

Navigating Entrepreneurial Aspirations

A Qualitative Exploration of Youth Visions for Cape Verde's Business Trajectory

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ABSTRACT

Youth entrepreneurship is widely promoted as a key driver for economic development in Africa. However, there is limited in-depth understanding of how young people themselves conceptualise viable business futures within specific national contexts, particularly in small island developing states. This study aimed to explore the entrepreneurial aspirations and perceived future trajectories of young Cabo Verdeans, examining the factors that shape their visions for business and the barriers they anticipate. A qualitative, interpretive study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with 32 purposively sampled youth (aged 18-30) across three islands. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify patterns in participants' narratives. A dominant theme was the tension between a strong aspiration for digital, tourism-adjacent enterprises and a perceived lack of foundational support. Specifically, over two-thirds of participants envisioned businesses in digital content creation or eco-tourism, yet consistently cited inadequate access to tailored business incubation as a critical constraint. The findings reveal a disconnect between the innovative, digitally-oriented business aspirations of Cabo Verdean youth and the existing support ecosystems, which are perceived as misaligned with their specific sectoral interests and contextual challenges. Policymakers and development agencies should co-design entrepreneurship programmes focused on digital and green economy sectors. Financial institutions are urged to develop financial products that cater to the asset-light, project-based nature of these nascent business models. youth entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial aspirations, qualitative research, small island developing state, business support, Cabo Verde This paper provides novel empirical evidence on the specific sectoral orientations and support gaps perceived by aspiring young entrepreneurs in a small island African economy, challenging assumptions of a homogeneous 'African youth entrepreneur'.

Keywords: *Youth entrepreneurship, Sub-Saharan Africa, Grounded theory, Entrepreneurial identity, Qualitative interviews, Small Island Developing States, Business trajectories*

Article Highlights

- Youth aspirations centre on digital content and eco-tourism ventures.
- Perceived lack of tailored business incubation is a critical constraint.
- Findings challenge assumptions of a homogeneous 'African youth entrepreneur'.
- Support systems are misaligned with asset-light, project-based business models.

Policy Implication

Programmes must be co-designed with youth to focus support on digital and green economy sectors, with financial products adapted to nascent, project-based models.

This qualitative study reveals the specific visions and perceived barriers of aspiring entrepreneurs in a small island developing state.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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