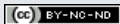




New Trends in
Qualitative
Research



VOLUME 22 | Nº 2

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.36367/ntqr.22.2.2026.e1300>

Roberto Pessoa de Queiroz Falcão

Marcelo Ferreira da Costa

Eduardo Picanço Cruz

**Susana Cristina Serrano Fernandes
Rodrigues**

Irene Dobarrio Machado Ciccarino

ADVANCING MULTI-METHOD QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: A STUDY OF BRAZILIAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN PORTUGAL

ABSTRACT

The growing presence of Brazilian migrants in Portugal has stimulated new research on migrant entrepreneurship, yet important gaps remain regarding how entrepreneurial trajectories are constructed and interpreted within specific migration contexts. Existing studies often rely predominantly on either quantitative surveys or qualitative case analyses, which may limit the capacity to capture both structural patterns and lived experiences. This study's primary contribution lies in demonstrating a transferable multi-method qualitative design that integrates survey-based profiling with Gioia-based inductive analysis. The study aims to analyse the pathways of Brazilian entrepreneurs in Portugal, focusing on motivational drivers, sociodemographic characteristics, economic integration strategies, and the challenges encountered in the process of establishing businesses. Data were collected between July 2024 and March 2025 through a combination of surveys with 667 Brazilian immigrants and 55 in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs, complemented by field observations and documentary sources from social networks, consulates, and migrant associations. Quantitative data were examined through descriptive statistical analysis to outline the sociodemographic profile of migrants and identify patterns of entrepreneurial activity. Qualitative data were analysed using the Gioia method, supported by MAxQDA software, enabling the identification of first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions that reveal recurring patterns in entrepreneurial experiences. The triangulation of multiple sources and analytical strategies strengthened the robustness and interpretive depth of the findings. The analysis identified two predominant entrepreneurial trajectories: opportunity-driven entrepreneurs who planned both migration and business creation, and necessity-driven entrepreneurs who developed businesses as adaptive strategies for economic integration. Methodologically, the study demonstrates how the articulation between survey data and inductive qualitative coding can enhance the interpretation of migrant entrepreneurial processes, offering a replicable approach for qualitative and mixed-method research in migration and entrepreneurship studies.

Keywords

Immigrant Entrepreneurship; Brazilian Migration; Ethnic Entrepreneurship; Portugal.

Submission date: April, 2025

Review date: December, 2025

Publication date: May, 2026

1. Introduction

Migrant entrepreneurship is a key driver of economic growth, employment, and integration in host societies (Dheer, 2024). Among immigrant groups, Brazilian entrepreneurs have gained prominence in Portugal, contributing to local economies through diverse ventures (Silva et al., 2024). While prior research has advanced important empirical insights into migrant entrepreneurship, limited attention has been given to how multi-method qualitative designs can systematically integrate large-scale survey data with interpretive, inductive analysis. This study addresses this gap by proposing and empirically demonstrating a methodological framework that articulates quantitative profiling, qualitative narrative analysis, and Gioia-based coding within a coherent interpretive design. This study investigates the motivations, barriers, and policy implications of Brazilian migrant entrepreneurship, focusing on how these individuals navigate Portugal's business landscape. Drawing on 55 in-depth interviews, 667 surveys and secondary data, following Johnson and Rowlands (2012), the study employs thematic analysis (Gioia et al., 2013) to identify two entrepreneurial profiles: opportunity-driven entrepreneurs, who migrate with capital and business plans, and necessity-driven entrepreneurs, who turn to self-employment due to limited job prospects and low wages (Fairlie & Fossen, 2020).

The study aimed to analyse the paths of Brazilian entrepreneurs in Portugal, highlighting motivational factors (opportunity-driven vs. necessity-driven), sociodemographic profiles, the dynamics of economic integration, and obstacles faced considering mixed embeddedness. Moreover, the study informs broader debates on global mobility, migrant entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic development. Findings show that instability and insecurity in Brazil act as push factors, while Portugal's cultural proximity, legal access, and quality of life are pull factors. Some migrants also choose Portugal as an entry point into the EU, relocating after acquiring residency rights (Schrooten et al., 2016). While opportunity-driven businesses tend to scale in consulting, tech, and gastronomy, necessity-driven ventures concentrate in labour-intensive sectors, facing more structural barriers. Despite various challenges, the more than 368,000 Brazilians in Portugal (Statista, 2023) contribute to economic diversification, job creation, and urban revitalization.

Building on the mixed embeddedness framework (Kloosterman, 2010), this study also examines how Brazilian entrepreneurs' decisions and trajectories are shaped by the interaction between individual resources, social networks, and Portugal's opportunity structure. Beyond personal motivations, migrant entrepreneurship is conditioned by regulatory regimes, labour market dynamics, and sectoral niches that define which ventures can flourish and which remain constrained. For many Brazilians, strong co-ethnic networks offer crucial bonding capital, facilitating entry into specific markets, reducing uncertainty, and enabling rapid business start-up. At the same time, successful scaling requires bridging capital to navigate institutional norms, formal procedures, and broader market demands.

By analysing how entrepreneurs mobilize resources within and across these layers, the study situates Brazilian migrant entrepreneurship not merely as an outcome of individual agency but as a process embedded in multi-level social, economic, and institutional contexts.

2. Mixed embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs

The original concept of embeddedness was developed by Polanyi (1957) to explain how social interactions shape behaviours and institutions (Vale, 2014; Kaup, 2015; Corrêa et al., 2020). Seeking to create an economic theory capable of integrating social and economic variables (Macdonald, 1971), Granovetter (1985) introduced this notion into entrepreneurship studies, inaugurating modern economic sociology. Drawing on industrial sociology (Jones & Ram, 2007) and economic geography (Nathan & Lee, 2013), Granovetter argued that economic behaviour is conditioned by the entrepreneur's insertion in social networks, challenging the neoclassical view of economic action as atomized and under-socialized (Granovetter, 1973; 1985).

Granovetter (1973; 2005), revisiting the work of Simmel (1955; 1971), emphasized that entrepreneurs connect different social groups through strong ties (characterized by cohesion, solidarity, and trust) and weak ties, which increase access to diverse information and external opportunities. Embeddedness therefore involves two essential dimensions: the relational, referring to an actor's personal relationships, and the structural, concerning how these relationships are situated within the broader social fabric. However, critics observed that despite his rejection of a direct association between social networks and market logic, Granovetter retained traces of a utilitarian perspective (Carvalho, 2002), which reintroduced the distinction between the anonymous market and the social economy (Krippner & Alvarez, 2007), while also neglecting the role of the state (Raud, 2007; Ram et al., 2017).

The so-called "problem of embeddedness" also emerged in the entrepreneurship field, where approaches centred on the individual often overlooked wider social contexts (Sexton & Smilor, 1997). In response, Kloosterman et al. (1999) challenged the prevailing argument, prominent since Light (1972), that co-ethnic networks alone explained the rise of immigrant entrepreneurs. They argued that the position and mobility of migrant-origin entrepreneurs can only be understood through a combination of social relations, socio-economic factors, and political-institutional contexts of the host country.

This led to the development of the mixed embeddedness model, which integrates social networks and economic opportunity structures with regulatory frameworks, recognizing both the composition of immigrant populations and the evolving market opportunities over time.

Kloosterman and Rath (2003) advanced the mixed embeddedness approach by emphasizing how markets and the state jointly shape entrepreneurial opportunities, contrasting with earlier European studies that focused mainly on co-ethnic networks (Kloosterman, 2010).

Building on Waldinger's (1990) interactionist model but extending it beyond narrow opportunity structures, Kloosterman (2010) integrated human, financial, and social capital with market variations, helping establish mixed embeddedness as a key framework in migrant entrepreneurship research (Jones et al., 2014; Ram et al., 2017). Subsequent studies broadened its empirical and analytical scope: Ram et al. (2008) showed that Somali businesses in the UK cannot be explained solely through "ethnic resources"; Langevang et al. (2015) introduced "bounded entrepreneurial vitality" to analyse gendered constraints in Global South–North settings; and Falcão et al. (2021) demonstrated how Brazilian entrepreneurs in Toronto navigate transnational ties and racialized opportunity structures. Collectively, this work illustrates how mixed embeddedness has evolved from a Europe-centred heuristic into a versatile, multi-scalar framework capable of addressing intersectional, gendered, and transnational dimensions of migrant entrepreneurship.

Importantly, the multi-layered nature of mixed embeddedness—spanning individual, relational, and institutional dimensions—demands methodological approaches capable of capturing both structural patterns and lived experiences. This requirement directly informs the multi-method design adopted in this study, which combines survey-based mapping of structural conditions with inductive qualitative analysis of entrepreneurial trajectories.

3. Methodology

Beyond its empirical focus, this study is designed as a methodological contribution to qualitative and multi-method research. It proposes a structured approach to integrating large-scale survey data with interpretive qualitative analysis, addressing a key challenge in migration and entrepreneurship research: how to combine breadth and depth without compromising epistemological coherence. This study is grounded in an interpretivist–constructivist epistemology, which assumes that social reality is co-constructed through meanings, experiences, and interactions rather than discovered as objective fact (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The aim is not to produce statistically generalizable findings, but to generate analytical and theoretical insights into how Brazilian migrant entrepreneurs make sense of opportunities, constraints, and everyday practices within specific socio-institutional contexts. Within this epistemological stance, qualitative data are valued for their depth, contextual sensitivity, and capacity to illuminate lived experiences, while constructs such as trustworthiness, transferability, and reflexivity guide the assessment of research quality. Accordingly, sampling follows a qualitative logic, based on purposive and theoretically informed strategies, and seeks analytical saturation rather than representativeness.

Building on this perspective, the study adopts a multi-method research design that combines quantitative and qualitative components, enabling the integration of statistical patterns with in-depth interpretive insights and enhancing analytical robustness through triangulation across multiple data sources.

3.1 Data collection

Data collection encompassed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Primary data was collected through questionnaires (surveys), in-depth interviews and field observations. Secondary data was collected using social media platforms (such as Facebook groups of Brazilians abroad and LinkedIn profiles), information from consulates and associations. The following stages were developed: (i) surveys with 667 Brazilian immigrants in Portugal were collected, allowing a comparative analysis between the respondents. Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted on participants' sociodemographic profiles, visa status upon entry into the host countries, reasons for leaving Brazil, and business-related information (e.g., business age, type, and level of formality). Note: this stage was completed prior to the field research; (ii) systematic literature review on the topic, aiming to update the topics discussed in the latest scientific articles, focusing mainly on papers containing research carried out in Portugal; (iii) field research and in-depth interviews with 55 entrepreneurs were conducted. Respondents were recruited via snow-ball sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). The interviews were conducted in the offices/companies or in the entrepreneurs' own homes and deepened the understanding of the respondents' perspective and points of view, collecting richer field data, and focusing on the life stories and behaviours of the entrepreneurs, as well as on their entrepreneurial trajectory in Portugal. Interviews lasted between 60-73 minutes and were transcribed verbatim; (iv) triangulation of sources, such as complementary information was sought at consulates and through their employees, accounting professionals from the Brazilian community, agents who assist in obtaining visas, citizenship, and migration processes for entrepreneurs, etc. Additionally, analyses were made of the main Facebook groups of these communities, with a view to identifying behaviours, migration trajectories, barriers and difficulties faced by immigrants and entrepreneurs.

This sequencing of data collection—from survey to qualitative fieldwork—was intentionally designed to enable analytical complementarity. Survey data provided a structured mapping of migrant profiles, which informed purposive sampling and thematic exploration in the qualitative phase. This design enhances both internal coherence and analytical depth, offering a replicable strategy for multi-method qualitative research.

3.2 Data analysis

For the survey data, statistical procedures such as factor analysis, cluster analysis, ANOVA, among others (Hair et al., 1998), were employed. The processing of these data was carried out using SPSS software. As for the qualitative data obtained from interviews, observation techniques, and field notes, thematic analysis was conducted, leading to “systematic, qualitative or quantitative descriptions, helping to reinterpret the messages and achieve an understanding of their meanings at a level that goes beyond a common reading” (Moraes, 1999, p. 35).

These qualitative data were processed using MaxQDA software. As for the coding of transcripts, two senior researchers conducted the thematic analysis, as follows.

The results were compared with recent literature on the topic to meet the research objectives and contribute to the advancement of studies on immigrant entrepreneurship. The thematic analysis followed the protocol established by Gioia et al. (2013), known as the Gioia Method. This approach is designed to systematically analyse and interpret textual data to identify themes, patterns, and embedded meanings. The procedure included the following steps: a) Data collection – textual data relevant to the research question, such as interview transcripts, documents, and field notes, were gathered; b) Initial familiarization – researchers read the texts multiple times to develop a comprehensive understanding and identify potential themes; c) Coding – relevant segments of text were systematically identified and labelled using both deductive codes (based on existing theories) and inductive codes (emerging from the data); d) Theme development – related codes were grouped into broader themes or categories, representing recurrent ideas or patterns, which were refined through iterative analysis; e) Data interpretation – themes were interpreted in relation to the research objectives, allowing researchers to explore their broader implications; f) Validation – to ensure analytical rigor, strategies such as member checking, peer review, and triangulation were used to verify the credibility of findings; g) Reporting – the final results were documented in a comprehensive report, detailing the analytical process, presenting the themes, and discussing their theoretical and practical relevance. The use of the Gioia methodology in this study extends beyond coding procedures, serving as a bridge between inductive meaning-making and theoretically informed interpretation. By combining deductive sensitivity to mixed embeddedness with inductive category emergence, the analysis demonstrates how hybrid coding strategies can enhance theoretical elaboration while preserving empirical richness.

Additionally, case studies on the trajectories and life stories of immigrant entrepreneurs enriched the comparative exploratory approach by foregrounding participants' perspectives (Yin, 2013). This method not only provided contextual depth to the literature review but also contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the entrepreneurial pathways of Brazilian immigrants, including common behaviours, motivations, barriers, and challenges they encountered.

Building on insights from Falcão et al. (2024), this methodological design demonstrates a robust integration of quantitative and qualitative components, combining surveys, in-depth interviews, field observations, digital ethnography, and institutional documents to generate a multi-layered understanding of migrant entrepreneurship. Statistical patterns identified in the survey data are complemented and deepened by interpretive insights from interviews and observations, while social media content and information from consulates, migrant associations, and professional service providers help access dispersed networks and contextualize participants' trajectories.

Within an interpretivist–constructivist epistemological stance, meaning-making, contextual embeddedness, and lived experience guide the construction of knowledge. Sampling follows qualitative logic, using purposeful and snowball strategies, and analytic saturation and triangulation across diverse sources enhance credibility and depth. Analytical alignment between theory, deductive and inductive coding, and the Gioia Method ensures coherence between conceptual framing and empirical interpretation. Throughout the process, reflexivity, reliability, and methodological limitations are addressed through peer debriefing, iterative memoing, attention to researcher positionality, and transparent documentation of analytic decisions. Therefore, a multi-method approach is consistent with the complexity of the context of immigrant entrepreneurs.

3.3 Methodological Reflection

This study offers a methodological contribution by demonstrating how a multi-method qualitative research design can integrate quantitative breadth with interpretive depth within an interpretivist–constructivist framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Rather than treating surveys and qualitative inquiry as separate approaches, the study advances a complementary design in which each component informs and enriches the other. In doing so, it addresses a key challenge in migration and entrepreneurship research: reconciling population-level profiling with the need to capture lived experiences and contextually embedded trajectories (Ram et al., 2017; Nathan & Lee, 2013).

A central contribution lies in the intentional sequencing of data collection. The survey phase provided a structured mapping of sociodemographic characteristics and entrepreneurial patterns, which informed purposive sampling and guided the qualitative inquiry (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). This sequencing enabled analytical complementarity, allowing statistical patterns to be interpreted through in-depth narratives. The integration of multiple sources—interviews, field observations, digital ethnography, and institutional data—further strengthened triangulation, enhancing credibility and contextual richness (Falcão et al., 2024). Importantly, triangulation was not used merely for validation, but as a strategy to capture the multi-layered nature of migrant entrepreneurship.

Analytically, the study contributes by combining deductive and inductive logics within a coherent interpretive strategy. The mixed embeddedness framework provided sensitizing concepts (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Kloosterman, 2010), while the Gioia methodology enabled the systematic emergence of first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions grounded in participants' accounts (Gioia et al., 2013). This hybrid approach balances theoretical sensitivity with empirical openness, avoiding both rigid theoretical imposition and purely descriptive inductivism. In doing so, it demonstrates how qualitative analysis can support theory elaboration while preserving participants' voices.

The study also highlights methodological challenges associated with researching dispersed and hard-to-reach populations.

Brazilian migrant entrepreneurs in Portugal are geographically scattered and embedded in diverse formal and informal networks. Access required combining snowball sampling, digital platforms, and institutional intermediaries, underscoring the importance of flexibility in qualitative design (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Falcão et al., 2024). The integration of online and offline fieldwork proved essential not only for recruitment but also for capturing the dynamics of migrant networks and entrepreneurial practices.

Reflexivity was central throughout the research process. Attention to researcher positionality, interaction dynamics, and interpretive decisions was supported through iterative memoing, peer debriefing, and constant comparison across data sources (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Such practices were essential to maintain analytical transparency and epistemological coherence, particularly in a multi-method design that integrates different data types and analytical logics.

The methodological design is transferable to other contexts involving complex, multi-level phenomena such as migration and entrepreneurship (Kloosterman & Rath, 2003; Ram et al., 2017). By combining survey-based mapping, in-depth qualitative inquiry, and iterative coding, the study offers a flexible yet structured framework that can be adapted across settings. Rather than proposing a rigid template, it provides guiding principles for integrating multiple data sources and aligning theory and analysis.

In sum, this study advances qualitative methodology by illustrating how multi-method designs can be operationalized in a coherent, reflexive, and theoretically informed manner. By bridging quantitative and qualitative approaches within an interpretivist framework, it contributes to ongoing discussions on triangulation, analytical integration, and theory-building in complex social research contexts (Gioia et al., 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

4. Results

4.1 Presentation of Data

This section presents the main empirical findings of the study, based on the analysis of 55 in-depth interviews with Brazilian migrant entrepreneurs in Portugal. The presentation of findings reflects the integration of survey-based profiling with inductive qualitative analysis, illustrating how the multi-method design enables the identification of both structural patterns and lived experiences. Drawing on thematic analysis guided by the Gioia method, the results identify recurring patterns in entrepreneurial trajectories, motivations, and challenges. Consistent with the mixed embeddedness framework, the findings highlight how individual resources, social networks, and institutional conditions interact in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes.

To contextualize the analysis, Table 1 provides an overview of the sample, presenting the distribution of interviewees according to their predominant entrepreneurial motivation, distinguishing between opportunity-driven and necessity-driven profiles. This classification, grounded in both the literature and the thematic analysis, informs the subsequent examination of entrepreneurial trajectories and their connection to the theoretical framework.

Table 1. Sample of interviewees

Opportunity-driven	Necessity-driven
E1, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8, E10, E11, E13, E14, E15, E16, E17, E18, E20, E23, E24, E26, E27, E28, E30, E31, E32, E33, E34, E35, E36, E37, E40, E41, E42, E43, E44, E45, E46, E47, E48, E49, E50, E52, E53, E55 e E58	E2, E9, E12, E19, E21, E22, E25, E29, E38, E39, E51, E54, E56 e E57

The 55 interviews with Brazilian entrepreneurs in Portugal revealed two predominant profiles, commonly recognized in international literature: opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurs. While this categorization provides analytical clarity, it gains depth when viewed through the personal stories, challenges, and motivations of everyone, considering the mixed embeddedness framework. Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs often arrived with structured plans, higher education, and previous professional success in fields like consulting, engineering, education, and tech.

“I decided to expand and internationalize my business by integrating it into the European market. [...] We managed to create a prosperous hub near Lisbon” (Brazilian startup/hub owner, Oeiras, Portugal). “I moved with my family to Portugal because Rio [de Janeiro] business environment was toxic [...] I knew I could earn money targeting to an international crowd! [...] So, we made several trips to Portugal to study the market [...]” (Brazilian night club/bar owner, Cascais, Portugal). “My associate was robbed at gunpoint, and we gradually considered moving to Cascais, Portugal, planning every detail before opening our restaurant in Cascais” (Brazilian restaurant owner, Cascais, Portugal).

They viewed migration as a step toward reinvention, internationalization, or lifestyle improvement, with cases like E52 and E55 reflecting deliberate and strategic transitions. “I wanted to experience a European lifestyle with my whole family” (Startup owner, Lisbon, Portugal). “I work from home mostly and control my business in Brazil and in Portugal from here” (HR Consultant, Lisbon, Portugal).

Many leveraged capitals, opted for franchises, or built on tested business models, often showing strong alignment between entrepreneurship and personal values such as sustainability, autonomy, or family well-being. “I replicated the business model I had in Brazil here, and it’s working very well in Portugal” (Sushi delivery owner, Lisbon, Portugal).

In contrast, necessity-driven entrepreneurs frequently came from more precarious circumstances, including unemployment, informal labour, or personal crises. Lacking access to capital or formal planning, many began entrepreneurial activities out of immediate need, sometimes informally or impulsively, often relying on community support or sheer resilience.

“We moved to Portugal and worked in cleaning and housekeeping for the first two years” (Flower decorator, Leiria, Portugal). “After working in a ceramic factory in Porto de Mos, I had a back injury, so I decided to work with therapy” (Therapist, Leiria, Portugal).

Examples above illustrate this adaptive, survival-driven path. These businesses were typically established in accessible sectors such as beauty, food, or services, and while some remained informal, others slowly formalized as a means of accessing social benefits or stability. Despite the lack of initial planning, several necessity-driven entrepreneurs eventually transitioned toward more strategic models, demonstrating the fluidity between categories and the importance of long-term adaptation.

Across both groups, shared elements emerged: a strong female presence, varied age ranges, and widespread geographic dispersion across cities like Lisbon, Porto, Leiria, and surrounding areas. Many women framed migration as a path to protection, independence, or family care, and numerous couples pursued shared entrepreneurial ventures.

“For me, migrating wasn’t only about work — it was about feeling safe and starting over without fear” (Realtor, Albufeira, Portugal). “Coming to Portugal gave me the independence I never had in Brazil. Here I can finally breathe and make my own decisions” (Designer, Leiria, Portugal).

Regardless of educational background or initial motivation, all interviewees shared a common aspiration: to rebuild their lives and create meaningful, sustainable livelihoods in Portugal. “We came together, we struggled together, and now we run the business together. It’s a family project” (Restaurant owner, Leiria, Portugal).

Their stories reveal the complex interplay between structure and improvisation, planning and necessity. Underscoring that, for migrant entrepreneurs, success often depends on perseverance as much as preparation.

4.2 Entrepreneurial Motivations

Preliminary findings suggest that Brazilian entrepreneurs in Portugal are motivated by a combination of opportunity-driven and necessity-driven factors. While some view Portugal as a strategic entry point for European markets, others turn to entrepreneurship due to difficulties securing employment.

The interviews reveal a dual pattern of entrepreneurial motivation among Brazilian migrants in Portugal, distinguishing between opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurs.

The former group, representing approximately 80%, engaged in extensive pre-migration planning. Consulting legal experts, attending webinars, assessing market saturation, and securing capital or franchise models to mitigate risk.

These factors facilitated rapid business formalization and early-stage hiring. Typically possessing higher education, professional experience, and strategic foresight, they targeted scalable ventures in sectors such as technology or consulting, aligning with Rath and Kloosterman’s (2000) findings on high-growth migrant entrepreneurship.

Their financial preparedness reduced dependency on external funding and enabled them to focus on expansion and long-term positioning within the host economy (see table 2).

Table 2. Opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurs

Feature	Opportunity-Driven Entrepreneurs	Necessity-Driven Entrepreneurs	Examples (from Interviews)	Implications
Motivation	Market opportunity, autonomy, lifestyle change	Lack of job opportunities, survival needs	Franchise acquisition, consultancy, tech startups vs. informal salons, food stalls	Requires tailored policy focus based on planning capacity
Pre-migration Planning	Extensive research and strategic foresight	Little to none, reactive approach	Used diaspora networks, legal support vs. trial and error with family help	Opportunity-driven benefit from startup support, necessity-driven need training
Financial Resources	Capital reserves or external investments	Personal savings, family loans	Initial equity vs. bootstrapped ventures	Credit access should differentiate profile needs
Business Type	Consulting, IT, education, niche services	Beauty, cleaning, food delivery, retail	Registered limited company vs. informal micro-business	Sector-specific interventions are key
Challenges	Market adaptation, regulation	Legal status, bureaucracy, informality	Complex tax system vs. delayed regularization	One-size-fits-all policy may fail

In contrast, necessity-driven entrepreneurs often began in low-wage jobs, such as caregiving or construction, before turning to entrepreneurship due to job precarity or non-recognition of credentials. With limited access to capital and formal planning, they relied heavily on informal networks and community support to launch small-scale businesses in sectors with low entry barriers, such as retail, hospitality, or personal services. These ventures typically evolved gradually, with formalization occurring reactively and often driven by regulatory requirements. Despite this, the distinction between both groups was not absolute: some necessity-driven entrepreneurs eventually adopted strategic approaches and expanded their businesses, while some opportunity-driven individuals encountered setbacks that forced them to pivot or downscale. Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp (2009) note that necessity-driven entrepreneurs often repurpose skills from previous employment, allowing for meaningful economic participation even in resource-constrained contexts.

4.3 Discussion on Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Portugal

Migrant entrepreneurs in Portugal encounter a range of structural, financial, and social challenges that impact their ability to establish and sustain businesses. These barriers vary depending on whether entrepreneurs are necessity-driven (forced into self-employment due to a lack of formal job opportunities) or opportunity-driven, entering the market with prior business experience and financial resources. Regardless of their motivations, both groups face significant obstacles related to bureaucratic procedures, financial access, market adaptation, and social capital limitations.

One of the most significant barriers is the complexity of bureaucratic processes, including lengthy business registration procedures and visa regulations. Administrative hurdles delay business operations and create uncertainty, making it difficult for migrant entrepreneurs to navigate legal requirements efficiently (OECD, 2019). Necessity-driven entrepreneurs may struggle with residence or work permits, sometimes resorting to informal business operations to bypass legal constraints (Kloosterman et al., 1999). Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs, while generally more financially prepared, must also adapt to Portugal's intricate regulatory environment, including taxation laws and labor regulations, which differ significantly from those in Brazil (Rath & Kloosterman, 2000).

Financial access represents another major challenge, as many migrant entrepreneurs struggle to secure loans or attract investment due to a lack of credit history in Portugal. Banks and financial institutions often perceive them as high-risk borrowers, leading to restricted access to capital and unfavourable loan conditions (Desiderio, 2014). Necessity-driven entrepreneurs, in particular, frequently rely on informal lending from family or community networks, which can be unreliable and restrictive (Baycan-Levent & Nijkamp, 2009). While opportunity-driven entrepreneurs may bring initial capital, they often face difficulties securing additional funding for business expansion, as many investment programs and grants cater primarily to local or EU-based businesses (Vinogradov & Kolvereid, 2007).

Market adaptation is also a significant obstacle for migrant entrepreneurs. Understanding consumer preferences, navigating competitive dynamics, and adjusting business strategies to fit the Portuguese market can be challenging, particularly for those unfamiliar with local purchasing behaviours (Kloosterman & Rath, 2010). Many necessity-driven entrepreneurs operate in saturated industries such as cleaning services, small restaurants, and personal care, where high competition and low profit margins limit growth opportunities (Solano, 2016). Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs, on the other hand, often seek entry into high-barrier industries such as technology, consulting, and finance, where success depends on strong local networks and established credibility (Fairlie & Fossen, 2020).

Social capital limitations further hinder the success of migrant entrepreneurs. Many struggle to integrate into existing business networks, which reduces their access to suppliers, customers, and collaborative opportunities. Limited professional connections make it difficult to secure business partnerships, attract clients, and gain industry recognition (Ram et al., 2017). Language differences, despite Portuguese being the common language, can also create communication barriers, particularly in formal business and bureaucratic settings (Oliveira, 2007). Additionally, discrimination and cultural biases may further restrict access to business opportunities, as native Portuguese entrepreneurs and investors often prefer working with local business owners (Ram et al., 2017).

Bureaucratic, financial, market, and social barriers significantly shape the entrepreneurial experiences of Brazilian migrants in Portugal, with distinct impacts based on whether entrepreneurs are driven by opportunity or necessity.

While opportunity-driven entrepreneurs tend to be better prepared, they still face frustrations with fiscal regulations and complex administrative processes. Necessity-driven entrepreneurs encounter more severe obstacles, including delays in business registration due to limited legal guidance or digital skills, and often rely on informal networks or family savings due to restricted access to formal credit. These structural challenges hinder both groups' ability to grow and integrate economically, underscoring the need for targeted policies that streamline administrative procedures, enhance financial inclusion, and foster inclusive business support networks.

Market adaptation challenges affected both groups in distinct ways. Necessity-driven entrepreneurs in crowded sectors like beauty, food, and cleaning faced difficulties standing out, often dealing with pricing pressures and high client turnover. Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs struggled with client acquisition in unfamiliar markets and sometimes had to pivot their business models to fit local expectations. Across the board, gaps in social capital were significant. Entrepreneurs lacking strong networks tended to rely on Brazilian clientele, creating enclave-style businesses, while others faced the slow and sometimes exclusionary nature of Portuguese business circles. Language, though manageable socially, became a barrier in formal contexts such as dealing with accountants, government agencies, and legal negotiations.

Within the mixed embeddedness framework (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Kloosterman & Rath, 2003), the distinction between opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurship can be understood as the result of the interaction between individual resources and the opportunity structure of the host country. Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs typically possess higher levels of human and financial capital, broader heterogeneous networks, and greater ability to interpret or exploit institutional openings. From a mixed embeddedness perspective, these individuals benefit from favourable positioning within both relational embeddedness (access to diverse, bridging ties) and structural embeddedness (integration into regulatory and market environments), enabling them to proactively identify market gaps and pursue strategic ventures.

In contrast, necessity-driven entrepreneurs emerge when migrants confront constrained opportunity structures, such as discrimination in wage employment, limited recognition of credentials, precarious legal status, or restricted access to mainstream markets. Their embeddedness is often bounded, rooted in dense co-ethnic networks, limited capital, and sectors characterized by low entry barriers. Mixed embeddedness highlights that these entrepreneurs do not choose self-employment solely for economic motives but rather as an adaptive response to structural exclusion and institutional barriers. Their ventures tend to concentrate in highly regulated, saturated, or marginal markets where formal opportunities are scarce.

Thus, mixed embeddedness shows that opportunity-driven and necessity-driven trajectories are not inherent individual traits; they are situated outcomes of how migrants' resources intersect with the social, economic, and institutional environments of the host society.

In this sense, the framework explains why migrants with similar motivations may experience different entrepreneurial paths: it is the fit between their personal capital, their social networks, and the evolving opportunity structure that ultimately shapes whether entrepreneurship becomes a chosen opportunity or a constrained necessity. From a methodological perspective, these findings illustrate the analytical value of combining survey-derived classifications with inductive qualitative narratives. The integration of these approaches enabled the identification of fluid transitions between entrepreneurial profiles, which might not be captured through single-method designs.

5. Final Considerations

This study examined the motivations, trajectories, and challenges of Brazilian migrant entrepreneurs in Portugal, distinguishing between opportunity-driven and necessity-driven pathways. The findings demonstrate that these categories are not fixed but dynamic, with entrepreneurs transitioning between survival-oriented and growth-oriented strategies over time. Building on the mixed embeddedness framework (Kloosterman et al., 1999; Kloosterman & Rath, 2018), the study advances a theoretical contribution by showing that entrepreneurial motivations are not merely individual attributes but are relational and structurally conditioned outcomes. Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs tend to benefit from greater access to capital, diverse networks, and institutional knowledge, whereas necessity-driven entrepreneurs emerge from more constrained forms of embeddedness, often relying on dense co-ethnic ties and operating in low-entry sectors. This perspective reframes entrepreneurial motivation as a context-dependent and evolving process shaped by the interaction between individual resources and opportunity structures.

The primary contribution of this study lies in its methodological design. By integrating survey data, in-depth interviews, field observations, and Gioia-based coding within an interpretivist framework, the study offers a structured and transferable approach for multi-method qualitative research. This design demonstrates how researchers can reconcile breadth and depth while maintaining epistemological coherence. More specifically, the study shows how survey-based profiling can inform purposive qualitative sampling, how multiple data sources can be triangulated to enhance analytical robustness, and how the combination of deductive and inductive coding can support theory elaboration while preserving empirical richness (Gioia et al., 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In doing so, it contributes to ongoing methodological discussions on how to integrate different forms of data within a coherent qualitative research strategy, particularly in contexts characterized by complexity, heterogeneity, and dispersed populations.

From a policy and empirical perspective, the findings highlight the need for differentiated support mechanisms tailored to distinct entrepreneurial profiles. Simplified administrative procedures, legal assistance, and access to microcredit are particularly relevant for necessity-driven entrepreneurs, while opportunity-driven ventures benefit more from scaling support, innovation incentives, and access to broader markets.

Strengthening both bonding and bridging social capital—especially for women and entrepreneurs operating outside major urban centres—emerges as a critical factor for enhancing inclusion and long-term sustainability.

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. Its focus on Portugal and its cross-sectional design constrains generalizability, pointing to the need for longitudinal and comparative research across different institutional contexts. Future studies could explore how entrepreneurial trajectories evolve over time and how variations in opportunity structures influence the transition between necessity- and opportunity-driven entrepreneurship. Overall, the study underscores the importance of combining theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives to better understand migrant entrepreneurship as a dynamic and contextually embedded process.

Ethical Approval: This research involved human participants through interviews and surveys. Ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate institutional ethics committee prior to data collection. The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Universidade do Grande Rio [UNIGRANRIO], under protocol number CAAE- 84607524.1.0000.5283, granted in November/2024. Participants were informed of the study's objectives, and informed consent was obtained from all individuals involved. Data was anonymized to ensure participant confidentiality and privacy in accordance with data protection regulations.

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study, ensuring respect for confidentiality and voluntariness principles.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The material has not been published, in whole or in part, elsewhere and is not currently under consideration for publication in any other journal. All authors were personally and actively involved in the work that led to this article and take responsibility for its content.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI): *Artificial Intelligence tools were used to support the preparation of this article, namely for language editing, textual reformulation, translation from Portuguese to English, and preliminary organisation of information (ChatGPT). The use of these tools was exclusively instrumental and did not replace critical analysis, data interpretation, methodological decisions, or the scientific responsibility of the authors, who fully assume authorship and the integrity of the content presented.*

Funding: This research was supported by the Fundação Carlos Chagas Filho de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ), through the Jovem Cientista do Nosso Estado program (Grant No. E-26/204.608/2024). I am deeply grateful for FAPERJ's continued commitment to fostering scientific development and innovation in the State of Rio de Janeiro. Their support has been fundamental to the advancement of this project.

6. References

- Baycan-Levent, T., & Nijkamp, P. (2009). Characteristics of migrant entrepreneurship in Europe. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 21(4), 375–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985620903020060>
- Carvalho, F. C. (2002). A crítica da sociologia econômica à abordagem econômica convencional. *Revista de Economia Contemporânea*, 6(1), 79–102. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1415-98482002000100004>
- Corrêa, V. S., Vale, M. P., & Guimarães, L. O. (2020). Embeddedness e empreendedorismo: Um ensaio teórico. *Revista Brasileira de Gestão de Negócios*, 22(3), 527–545. <https://doi.org/10.7819/rbgn.v22i3.4078>
- Desiderio, M. V. (2014). *Policies to support immigrant entrepreneurship*. Migration Policy Institute.
- Dheer, R. J. (2024). Cultural diversity: An impetus to economic growth—under what conditions? *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 36(7–8), 855–880. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2024.2290741>
- Fairlie, R. W., & Fossen, F. M. (2020). Defining opportunity versus necessity entrepreneurship: Two components of business creation. In S. W. Polachek & K. Tatsiramos (Eds.), *Change at home, in the labor market, and on the job* (pp. 253–289). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Falcão, R. P. Q., Cruz, E., Costa Filho, M., & Elo, M. (2024). Researching hard-to-reach populations: lessons learned from dispersed migrant communities. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 44(1/2), 76–95. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-06-2023-0134>
- Falcão, R. P. de Q., Machado, M. M., Cruz, E. P., & Hossein, C. S. (2021). Mixed embeddedness of Brazilian entrepreneurs in Toronto. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 27(7), 1724–1750. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-08-2020-0527>
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151>
- Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380. <https://doi.org/10.1086/225469>
- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(3), 481–510. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228311>
- Granovetter, M. (2005). The impact of social structure on economic outcomes. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 19(1), 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.1257/0895330053147958>
- Johnson, J. M., & Rowlands, T. (2012). The interpersonal dynamics of in-depth interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (pp. 99–113). SAGE Publications.
- Jones, T., & Ram, M. (2007). Re-embedding the ethnic business agenda. *Work, Employment and Society*, 21(3), 439–457. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017007080014>
- Jones, T., Ram, M., Edwards, P., Kiselincev, A., & Muchenje, L. (2014). Mixed embeddedness and new migrant enterprise in the UK. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 26(5–6), 500–520. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2014.950697>
- Kaup, B. Z. (2015). Markets, embeddedness, and elites: The case of Bolivia. *Latin American Perspectives*, 42(5), 42–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X14547514>
- Kloosterman, R. C. (2010). Matching opportunities with resources: A framework for analyzing (migrant) entrepreneurship from a mixed embeddedness perspective. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 22(1), 25–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985620903220488>

- Kloosterman, R. C., & Rath, J. (2003). *Immigrant entrepreneurs: Venturing abroad in the age of globalisation*. Berg.
- Kloosterman, R., & Rath, J. (2010). Shifting landscapes of immigrant entrepreneurship. In OECD (Ed.), *Open for business: Migrant entrepreneurship in OECD countries* (pp. 101–123). OECD Publishing.
- Kloosterman, R. C., & Rath, J. (2018). Mixed embeddedness revisited: A conclusion to the symposium. *Sociologica*, 12, 103–114. <https://doi.org/10.6092/1971-8853/8625>
- Kloosterman, R. C., van der Leun, J., & Rath, J. (1999). Mixed embeddedness: (In)formal economic activities and immigrant businesses in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23(2), 252–266. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00194>
- Krippner, G. R., & Alvarez, A. S. (2007). Embeddedness and the intellectual projects of economic sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 219–240. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131647>
- Langevang, T., Gough, K. V., Yankson, P. W. K., Owusu, G., & Osei, R. (2015). Bounded entrepreneurial vitality: The mixed embeddedness of female entrepreneurship. *Economic Geography*, 91(4), 449–473. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecge.12092>
- Light, I. (1972). *Ethnic enterprise in America: Business and welfare among Chinese, Japanese, and Blacks*. University of California Press.
- Macdonald, D. (1971). *Economic theories and social structure*. Free Press.
- Nathan, M., & Lee, N. (2013). Cultural diversity, innovation, and entrepreneurship: Firm-level evidence from London. *Economic Geography*, 89(4), 367–394. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecge.12016>
- OECD. (2019). *The missing entrepreneurs 2019: Policies for inclusive entrepreneurship*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/3ed84801-en>
- Oliveira, C. R. (2007). Understanding the diversity of immigrant entrepreneurial strategies. In L. P. Dana (Ed.), *Handbook of research on ethnic minority entrepreneurship* (pp. 61–82). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Polanyi, K. (1957). *The great transformation: The political and economic origins of our time*. Beacon Press. (Original work published 1944; no DOI)
- Ram, M., Jones, T., & Villares-Varela, M. (2017). Migrant entrepreneurship: Reflections on research and practice. *International Small Business Journal*, 35(1), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242616678051>
- Ram, M., Theodorakopoulos, N., & Jones, T. (2008). Forms of capital, mixed embeddedness and Somali enterprise. *Work, Employment and Society*, 22(3), 427–446. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017008093479>
- Rath, J., & Kloosterman, R. (2000). Immigrant entrepreneurship in advanced economies: Mixed embeddedness further explored. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26(4), 657–673. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713680743>
- Raud, C. (2007). A importância do Estado na abordagem da embeddedness. *Revista de Sociologia e Política*, 28, 207–218. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-44782007000100013>
- Schrooten, M., Salazar, N. B., & Dias, G. (2016). Living in mobility: Trajectories of Brazilians in Belgium and the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42(7), 1199–1215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1139443>
- Sexton, D. L., & Smilor, R. W. (1997). *Entrepreneurship 2000*. Upstart Publishing.
- Silva, H. S., Mota, C. B. da, Cruz, E. P., & Falcão, R. P. Q. (2024). Mixed embeddedness of Brazilian business in the city of Porto. In I. Tulekian, S. Ribeiro, & L. B. Álvares (Eds.), *Cultural and linguistic education in the context of migration* (pp. 122–138). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Simmel, G. (1955). *Conflict and the web of group affiliations*. Free Press.

Simmel, G. (1971). *On individuality and social forms*. University of Chicago Press.

Solano, G. (2016). Immigrant self-employment and transnational practices: The case of Moroccan entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Milan. *International Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 121–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2016.1145463>

Statista. (2023). Foreign residents in Portugal in 2023, by nationality and gender. *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1419590/foreign-residents-in-portugal-by-nationality-and-gender/>

Vale, M. P. (2014). Embeddedness e desenvolvimento: Uma revisão conceitual. *Revista de Desenvolvimento Econômico*, 16(30), 145–164.

Vinogradov, E., & Kolvereid, L. (2007). Cultural background, human capital and self-employment rates among immigrants in Norway. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 19(3), 293–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985620701223113>

Waldinger, R. (1990). *Ethnic entrepreneurs: Immigrant business in industrial societies*. Sage.

Roberto Pessoa de Queiroz Falcão

Universidade do Grande Rio, UNIGRANRIO AFYA - PPGA, Brazil

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8125-0938>

roberto.falcao@afya.com.br

robertopqfalcao@gmail.com

Marcelo Ferreira da Costa

Universidade do Grande Rio, UNIGRANRIO AFYA - PPGA, Brazil

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5038-4053>

mfcostarj@gmail.com

Eduardo Picanço Cruz

Universidade Federal Fluminense – STE, Brazil

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4484-3256>

epicanco@id.uff.br

Susana Cristina Serrano Fernandes Rodrigues

Instituto Politécnico de Leiria, Portugal

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6544-7001>

susana.rodrigues@ipleiria.pt

Irene Dobarrio Machado Ciccarino

Instituto Politécnico de Santarém, Portugal

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6517-4154>

irene.ciccarino@esg.ipsantarem.pt