Internship Goals							
Spain Market Research							
Catalogs (Brazil, International, Angola)							
France and USA Markets Research							
Dominican Republic Market							
Expofish 2024 Virtual Event							
Hiring Gift Solutions 2025							
Brazil Market Research							
SAP Skills							
Riberalves Angola Spaces' Decoration							
Creating Export Products Labels							
“2025 Nutrition Insights” Congress							

The color coding in the table indicates the status of the activity: grey indicates periods when the activity was not being carried out, green marks the months in which the activity was actively developed, and yellow represents activities scheduled or planned for that period, and red highlights phases when the activity was temporarily on standby.

As shown in the timeline, the internship began with integration and exploratory tasks, progressively incorporating market studies, catalog adaptations, and marketing materials development. From December onwards, the work expanded to include event participation and regulatory support, which required greater autonomy and close collaboration across departments. The distribution of colors reinforces the central role of Marketing and Export activities, while also evidencing the complementary involvement of Regulatory and Event-related tasks in consolidating the overall experience.

4.4. Activities Description

This subsection provides an overview of the most important work I performed during my internship with Riberalves, illustrating how I applied theoretical concepts from my study cycle to practice. Besides simply informing you about my responsibilities, I will illustrate how I applied principles of strategy, international business, and marketing to practical exercises, demonstrating my ability to transfer theoretical frameworks to practical operations.

4.4.1. Spanish Market Analysis

Since the interview date for this firm, I came to understand that they would venture into discovering the Spanish market to internationalize by offering something the Spanish people had never seen or tasted before, as the Spanish typically only eat Portuguese codfish when in Portugal. Initially, it was intended to be the location where I would work on approximately 80% of this project. However, after three months of work, the board members decided to step back from this project.

By the time I worked on the project, I met the Export Manager each Monday for 2 or 3 weeks to have him pass on some preliminary work to me. Thus, from stage 0 the initial stage I collected socio-economic data, I researched and learned about wholesalers, retail chains, supermarket and small retailers selling frozen fish or fish products, I had to research all the potential ways by which Spanish people consume cod, either with their recipes, packaging or even label specifications, to end up I carried out a Route-to-Market that cannot be shared for privacy reasons and a PESTEL Analysis that can be found on Appendix A. I discovered that in this sector, Spain could be a significant market for Portuguese Codfish products, given its existing market and the lack of competition.

Through my research, I discovered that Spain presents a promising business opportunity, with approximately 48.8 million individuals, a GDP per capita of € 31,662, as we can see in Appendix B. In Appendix C, we can see the robust tradition of fish consumption. Demand for cod, in particular, is high in regions such as Galicia and the Basque Country, and is particularly high during religious periods, including Holy Week (Semana Santa) and Christmas. Spanish purchasers are interested in sustainability, clear labeling (indicating how the fish was caught, when it was initially frozen, and its origins), and types of packaging that suit their requirements, such as desalted products, freezing trays, or small packs.

The distribution is very organized. At the wholesale level, I identified key players such as Makro, Mercamadrid in Madrid, Mercabarna in Barcelona, and Mascato in Vigo, a leader with foreign subsidiaries as shown on Appendix D. At the retail level, Spain's market is led by national chains such as Mercadona (1,600 establishments), Carrefour (500), and Lidl (600), as well as supported by robust regional operators like Eroski in the north, Consum in Catalonia and Valencia, and La Sirena, a specialist in frozen products, presented on Appendix E. Distributors such as Vigalpeixe (Vigo) and Selpromar (Seville) also highlight the importance of the frozen fish trade in Spain as we can see on Appendix F.

There is another opportunity in Spanish cuisine culture, particularly tapas. This presents excellent potential for additional cod products derived from Portuguese traditions, such as Pateis de Bacalhau or Pataniscas, as well as prepared meals. The intended marketing method was implemented in stages, beginning with restaurants, hotels, and specialty shops in Galicia and the Basque Country, followed by supermarket chains with Spanish packaging, and concluding with online promotions, seasonal advertising, and chef endorsements to build brand awareness. I discovered that Spain could be a large potential market for Portuguese codfish products, as they are fond of fish and sometimes consume more cod, and do not face much competition from others offering high-quality "cura portuguesa" products. This indicated that while the market could be favorable, an intelligent entry strategy was also necessary.

4.4.2. Catalog Design and Update

Among the most significant tasks I performed during my internship was designing and updating the product catalog, a crucial tool for supporting Riberalves' international presence in foreign markets. These tasks entailed aligning product lines and marketing strategies with

the interests of different markets, emphasizing customized communication in global business settings.

My responsibilities included updating the Brazil and Export catalogs, as well as creating a new Angola catalog. This progress began with the coordination between me and Dr. Marilina, the Marketing Manager, who was responsible for selecting products to present. We proceeded to seek approval and validation of the product selection from Dr. Miguel of the Export Department to ensure it met market requirements. For example, in Brazil, we emphasize Riberalves' premium positioning by showcasing quality products targeted at an upscale target. Both expatriates and Angolans were targeted in Angola by the catalog, with products ranging from items that appeal to the respective cuisines of the groups.

Once the products had been settled, I provided the Graphic Designer with an initial proposal in PowerPoint. We sat and mapped out potential layouts and designs, tweaking content until a final draft was achieved. The final catalog design was then submitted to a printing agency, where I obtained quotations and ordered the print according to the number specified by the concerned department. After approval, I liaised with the agency to ensure the catalogs were printed on time.

By doing so, I applied international business strategy concepts, specifically the glocalization theory, to present a brand consistent with local market requirements. In global marketing, I applied product positioning and branding strategies to develop visuals and descriptions that aligned with customer expectations across all marketplaces. Such tailor-made catalogs not only showcased the diversity of Riberalves' offerings but also optimized its brand visibility in major overseas markets.

Through the strategic planning combined with cooperative implementation, such efforts entrenched Riberalves' position in geographies such as Brazil and Angola. The initiatives underscored the importance of adapting marketing instruments to address the needs of both local and expatriate consumers, thus leading to success for the firm in the international market.

4.4.3. French and US Market Research

During my second month as an intern, I conducted market research for France and the USA, two countries in which Riberalves is already established. To do so, I collected data from multiple secondary sources, namely databases, institutional reports, competitors' websites,

trade statistics, and consumer information and employed benchmarking techniques to compare competitor strategies and mapping of distributors and retailers to understand the dynamics of foreign markets.

The collected data on distributors, retailers, and small retailers, as well as their prices, contacts, and items they trade in was compiled and analyzed. Comparisons of such products with what products Riberalves or other brands already had in stock were drawn and used as a benchmark to analyze offers to the customers in the mentioned markets.

It was directly applied from strategic and international business concepts of market dynamics and competitive positioning. Strategically, the issue was defining who the key players are within the distribution and retail channels required for effective market penetration, as well as alignment with company goals. I also evaluated pricing alternatives and product offerings as part of this critical step in how Riberalves can maintain or increase its competitive advantage. From an international business perspective, this research aimed to understand the various market forces and consumer patterns in France and the USA. I compared the product features and prices of local players, gaining an understanding of how economic determinants and culture influence purchasing behavior. This aligns with international business strategies, such as developing products and strategies that are tailored to the respective local markets. Overall, this task confirmed the importance of thorough market research in supporting strategic decision-making and cementing Riberalves' international presence.

4.4.4. Dominican Republic Market Entry Preparation

4.4.4.1. Landing Page in Spanish

As part of my responsibilities, I produced a Spanish-language landing page for Riberalves' website targeting the Dominican market. I designed a PowerPoint presentation featuring examples of effective designs, which were refined based on feedback from my supervisor and aligned with the company's branding. I also translated instruction videos and selected Dominican and Portuguese recipes to enhance cultural relevance.

Based on feedback from the Export Manager and my line manager, the final model was forwarded to production. Multiculturalism and Global Marketing principles were utilized in this project, with an emphasis on cultural sensitivity and audience-directed messaging to promote the company's global goals.

4.4.4.2. Promotional and Brand Activation Measures

To encourage Riberalves' market entry in the Dominican market, I created a concept design and collaborated with a graphic design agency to create promotional materials. They included a cooler crowner for supermarket shelves, a stand for the promoter, a flyer, and a totem to display in stores, in order to educate consumers about the Portuguese method of curing codfish. Such materials were essential for Promotional and Brand Activation Actions to engage the brand and connect with local audiences. The project relied on concepts of global marketing, International Entrepreneurship, and multiculturalism, utilizing strategic information to craft culture-specific materials and establish a strong brand image in an emerging market.

4.4.4.3. Certificate of Free Sale

One of my tasks was to assist the Export Manager in obtaining a Certificate of Free Sale. This valuable document is essential when exporting products to countries with specific regulations. This began with research and preparation of the documents to be filed, including a bill of sale, the permanent certificate, and proof of registration with the Direção Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária (DGAV). These reports were crucial in ensuring the necessary regulatory compliance to facilitate more efficient exports and adhere to international trade standards. Through this assignment, I gained a deeper understanding of regulatory requirements and the intricacies of international trade documentation.

4.4.5. Hiring Corporate Gift Solutions for 2025

As part of Riberalves' initiatives to upgrade client and partner relationships, I was tasked with coordinating the process for selecting corporate gifts to be given in 2025. The project was commenced by seeking suitable agencies that would provide tailor-made gift solutions. I wrote to five agencies, requesting quotes for two specific articles, along with their prices. Those agencies reported a willingness to collaborate more closely, organizing meetings to show their catalogs and assist with further defining the design and price of the gifts. This interaction provided greater insight into alternatives and helped keep Riberalves on course with its branding goals.

Upon this discovery process, I compiled the choices and presented them to the marketing department in a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation included a detailed breakdown

of proposed gifts, their corresponding costs, and recommendations for adjudication. This process significantly contributed to informed decision-making by the department.

In January, I was tasked with another project: searching for affordable and practical gifts for nutritionists in particular. This required finding products that would not only meet the cost requirement but also serve the needs of this specialist segment. The project captured Riberalves' passion for responsible and compassionate corporate engagement

4.4.6. “Expofish 2024” Virtual Event

I attended the Expofish virtual event as part of my internship and worked under the Export Manager's supervision, undertaking several tasks. The first step was to manage the registration process so that all necessary details were provided in the proper manner and on time. During the event, my responsibility was to collect catalogs from participating companies to serve as helpful references for future export and marketing initiatives. Furthermore, I helped coordinate and arrange contacts, ensuring business lead opportunities were documented and categorized accordingly.

Expofish also possessed a firm B2B facet, with the Export Manager communicating with various enterprises to seek out opportunities for diversifying Riberalves' worldwide base. I contributed to these by assisting in the organizational department, attending meetings, and making follow-ups when needed. The experience brought real-world exposure to how activities like Expofish play a significant role in maintaining business networks, creating new markets, and fostering firm growth. My active participation enabled me to apply my knowledge of international business and communication, gaining valuable insights from the rapidly evolving nature of export activities.

4.4.7. Brazilian Market Research

As part of my internship responsibilities, I was tasked with conducting market research for one of Riberalves' largest international markets in Brazil. With the project, I aimed to discover how local points of sale (POS) sell and highlight products, in this case codfish, and how Riberalves can better position itself in the competitive market.

The project began after my supervisor had her business trip to Brazil in November. She did store calls there, assessing the availability and visibility of Riberalves products and campaigns across various POS. My initial task was to organize and consolidate the

information she collected into a thorough briefing, where I organized the pictures taken, and she filled out the factual details.

Building on that experience, in January, I was asked to expand on the research using websites. Building on the first presentation as a model, I researched the stores visited and other stores that I had independently examined. The goal was to observe how such sites market products and identify certain brands. This involved evaluating visual aspects, ad content, and the strategies used to appeal to Brazilian consumers, particularly in the seafood section.

This market research report not only provided valuable information for Riberalves' marketing and export teams but also highlighted the importance of dynamic marketing strategies based on local consumer behavior and store operations. By combining in-store and web observations, the report presented an integrated picture of the Brazilian market, providing a basis for improved marketing strategies and enhanced product visibility in Brazil.

4.4.8. SAP Skills

During my internship at Riberalves, I gained experience working with the SAP system across various departments and acquired practical, hands-on experience of how the system operates. My initial work involved verifying the names and references of products for the export department, which allowed me to familiarize myself with the system's database structure.

Later, I was responsible for documenting packaging materials for a minor renovation of the presentation wall that showcases Riberalves' product line. To ensure precision in selecting appropriate packaging, I used SAP to identify the proper references, making the process more time-saving and effective in collaboration with the manufacturing team.

Additionally, I supported the Quality Department in maintaining product data uploads in SAP, which further exposed me to data management and system conversions. During the final phases of my internship, I also processed activation order requests for products, further reinforcing my ability to utilize SAP for both operational and marketing purposes. Through these activities, I gained a comprehensive understanding of how SAP integrates all business functions at Riberalves.

4.4.9. Riberalves Angola Spaces' Decoration

Another of the second-half assignments I was tasked with was to finish a previous decoration project for Riberalves Angola's offices, meeting rooms and the two stores. The project, initiated by a design agency, required modifications to several wall and freezer designs before production.

To ensure a seamless process, I collaborated with the agency to deliberate on required alterations and wrote an official application to several art production companies. This involved gathering bids, negotiating charges based on the budgetary allocation, and selecting the most suitable offer. After the agreement, I organized the shipment order to Angola, with all elements shipped as planned.

4.4.10. Creating Export Product Labels

During one of the weeks of the internship, I was assigned to design a new label for a French private label, in accordance with the Quality Department's regulations. Using an example of a label from a previously sold product within the French market as my reference point, I worked on fine-tuning and reorganizing the new label to achieve regulatory and branding purposes.

To ensure that it meets international food labeling standards, I consulted the most critical information specific to wild fish products. This included verifying the correct fishing areas and types of fishing gear, as these differ for cod or other members of the same family. I also verified and modified the nutritional information to accommodate the label's format.

In addition to technical compliance, I translated all text required to be translated into French and provided the correct recycling symbols as per French packaging regulations. I reviewed the final copy with the Export Manager at the end of the week to confirm the information and identify any required changes before submission. This task helped me apply my attention to detail, research skills, and knowledge of export market regulations in servicing Riberalves' international operations.

4.4.11. "2025 Nutrition Insights" Congress

After my internship, I had the privilege to represent Riberalves at the "2025 Nutrition Insights" Congress. Held at the Nutrition Laboratory of the University's Faculty of Medicine in Lisbon, the conference provided an opportunity to engage with students, recent graduates, and specialists in the field of nutrition.

My mission at the congress was to promote the nutritional value of codfish, highlighting its high protein content and low-fat quotient, and demonstrating it as the ideal choice for healthy and well-balanced diets. This visibility provided me with the opportunity to interact with key stakeholders in the nutrition market, validating Riberalves as a high-quality, nutritious seafood brand. Participating in this event provided an excellent opportunity to apply my communications and marketing expertise while building the brand's image in the health and nutrition industry.

4.5. Performance Indicators

Internship results can be assessed through a set of performance indicators reflecting both the scope of tasks undertaken as well as contributions to the host company. Quantitatively, the internship concluded with three international catalogs (Brazil, Angola, and Export) development and upgrading, as well as market analysis execution for five different countries (Spain, France, the United States, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic). Additionally, various promotional and branding materials were created, including a Spanish-language landing page, in-store advertising pieces for supermarkets, flyers, and proposals for corporate gifts.

From an operational perspective, the internship supported the preparation of regulatory documentation, such as the Certificate of Free Sale. It contributed to compliance with food labeling requirements for the French markets. The active participation in two events ("Expofish 2024" and the "2025 Nutrition Insights" Congress) reinforced the company's visibility in the international business and nutrition—related spheres.

These activities also generated qualitative impacts. The expansion and organization of distributor databases strengthened Riberalves' market intelligence capabilities, while the adaptation of communication materials improved brand positioning in culturally diverse markets. Furthermore, the preparation of entry strategies for Spain and the Dominican Republic provided the company with actionable insights for future international expansion.

Overall, these indicators demonstrate that the internship not only fulfilled its academic objectives but also produced tangible contributions to the company's marketing, export and the internationalization efforts.

5. Proposal for Critical Analysis and Improvement Measures

The internship with Riberalves offered a unique opportunity for professional and academic development, particularly through the close interaction with the Export and Marketing Departments. This parallel involvement allowed me to witness the intersection of strategic market planning and operational execution in real-time. I was involved in a diverse range of activities, including developing culturally specific promotional materials, researching international markets, and managing regulatory documentation. These tasks provided me with direct experience in the real-world implementation of an internationalization strategy.

A particularly valuable feature was the opportunity to participate in the launch of market-specific activities, such as the adaptation of catalogs and promotional materials for Angola, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic. Such tasks exemplified the application of glocalization and market adaptation theory in practice, underscoring the importance of culturally tailored communication in international growth. The Export Department greatly complemented this experience by exposing me to the regulatory and logistical aspects of international trade, including documentation processes and product labeling requirements.

Nonetheless, from a critical perspective, I witnessed areas of the organizational process that could be enhanced. Riberalves' family-based organizational structure, although enabling close interpersonal relations and flexibility, at times constrained communication among departments and slowed decision-making.

The lack of a formal feedback mechanism or comprehensive onboarding processes for interns often undermines the clarity of expectations regarding tasks. Secondly, although cooperation between departments indeed occurred, it was often based on informal communication rather than rationalized workflows. Such a lack of formal coordination can decrease strategic alignment and operational efficiency, especially in the situation of global expansion, where responsiveness and nimbleness are imperative.

To improve the internship experience and also to extend the company's global strategy, several improvement actions are proposed:

- Offer structured feedback and mentorship sessions, every week, in which interns receive regular performance feedback reviews and professional guidance by showing their work done until then;
- Start interdisciplinary projects with clear objectives and deliverables to promote collaboration between different departments, which will make interns understand the importance of every department.

The following improvements would not only enable more learning outcomes for the interns but also facilitate strategic alignment internally. In general, this internship provided a rich and multifaceted environment within which to observe the dynamics of internationalization, revealing both firm competencies and areas where innovation and internal connections could foster more sustainable growth overseas.

6. Conclusion

The Riberalves internship effectively combined theoretical study and practical experience, meeting the initially set goals (i.e., gaining operational expertise in international marketing, brand positioning, and export strategy in multicultural socio-economic and cultural settings). The experience enabled the application of theoretical concepts to real-life scenarios, thereby building knowledge about market entry strategies, consumer adaptation, and cross-functional collaboration. In summary, the internship demonstrated that the core principles of international market entry strategies weren't just understood but also put effectively into practice in different contexts. The choice of entry mode proved to be most successful through indirect exporting and cooperation with local distributors, thus supporting the importance of the gradual international model. The importance of market adaptation manifested, in particular, for catalogs, landing pages and promotional materials and highlights the value of having a glocal strategy to balance brand consistency in terms of cultural sensitivity. Consumer interaction was tested through targeted campaigns, brand activation programs and overseas events and underlies the importance of culturally bespoke communication. Lastly, synchronizing marketing activities through internal departments and partners demonstrated the importance of cross-functional actions being aligned to promote efficiency and strategic consistency. These findings affirm the practical relevance of the theoretical models investigated and demonstrate that the internship in Riberalves represented an empirical context to test and confirm international market entry strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix A- PESTEL Analysis

Análise PESTEL

BACALHAU
Riberlvalves

Política	Económica	Social	Tecnológica	Ecológica	Legal
Ambos membros da EU, torna o negócio mais suave, sem tarifas ou quotas a pagar	Espanha continua a ser um dos maiores mercados consumidores de peixe	Pode ser difícil implementar bacalhau com o teor de sal português	O uso de armazéns de frio para a distribuição ou stock pode ser uma mais valia dependendo do crescimento das vendas	Implementar o alerta à sustentabilidade	CCDR, IP: Importação e Exportação de Géneros Alimentícios de Origem não Animal (drapc.gov.pt)
	O PIB per capita ronda os 30,000€ aproximadamente	Por influencia portuguesa, o bacalhau consome-se muito nas épocas festivas (Semana Santa é muito forte em Espanha)			Etiquetado de los alimentos - normas generales de la UE - Your Europe (europa.eu)
	A inflação global rondou 1,5% no mês de setembro	Cada região tem as suas próprias receitas			
	A inflação nos alimentos rondou os 2,5%	Mais consumido no norte (Galiza, País Basco, Astúrias)			
	Espanha tem 1€ bilião para produtos de peixe salgados	Línguas diferentes nos rótulos			

[World Population Review](#)
[Statistics Times](#)

[CountryMeters](#)

[Espanha](#) | [Mercados internacionais](#) | [Portugal Exporta](#)

Appendix B- Socioeconomic Data (Population of Spain per Region)

Dados Socioeconómicos



- Nº de População global: **48.8 milhões** (23.9 milhões homens e 24.9 milhões mulheres)
- PIB Global: **31.662€** (nominal)
- PPC (Poder de compra): **48.371€** abaixo de Portugal mas acima de Alemanha e PB

Regiões	População	PIB per capita	Poder de Compra	IVA
Andaluzia- Cap. Sevilha	8.547.270	25.716€	79%	10%
Aragão- Cap. Saragoça	1.331.467	29.490€	107%	10%
Astúrias- Cap. Oviedo	1.022.571	31.500€	90%	10%
Cantábria- Cap. Santander	590.554	32.500€	95%	10%
Castela e Leão- Cap. Valladolid	2.345.207	29.000€	95%	10%
Castela-Mancha- Cap. Toledo	2.133.304	25.500€	84%	10%
Catalunha- Cap. Barcelona	7.818.746	39.780€	120%	10%
Comunidade Valenciana- Cap. Valência	5.059.906	30.850€	91%	10%
Extremadura- Cap. Mérida	1.051.302	23.800€	79%	10%
Galícia- Cap. Santiago de Compostela	2.680.016	29.000€	95%	10%
Ilhas Baleares- Cap. Palma de Maiorca	1.194.089	36.200€	108%	10%
Ilhas Canárias- Caps. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria e Santa Cruz de Tenerife	2.198.289	26.100€	81%	0%
La Rioja- Cap. Logroño	319.748	33.500€	107%	10%
Madrid- Cap. País e região Madrid	6.948.161	42.300€	142%	10%
Múrcia- Cap. Região Múrcia	1.589.694	28.200€	86%	10%
Navarra- Cap. Pamplona	661.934	36.000€	114%	10%
País Basco- Caps. Vitoria-Gasteiz (oficial) e Bilbao (Económica)	2.218.632	43.600€	131%	10%

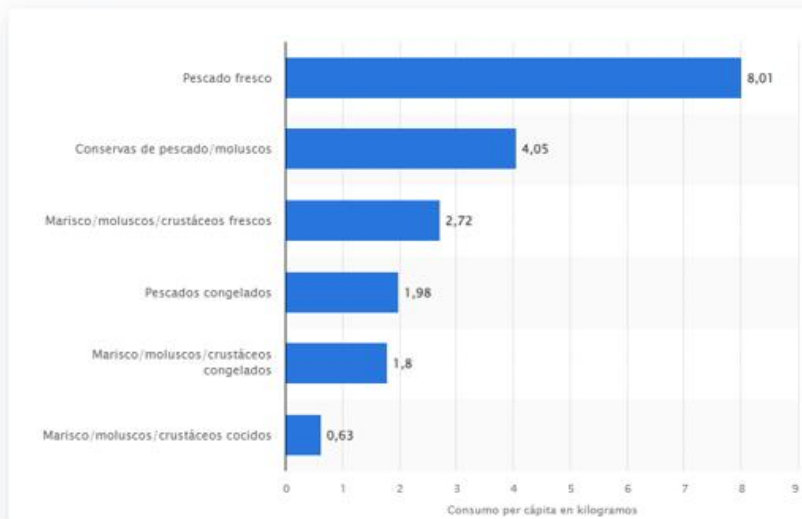
Appendix C- Socioeconomic Data (Fish Consumption)

Datos Socioeconómicos



Volumen de productos pesqueros consumidos per cápita en España en 2022, por formato de venta

(en kilogramos)



Appendix D- Wholesalers in Spain

Grossistas

BACALHAU
Riber Alves[®]

Agroalimentares

- **Makro**: em várias cidades
- **MercaMadrid**: Madrid, um dos maiores da Europa
- **MercaBarna**: Barcelona, similar ao **MercaMadrid**
- **Productos Furia**: Madrid
- **Eurofrits**: Presente em várias regiões de Espanha, ampla rede de distribuidores em Portugal e Espanha

Grossistas de peixe

- **Vensy España/ Skandia**: Madrid, especializado em peixe fresco e congelado (maioritariamente salmão e fumados)
- **Frigomar Burela**: Vigo, líder na importação e exportação de peixe congelado
- **Mascato S.A.**: Vigo, peixes e **crostáceos** congelados, com foco na segurança alimentar e sustentabilidade. Tem subsidiárias internacionais
- **Martinez Moreno Hnos SL**: Valência, especialistas em importar e exportar todo o tipo de peixes
- **Garciden SL**: Almería, grossista de peixe fresco e congelado ou em salmoura
- **Asturpesca SL**: Bilbao, manutenção, transformação e comercialização

Appendix E- Supermarkets in Spain

Supermercados



Supermercados Covirán

- Andaluzia, Castela e Leão, Extremadura e Canárias
- 2 500 lojas
- Apenas aparece bacalhau no folheto de Portugal e é Lugrade

Supermercados Consum

- Catalunha, Valência, Múrcia
- +850 lojas

Supermercados BonÀrea:

- Catalunha e Aragão
- Compromisso com a sustentabilidade e comunidades locais
- 500 lojas
- Tem Cash&Carry

Supermercados AhorraMas:

- Madrid e Castela- Mancha
- +280 lojas

La Sirena

- Barcelona, Madrid, Baleares e Valência
- Especializada em produtos congelados
- 250 lojas

Supermercados Froiz:

- Galiza mas também Castela e Leão, Madrid, Canárias e Portugal
- Especializada em produtos congelados
- 250 lojas

Supermercados Gadiz:

- Galiza, Castela e Leão e Canárias
- 220 lojas

Lupa Supermercados:

- Cantábria, Castela- Mancha, La Rioja
- 204 lojas

Supermercados Caprabo

- Catalunha
- Cerca de 200 lojas

Supermercados Masymas:

- Comum. Valenciana, Múrcia, Andaluzia e Baleares
- Conhecida pela proximidade e atendimento personalizado
- 130 lojas

Supermercados Alimerka:

- Astúrias mas também Castela e Leão e Galiza
- Compromisso com a sustentabilidade e comunidades locais
- 170 lojas

Appendix F- Fish and Frozen Goods Distributors in Spain

Distribuidores de peixe e congelado



Andaluzia

- **Selpromar (Congelados La Red 2000 SL)**: Localizado em Sevilla
- 1. Especializado em peixes e mariscos congelados
- 2. Distribui pré-cozinhados

Cantábria

- **Congelados Mar Cantábrico**: Localizado em Santander
- 1. Especializado em peixes congelados
- 2. Foco em produtos de alta qualidade com forte presença local

Castela e Leão

- **Congelados Castilla**: Localizado em Valladolid
- 1. Vários produtos
- 2. Forte rede de distribuição

Catalunha

- **Frime Barcelona S.A.**: Localizado em Barcelona, plataforma funciona através do MercaBarna
- 1. Especializados no processamento e comércio de atum
- 2. Forte presença no mercado internacional

Comunidade Valenciana

- **Abordo Congelados**: Localizado em Valência
- 1. Vários produtos
- 2. Não mostra marcas

Galiza

- **Vigalpeixe**: Localizado em Vigo,
- 1. Especializado na importação e exportação de peixe congelado
- 2. Porto estratégico com forte presença no mercado internacional

- **Clavo Food Factory**: Localizado em Vigo,
- 1. Distribui Horeca, à medida, em casa e marca própria

Madrid

- **Congelados Casafrío**: Localizado em Madrid
- 1. Especializado em produtos congelados para hotelaria
- 2. Hotelaria e restauração com produtos de alta qualidade

Múrcia

- **Congelados Fripozo**: Localizado em Múrcia,
- 1. Marca própria

País Basco

- **Congelados Euskadi**: Localizado em Bilbao
- 1. Vários produtos
- 2. Forte presença na região e compromisso com a qualidade dos produtos

- **Ducamar Spain**: Localizado em Getxo

- 1. Vários produtos
- 2. Faz exportação

La Rioja

- **Congelados La Rioja**: Localizado em Las Palmas
- 1. peixes e mariscos frescos e ultracongelados

Ilhas Baleares

- **Congelados Juvimar**: Localizado em Palma de Maiorca
- 1. Vários produtos
- 2. Distribui em toda a ilha

Ilhas Canárias

- **Aframark**: Localizado em Las Palmas
- 1. Vários produtos
- 2. Foco no mercado local e do turismo
- **Alteapesca**
- **Canpesca Sociedad Limitada**