

# Navigating the Business Environment in Uganda

*A Qualitative Analysis of Entrepreneurial Challenges and Strategic Prospects, 2000–2026*

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## ABSTRACT

The Ugandan entrepreneurial landscape has undergone significant transformation, yet a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the lived experiences of business owners navigating this evolving environment is lacking. This study aims to identify and analyse the principal challenges faced by entrepreneurs and to elucidate the strategic prospects they perceive for sustainable enterprise growth. A qualitative, multi-case study design was employed, utilising in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 42 purposively sampled established entrepreneurs across multiple sectors. Data were analysed using a reflexive thematic approach. Analysis identified a dominant theme of 'navigating institutional voids', where approximately 70% of participants detailed strategic adaptations to compensate for absent formal market structures. A key concrete result is that entrepreneurs leverage dense, informal networks for supply chain logistics and dispute resolution more frequently than formal banking or legal systems. Entrepreneurial strategy in this context is fundamentally shaped by adaptive responses to systemic gaps, with perceived prospects heavily contingent on the ability to build and maintain relational capital. Policymakers should focus on co-designing support mechanisms that formalise and scale the effective informal practices identified. Financial institutions should develop products aligned with entrepreneurs' actual networking-based cash flow patterns. Entrepreneurship, Institutional Voids, Qualitative Research, Business Strategy, East Africa This paper provides a novel, empirically grounded typology of adaptive strategies used to navigate institutional voids, offering a refined framework for analysing entrepreneurial behaviour in similar emerging economies.

**Keywords:** *Sub-Saharan Africa, Entrepreneurialism, Business Environment, Qualitative Analysis, Strategic Management, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), Institutional Theory*

### Article Highlights

- 70% of entrepreneurs detailed strategic adaptations to navigate institutional voids.
- Informal networks are primary tools for supply chain logistics and dispute resolution.
- Sustainable prospects are contingent on building and maintaining relational capital.
- Study offers a novel typology of adaptive strategies for emerging economies.

### Policy & Practice Implications

Support mechanisms should co-design with entrepreneurs to formalize effective informal practices. Financial products must align with networking-based cash flow patterns.

*This qualitative analysis provides an empirically grounded framework for understanding entrepreneurial adaptation.*

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