

Immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal's new migration wave: A systematic review and theoretical expansion of the mixed embeddedness model

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Immigrant entrepreneurship amid the new migration wave to Portugal: a systematic review of key dynamics, gaps, and emerging opportunities

1. Introduction

Global migratory dynamics have undergone significant transformations in recent decades, reshaping the social and economic landscapes of host countries (Szczygiel, Nunes, & Ramos, 2020). Portugal, historically a country of emigration, has recently become an attractive destination for a “new migration wave,” marked by a diversity of nationalities, skill levels, and motivations (Cruz & Falcão, 2020; Da Silva et al., 2022).

According to the AIMA Report (2023), the number of foreign residents in Portugal reached 1,044,606. These residents come from a wide array of national backgrounds, including new migration flows from Asia, such as India (4.2%), Nepal (2.9%), Bangladesh (2.46%), and Pakistan (1.64%), alongside migrants from traditional Lusophone countries like Brazil (35.3%), Angola (5.3%), Cape Verde (4.7%), São Tomé and Príncipe (2.5%), and Mozambique (0.78%). European nationals are also represented, such as from the United Kingdom (4.5%), Italy (3.5%), France (2.6%), Germany (2.19%), and Spain (1.97%), as well as migrants from the United States (1.35%). This diversity stems from a combination of factors, including the pursuit of economic opportunities, the presence of pre-existing social networks, and the perception of Portugal as a welcoming destination in comparison to other countries (Padilla et al., 2024). Many migrants are also drawn by the country’s quality of life, safety, and mild climate, qualities particularly appreciated by Northern Europeans and some Brazilians (Dinis, 2021; Reaes Pinto et al., 2024).

Beyond their demographic contribution, immigrants play an active role in Portuguese society, fostering mutual integration processes and establishing business networks that reconfigure local economic dynamics. On one end of the spectrum are retirees from Northern Europe, North America, and Brazil (Dinis, 2021); on the other, manual laborers from Lusophone and Asian countries seeking residency status (Cruz et al., 2020; Sarkar et al., 2022; Gaspar, 2019). For many migrants, entrepreneurship emerges as a strategy for economic integration, mobilizing resources such as social capital, creativity, and cultural adaptability (Malheiros & Padilla, 2015; Sarkar et al., 2022). These ventures contribute to sectors like transportation and technology (Sarkar et al., 2022; Gaspar, 2019) but also face barriers such as limited access to formal financing, excessive bureaucracy, and ambiguous media representations (Cruz et al., 2020; Da Silva et al., 2022). Furthermore, public policies such as the Golden Visa and microcredit programs (although aimed at fostering economic integration) often steer migrants toward real estate investment rather than productive entrepreneurship (Ratten & Pellegrini, 2019).

This study adopts the mixed embeddedness framework, which integrates micro-level factors (individuals and networks), meso-level contexts (community structures), and macro-level dimensions (public policy and institutional environment), emphasizing the strategic role of social capital in overcoming initial disadvantages (Kloosterman & Rath, 1999; Da Silva et al., 2022). Although the literature acknowledges the importance of support networks and structural opportunities, there is a notable lack of studies on emerging groups such as Indians (4.2%) and Nepalese (2.9%), as well as on elderpreneurs (retired entrepreneurs) and digital platforms in migrant contexts (e.g., Uber, Glovo). This gap is critical, as migration policies often lack the necessary adaptations to foster inclusion in areas like sustainable tourism and the creative industries, sectors where multicultural skills could be effectively leveraged (Reaes Pinto et al., 2024).

The objective of this article is to map theoretical gaps in research on immigrant entrepreneurship in the context of Portugal’s “new migration wave,” drawing on the mixed embeddedness framework (Kloosterman & Rath, 1999; Da Silva et al., 2022) and data from AIMA (2023). Thus, the guiding research question is: *What are the existing research gaps at*

the micro, meso, and macro levels concerning immigrant entrepreneurship in the context of Portugal's new migration wave?

In addition to reviewing research specifically on immigrant entrepreneurship, the study also examines broader literature on immigration to Portugal, in order to contextualize emerging migratory patterns and underrepresented groups. To answer the main research question, we conducted a systematic review of 13 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025, organizing the findings across micro, meso, and macro levels. The analysis highlighted recurring themes, such as the importance of social capital and the conversion of multicultural skills into competitive advantages, particularly in sectors like tourism, beauty services, ethnic gastronomy, and the creative industries. More importantly, it identified notable gaps in the literature, including the scarcity of studies on underrepresented groups (such as Indians and Nepalese), the limited exploration of digital platforms and informal business models, and the lack of attention to hybrid strategies and creative entrepreneurship. By mapping these research gaps, the article contributes to a more comprehensive and forward-looking agenda on immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal.

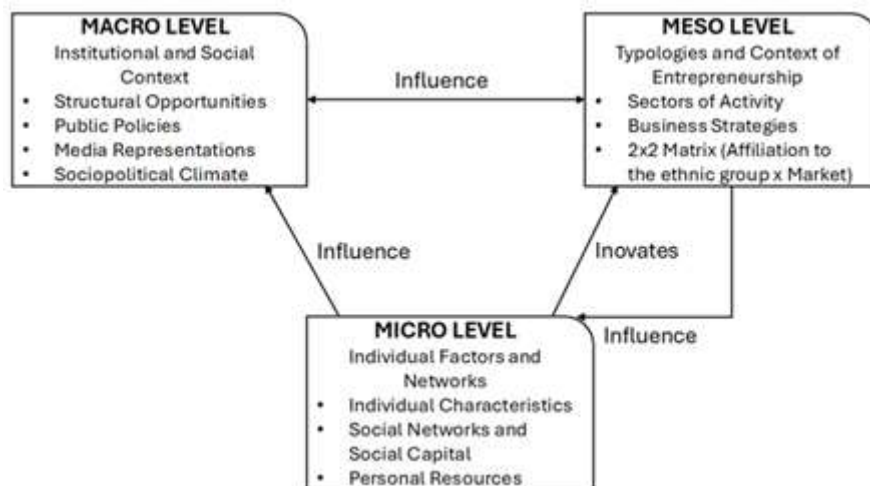
Building on this agenda, the study proposes a theoretical contribution by expanding the classic mixed embeddedness framework to better capture contemporary dynamics in the Portuguese context. Specifically, it introduces three emerging dimensions (digital, aesthetic-cultural, and narrative embeddedness) that reflect how immigrant entrepreneurs engage with technology, mobilize cultural repertoires, and are influenced by public narratives. These additions allow for a deeper understanding of how migrants navigate opportunities and constraints across different levels of analysis. By integrating these new categories, the article not only highlights empirical blind spots but also advances a renewed conceptual approach capable of informing both academic inquiry and inclusive policy design.

2. Mixed Embeddedness: integrating micro, meso, and macro dimensions of immigrant entrepreneurship

Mixed Embeddedness (Kloosterman & Rath, 1999) serves as the central framework for understanding immigrant entrepreneurship as the outcome of interactions among individual, community, and institutional factors. The theory is structured around three main pillars: (i) Social Networks and Social Capital: the mobilization of internal networks (bonding social capital) and transnational ties (bridging social capital) to access scarce resources (Szczygiel et al., 2020); (ii) Business Strategies: adaptation to market niches (e.g., sustainable tourism, gastronomy) and informal sectors (e.g., delivery services, urban transport), reflecting migrants' ability to convert cultural capital into competitive advantage (Reaes Pinto et al., 2024); (iii) Structural Opportunities: the socio-economic and institutional context of the host country, including migration policies, tourism demand, and business regulations.

Applying this framework to the Portuguese context reveals that immigrant entrepreneurship is not an isolated phenomenon, but rather one embedded in both informal and formal mechanisms that link individuals, communities, and institutions (AIMA, 2023) – see figure 1.

Figure 1: Mixed Embeddedness Framework Applied to Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Portugal.



Source: Own elaboration bases on Kloosterman e Rath (1999).

The micro level (individual and personal resources) highlights how individual characteristics and support networks shape entrepreneurial trajectories. The resilience and adaptability of immigrants, shaped by experiences in challenging contexts, enhance their capacity to transform human capital into entrepreneurial opportunities (Szczygiel et al., 2020). Family and community networks not only facilitate access to resources but also provide crucial emotional support, reinforcing social capital as a strategic asset. Data from AIMA (2023) indicate that migrants with longer residence in Portugal report fewer perceived barriers, whereas recent arrivals face challenges related to bureaucracy and lack of proficiency in the local language (Cruz et al., 2020).

Social capital helps overcome initial disadvantages, such as limited access to formal financing. For example, WhatsApp groups among Brazilians in Porto are used to exchange experiences and product recommendations, reinforcing bridging social capital (Szczygiel et al., 2020). Similarly, Indian, and Nepalese transnational networks in Lisbon (together representing 7.1% of the migrant population) leverage connections with their countries of origin to import ingredients or specific technologies. However, academic studies on their strategies remain scarce (AIMA, 2023).

The meso level (sectors of activity and contextual strategies) analyses the sectors and business strategies adopted by migrants reveals that immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal is primarily associated with two main trends: lifestyle entrepreneurship and engagement in the creative industries. The former, as highlighted by Dinis (2021), refers to migrants who seek to balance work and quality of life, particularly in rural areas such as Penamacor, where multicultural skills and transnational networks are mobilized to create sustainable businesses. The latter, explored by Reaes Pinto et al. (2024), involves the use of cultural competencies and local heritage as foundations for ventures in sectors such as art, gastronomy, and tourism.

The 2x2 matrix (Cruz & Falcão, 2020) in Table 2 illustrates this duality by classifying entrepreneurial strategies based on the degree of ethnic affiliation and the target audience (ethnic or local).

Table 2 – Strategy Classification

Market	Affiliation to ethnic group	No affiliation
Ethnic	Ethnic niche (Brazilian restaurants)	Specific interests ('middleman minorities')
Local	Exotic products (tropical culture)	Generic markets (law, IT)

Fonte: Cruz & Falcão (2020)

For example, Brazilian restaurants in Porto represent an ethnic niche, whereas Venezuelan-run businesses in Lisbon operating in law or technology exemplify participation in more generic

markets. However, the reviewed literature shows a concentration of studies on ethnic niche businesses, while strategies targeting generic markets (particularly among Asian and African groups) remain underrepresented, underscoring the need for further empirical research in these contexts.

Moreover, the macro level (public policies and media representations) incorporates institutional factors such as migration policies and the broader sociopolitical climate. Policies like the Golden Visa, microcredit programs, and the Nationality Law (as shown in Table 3) are often cited as promising initiatives, yet they frequently remain disconnected from the lived realities of migrants (Ratten & Pellegrini, 2019; Sarkar et al., 2022). Programs such as the StartUp Visa aim to encourage immigrant entrepreneurship, but bureaucratic barriers (such as complex legalization processes and licensing requirements) limit their effectiveness (Sarkar et al., 2022). Aligning public policies with media representations is crucial to fostering an inclusive environment, mitigating stereotypes, and recognizing the multicultural contributions of immigrants, thereby generating new market opportunities (Padilla et al., 2024).

Table 3 – Migration policies

Policy/Regulation	Impact on entrepreneurship	Gaps identified in literature
Golden Visa	Directs migrants to real estate investments	Poor adaptation to productive sectors (e.g., tourism)
Microcredit	Limited access due to lack of financial history	Lack of programs for Asian and African migrants
Nationality Law (Decree-Law 41/2023)	Facilitates citizenship for second-generation migrants	Lack of incentives for businesses in rural areas

Source: own elaboration based on AIMA Report (2023)

Media representations are equally critical at the macro level, as they shape narratives that influence public perception and the economic opportunities available to migrants. Studies show that positive narratives can enhance the visibility of immigrant entrepreneurs, facilitating their access to social networks and local markets. Conversely, negative stereotypes or narratives of exceptionalism tend to perpetuate inequalities by limiting access to formal resources and creating additional barriers (Ratten & Pellegrini, 2019; Padilla et al., 2024). Narratives surrounding migrants (e.g. Venezuelans in Portugal) often fluctuate between exceptionalism and stereotyping, impacting public perceptions and market opportunities (Padilla et al., 2024). This ambiguity underscores the need for public policies that address institutional biases and promote more inclusive regulatory environments. The interconnection of micro, meso, and macro levels provides a comprehensive understanding of immigrant entrepreneurship, highlighting how individual factors (such as social capital and entrepreneurial intent), contextual elements (emerging sectors like tourism and the creative industries), and institutional dimensions (public policy and media narratives) interact to shape entrepreneurial trajectories. This integrated approach not only clarifies the dynamics of the phenomenon but also supports the development of inclusive public policy and business practices.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach through a systematic literature review, aiming to identify, analyse, and synthesize the main findings on migration and immigrant entrepreneurship in the context of the new migration wave to Portugal. The review followed the PRISMA protocol guidelines, which ensure transparency and rigor in conducting systematic reviews (Moher et al., 2009).

3.1. Search Strategy

The Scopus database was selected due to its broad coverage of relevant and indexed academic publications, particularly in interdisciplinary fields such as social sciences, economics, and entrepreneurship. According to Burnham (2006), Scopus is recognized for its thematic diversity

and relevance for applied research, making it particularly suitable for studies on migration and entrepreneurship. Moreover, Mongeon and Paul-Hus (2016) emphasize that Scopus offers broader coverage in terms of the number of journals and geographical regions compared to other databases. These characteristics are essential to ensure the representativeness of diverse cultural and economic contexts in this study. Although other databases, such as Web of Science, are also relevant, Scopus was prioritized due to its strong representation in socioeconomic and business research, as well as its compatibility with the temporal and geographic criteria of this study. Future research may expand the scope to include additional databases.

3.1.1. Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Portugal

The search was conducted in the Scopus database using the following terms, combined with Boolean operators: (((immigra* OR transnational) AND entrepreneur*) OR ((imigra* OR transnacional) AND empreende*) AND portugal). The inclusion criteria comprised articles published between 2015 and 2025, with an explicit focus on immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal, restricted to the subject areas of Social Sciences; Business, Management and Accounting; and Economics, Econometrics and Finance, and that had undergone peer review. In contrast, studies focusing on other countries, works that did not address entrepreneurship or the Portuguese context, articles without full-text access, or those not published in scientific journals were excluded (figure 2).

Figure 2 – Screening process

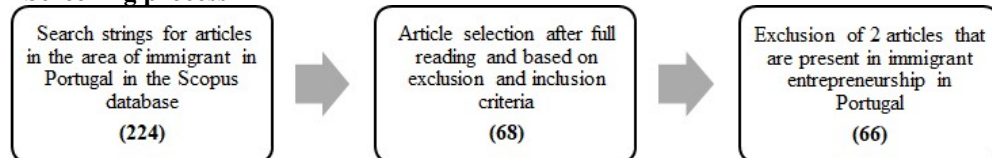


Source: own elaboration

3.1.2. Migration to Portugal

The search was conducted in the Scopus database using the following terms combined with Boolean operators: ((immigra* OR transnational) OR (imigra* OR transnacional) AND Portugal). Articles published between 2015 and 2025 were included, provided they had an explicit focus on immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal, were limited to the subject areas of Social Sciences; Business, Management and Accounting; and Economics, Econometrics and Finance, and had undergone peer review. Conversely, studies focused on other countries, works that did not address immigration or the Portuguese context, articles without full-text access, or those not published in scientific journals were excluded.

Figure 5 – Screening process



Source: own elaboration

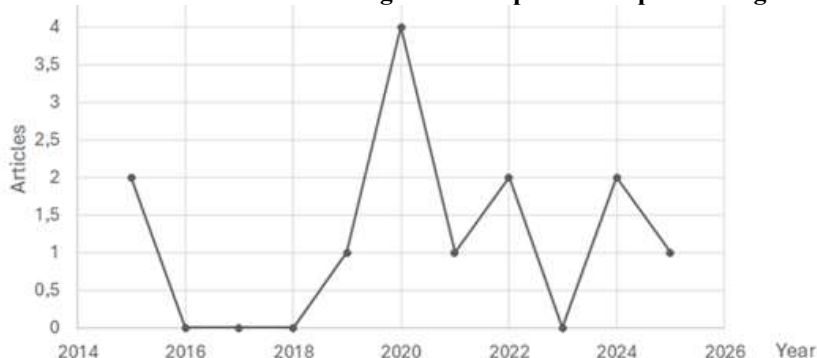
4. Presentation of Results

4.1. Articles published on immigrant entrepreneurship

The phenomenon of immigration and the emergence of new migration waves has been driven by specific events, such as the global migration crisis and the implementation of public policies aimed at immigrant integration, as highlighted by AIMA (2023). A sharp decline in the number of publications is observed between 2022 and 2023. However, from 2022 onward (amid rising international migration in the post-pandemic period and growing political debates

on the socioeconomic integration of immigrants) interest in the topic was significantly revitalized, reflecting the increasing relevance of immigrant entrepreneurship in the Portuguese context (AIMA, 2023). Figure 3 indicates a consistent growth in interest regarding immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal since 2018.

Figure 3 - Annual Publication of Articles on Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Portugal



Source: own elaboration based on Scopus search

Figure 4 shows that the selected articles were published in journals specializing in topics such as entrepreneurship, migration, and management, reflecting the relevance of these fields for studying immigrant entrepreneurship in the Portuguese context.

Figure 4 – Publications in specialized journals related to entrepreneurship, migration, and management.



Source: own elaboration based on Scopus search

4.1.1. Analysis of Article Categories on Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Portugal

Of the 13 articles analysed, research on immigration in Portugal was grouped into several thematic categories, as detailed below (table 4):

Table 4 – Immigrant Entrepreneur in Portugal by theme

#	Title	Theme of Article
1	Financing the creation of microenterprises with microcredit: Does being an immigrant make a difference?	Access to Financial Resources (7.69%)
2	Immigrants and entrepreneurship: A road for talent or just the only road?	Entrepreneurship (53.85%)
3	Up start-creative industries. assemblage for immigrant integration and creative heritage preservation	
4	Aspects of Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurship in Porto, Portugal	
5	Tourism, immigrants and lifestyle entrepreneurship: the (in)coming of people as a key factor for sustainability of low-density territories—a case study in Portugal	

6	Analysis of predictive variables of entrepreneurial intention among Brazilian immigrants in Portugal	
7	Chinese descendants' professional pathways: Moving to new businesses?	
8	The influence of creativity on entrepreneurship: the Portuguese Case	
9	Female transnational entrepreneurship and smart specialization policy	Gender (15.38%)
10	Can stigma become a resource? The mobilisation of aesthetic–corporal capital by female immigrant entrepreneurs from Brazil	
11	Mobilizing a network of competencies to fulfil the purpose and achieve impact: the Portuguese case of mezze for the integration of refugees	Policy (15.38%)
12	Media representations of Venezuelan migration in Portugal and Argentina: Between exceptionalism and a returning diaspora	
13	Social support in migrant entrepreneurship before and during the coronavirus crisis	Social Networks (7.69%)

Source: own elaboration based on Scopus search

In the theme of ‘Access to Financial Resources’, the articles examine the dynamics of financing for immigrant entrepreneurs in Portugal. The research specifically addresses differences between immigrants and natives in access to microcredit, revealing that while there are distinctions in terms of human capital and business location, no significant disparities were observed in loan amounts granted or repayment rates. This focus contributes to the debate on alleged discrimination by financial institutions and provides support for policy development (Sarkar et al., 2022).

Addressing the theme of ‘Entrepreneurship’, the articles focus on the multifaceted entrepreneurial experiences of migrants in Portugal. The studies explore motivations behind business creation (whether driven by talent or necessity due to labour market barriers) highlighting the influence of human capital loss and the challenges of prejudice, such as the “accent ceiling.” Factors such as age at arrival, length of stay, visa type, and educational level are identified as predictors of entrepreneurial intention. Additionally, the studies examine lifestyle entrepreneurship in low-density areas, the role of Chinese descendants in businesses linked to investment policies, and social innovation initiatives that leverage cultural heritage. The analysis also considers the impact of creativity on new business development and the challenges faced by immigrants in this process (Cruz et al., 2020); Dinis, 2021; da Silva et al., 2022; Gaspar, 2019; Iranzo, 2025; Olim et al., 2015; Reaes Pinto et al., 2024).

The articles that address ‘Gender’ delve into the intersections of gender and migration, with a particular focus on transnational female entrepreneurship and the ways in which social stigmas can be re-signified. The studies examine how smart specialization policies in the European Union and diaspora networks can foster transnational female entrepreneurship, promoting a more inclusive global ecosystem. Furthermore, they analyse how stereotypical images of migrant women (particularly Brazilian women in Portugal) are reappropriated and transformed into “aesthetic–bodily capital” in the beauty sector, converting prejudice into entrepreneurial resources (Malheiros & Padilla, 2014; Ratten & Pellegrini, 2019).

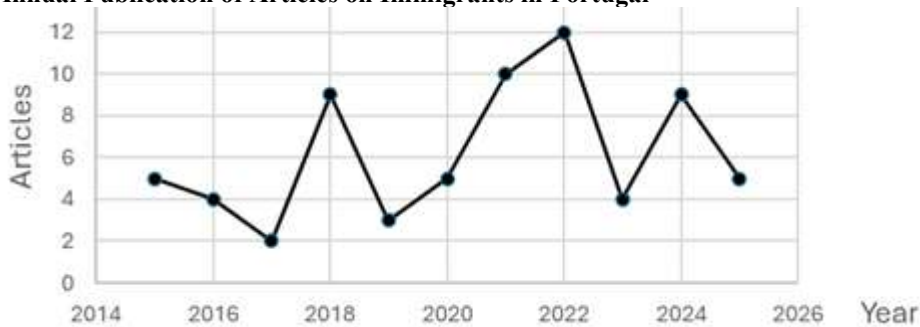
In the ‘Policy’ theme, the articles explore the intersection of governance, integration, and representations of migration. The research addresses refugee integration into the labour market through social entrepreneurship initiatives, emphasizing the role of competence networks in overcoming initial lack of experience and achieving social and financial sustainability. Other studies analyse media representations of migration flows, such as Venezuelan migration to Portugal and Argentina, showing how media discourses are shaped by migration policies and historical–global contexts. There is also attention to recent reforms in Portuguese migration policy, including institutional restructuring aimed at de-securitizing the management of international migration. Together, these works illustrate the complexity of policy approaches and narratives surrounding migration (Padilla et al., 2024; Verga Matos et al., 2025).

In the ‘Social Networks’ theme, one article investigates the crucial role of social support for immigrant entrepreneurs in Portugal, particularly in times of crisis. The research highlights how social connections function as a key mechanism for mobilizing resources, mitigating stress, and overcoming challenges inherent to starting a business in a new country, such as understanding the local market, legal frameworks, and cultural nuances. The findings underscore that social support, in its various forms (informational, instrumental, appraisal, and emotional), is a core function of social relationships and a vital source of entrepreneurial resources for immigrants—becoming especially critical during periods of acute adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Szczygiel et al., 2020).

4.2. Articles published on immigration

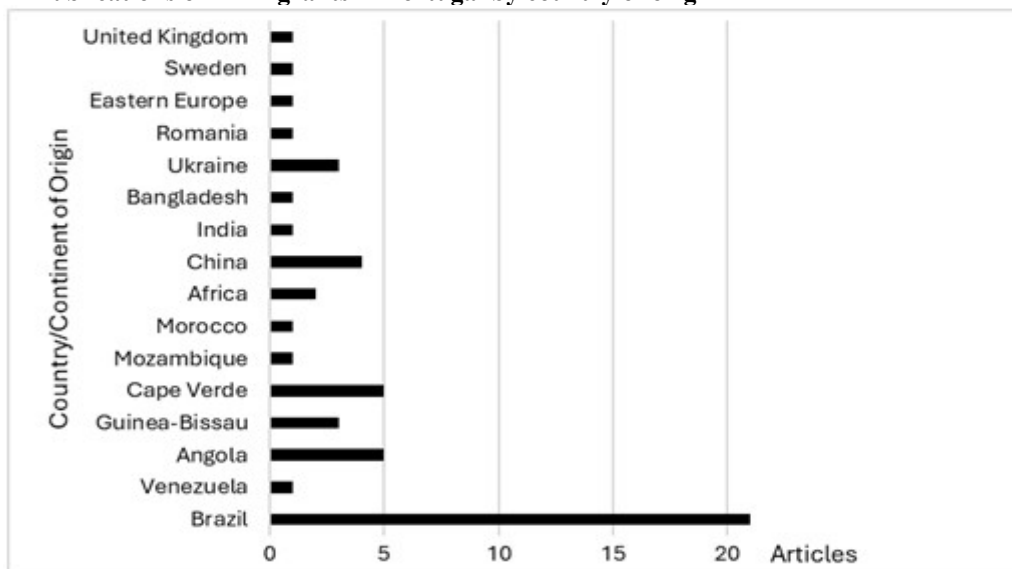
Figure 6 presents the annual distribution of articles published on immigration in Portugal between 2015 and 2025, revealing notable fluctuations in publication volume over the years. The period begins with relatively low output, reaching its lowest point in 2017. From 2018 onward, there is a marked increase in academic production, with peaks occurring in 2018, 2021, and especially in 2022, which recorded the highest number of publications. This was followed by a decline in 2023 and a subsequent recovery in 2024. As of 2025, five articles have been published. Overall, the trend indicates a growing scholarly interest in immigration in Portugal, particularly during the 2018–2024 period, which coincides with the growing immigration trend – “new migration wave.”

Figure 6 – Annual Publication of Articles on Immigrants in Portugal



Source: own elaboration based on Scopus search

Figure 7 – Publications on immigrants in Portugal by country of origin



Source: own elaboration based on Scopus search

4.2.1. Analysis of Article Categories on Immigration in Portugal

Of the 68 articles analysed, research on immigration in Portugal was grouped into several thematic categories, as detailed in Table 5.

Table 5 – Migration to Portugal by Thematic category

#	Article title	Thematic categories	
01	The changing value of higher education in England and Portugal: massification, marketization and public good	EDUCATION (1.51%)	
02	Female transnational entrepreneurship and smart specialization policy	ENTREPRENEURSHIP (4.54%)	
03	Market orientation of small and medium enterprises owned by Brazilian immigrants abroad		
04	The community of Chinese “expat-preneurs”: understanding the challenges of doing business abroad		
05	Childcare between Angola and Portugal: Parenthood in transnational families	FAMILY (4.54%)	
06	Comparing transnational and local influences on immigrant transnational families of African and Asian origin in Portugal		
07	Transnational parenting and the well-being of Angolan migrant parents in Europe		
08	« Faire lien » pour retrouver l’estime de soi. Une tontine basée au Portugal pour les traitements esthétiques transnationaux	GENDER (19,69%)	
09	Bolivian in Argentina, Brazilian in Portugal and Colombian in Spain. A Postcolonial analysis of the migratory trajectories of the women from Latin America		
10	Brazilian escorts in Lisbon: traffics, desires, and business from sexual economics in transnational contexts.		
11	Brazilian escorts on a Portuguese escort website: strategies, tensions, and power relations		
12	Cross-border citizenship: mothering beyond the boundaries of consanguinity and nationality		
13	Embodying the European in the mirror: corporeal biographies of Brazilian trans and travestis sex workers in Lisbon		
14	Island-raised but foreign-made: Lived experiences, transnational relationships, and expressions of womanhood among Cape Verdean migrant women in greater Lisbon		
15	Marriage patterns among Portuguese-Brazilian couples: are same-sex couples different from heterosexual couples?		
16	Migration after empire: postcolonial masculinities and the transnational dynamics of subalternity		
17	Reconsidering gender norms in childcare within Chinese migrant families in Portugal		
18	Sexuality, care, and power relations in the diaspora: Brazilian immigrant women in the world of nightclubs in Lisbon		
19	The transnational sex industry on the web: virtual advertisements by Brazilian women in Portugal and Brazil		
20	Transnational families, religious participation and gender dynamics: Filipino, Sao Tomean and Indo-Mozambican immigrant women in Lisbon, Portugal		
21	Childhood vaccine hesitancy from the point of view of health professionals: a glance at the place of immigrant communities and ethnic minorities in Portugal		HEALTH (6.06%)
22	Interrupted lives and suspended futures: experiences of Brazilian students in Portugal during the COVID-19 pandemic		
23	Pandemic and Imigrantes: Brazilians in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area		
24	Travelling to Prüm –euphoria and dysphoria regarding the use of DNA data between and beyond borders		
25	Anthropology and ethnography: The transnational perspective on migration and beyond	MOBILITY (27.27%)	
26	Channelling mobilities: migrant-owned businesses as mobility infrastructures		
27	Holy Strangers: Transnational Mobility and Moral Empowerment among Evangelical Guineans in Lisbon, Portugal		

28	Informal strategies in transnational mobilities and their implications for European lifestyle migration	
29	Making a “Bangladeshi diaspora”: Migration, group formation and emplacement between Portugal and Bangladesh	
30	Navigating between mobility and immobility: precarious sporting trajectories of young Guinea-Bissauan footballers in Portugal	
31	Reciprocal migration: the coloniality of recent two-way migration links between Angola and Portugal	
32	Socio-spatial negotiations in Lisbon: Reflections of working-aged lifestyle migrants on place and privilege	
33	The dynamic welfare habitus and its impact on Brazilian migration to Lisbon and Barcelona	
34	The monarchical engagement of Portuguese immigrants in Brazil: A case of nineteenth-century transnational politics	
35	The role of diu in the hindu-gujarati diaspora in Portugal	
36	The Use of Online Media in Migration Networks	
37	Transnational mobility of Chinese students in Portuguese-Speaking countries: the role of a non-hegemonic language	
38	Understanding international students beyond studentification: A new class of transnational urban consumers. The example of Erasmus students in Lisbon (Portugal)	
39	Urban travel behavior adaptation of temporary transnational residents	
40	Venezuelans in Argentina, the United States and Portugal: a diaspora on the making?	
41	Vitalina’s (in)visibility: contemporary Portugal and the cinema of human mobility	
42	What motivates international homebuyers? Investor to lifestyle ‘migrants’ in a tourist city	
43	The desecuritization of immigration policy in Portugal: Separation between migration management and internal security	POLITICS - XENOPHOBY (3.03%)
44	Transnational diffusion and far-right latent social movements: unveiling the survival of anti-immigration mobilisation in Portugal	
45	“Nothing is sweet in my mouth”: Food, identity, and religion in African Lisbon	SOCIAL INTEGRATION (33.33%)
46	“We are sons of the ghetto, we are sons of immigrants, sons of Cape Verde”: aesthetics, anti-racism, and engagements in Creole rap in Portugal	
47	Art as an enabler of social inclusion of refugees and immigrants. Case studies, in Portugal	
48	Belonging among young people with migrant background in Portugal: local, national, and transnational identifications	
49	Citizenship rights of immigrants in Portugal	
50	City diplomacy of ordinary cities: Harnessing migrant inclusion policies for international engagement in Amadora, Portugal	
51	Exogamous patterns in four immigrant groups in Portugal (2001 and 2011)	
52	Inscriptions in social space: Brazilian immigrants in greater Oporto	
53	Integrating refugees and migrants into higher education in Portugal? An action research experience in a Portuguese university	
54	Intermittent pathways in the access to artistic careers in young descendants of migrants	
55	Introduction: Language and speakerhood in migratory contexts	
56	Kizomba beyond Angolan-ness and Lusofonia: The transnational dance floor	
57	Learning how to work in the arts field in Portugal: A biographical approach to the migrant artists' trajectories	
58	Learning Portuguese as a host language, in a non-formal context, in the voice of immigrants and refugees in Portugal	
59	Lost in transit or ready for takeoff?: Airport Cinema and European identity	
60	Migrant welfare tactics and transnational social protection between Portugal and the UK	
61	Migration paths and life trajectories of descendants of Chinese immigrants	

62	Multiculturalism in dominant ethnic populations: A transnational profile analysis	
63	Photo-Essay of the migrant home: doing international political sociology and engaging the other “other”	
64	Proximity and distance in transnational families between Angola and Portugal - the contribution of information and communication technologies	
65	Representation, regulation and voice of immigrant couriers and platform drivers in Portugal	
66	Socio-professional profiles of immigrant artists in Portugal	

Source: own elaboration

In the ‘Education’ theme, the article addresses both formal and non-formal learning processes among immigrant and refugee populations in Portugal. The studies emphasize the role of language acquisition (e.g. Portuguese as a host language) in facilitating integration and social inclusion. Attention is given to the need for holistic pedagogical approaches that account for psychosocial contexts, multiculturalism, and plurilingualism. Research also explores how higher education can support migrant students through tailored academic programs and inclusive institutional practices (Alves & Tomlinson, 2020; Pinho & Ançã, 2022).

In the ‘Entrepreneurship’ theme, the articles examine the dynamics of immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal, with particular attention to Brazilian migrants in Porto. The studies identify barriers such as linguistic prejudice (e.g., the “accent ceiling”) and discrimination, while also highlighting enabling factors such as social networks, cultural adaptation, and access to human capital. Further research explores transnational female entrepreneurship and the potential of policy frameworks (smart specialization) to foster inclusive economic participation (da Silva et al., 2022; Ratten & Pellegrini, 2020).

The ‘Family’ theme focuses on family structures, caregiving practices, and transnational kinship arrangements involving immigrant families in Portugal. Special emphasis is placed on Angolan and African-Asian communities, examining how migration affects childcare responsibilities, gender roles, and intergenerational relationships. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal the emotional and psychological impacts on transnational parents, underscoring the need for policies attuned to dispersed family dynamics (Grassi & Vivet, 2015; Mazzucato et al., 2017; Trovão, 2016).

Articles under the ‘Gender’ theme explores the intersections of gender, migration, and identity in the Portuguese context. Topics include transnational sex work, motherhood as a form of citizenship, reconfigurations of gender norms in migrant families, and the lived experiences of migrant women. The research highlights how race, class, and sexuality shape migratory trajectories, especially among Brazilian, Cape Verdean, and Chinese communities. For example, one study analyses online advertisements by Brazilian sex workers, identifying differences such as the “girlfriend style” in Brazil versus “natural oral” in Portugal. Another examines motherhood among Cape Verdean students in northern Portugal as a catalyst for cross-border kinship and citizenship practices. Research also investigates shifting gender roles in childcare among Chinese migrant families, showing how women’s increasing labour force participation challenges traditional expectations. Additional studies explore the corporeal biographies of Brazilian trans and travesty sex workers, demonstrating how mobility to Europe facilitates the accumulation of economic and symbolic capital. Findings on Portuguese-Brazilian couples reveal that same-sex unions tend to involve younger and more educated individuals compared to heterosexual couples. Other research highlights how religious participation among Filipino, São Tomean, and Indo-Mozambican women restructures family dynamics by generating resources through faith-based networks without disrupting established gender roles. The use of tontine systems for transnational aesthetic treatments is also examined, underscoring bodily agency and mutual aid among Portuguese-speaking women. Collectively, these studies illuminate the complex interplay between gender, migration, and identity,

revealing the resilience and agency of migrant women as they navigate social realities (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2021; Alaman et al., 2022; Challinor, 2018; Dolabella, 2015; Lam, 2021; Li et al., 2024; Passamani et al., 2022; Passos & Almeida-Santos, 2022; Pessoa & Ferreira, 2024; Prado, 2023; Ramos & Ferreira, 2022; Souto-García & Ambort, 2022; Trovão et al., 2015).

The ‘Health’ theme addresses the challenges faced by immigrant populations in Portugal in relation to health and well-being. Topics include vaccine hesitancy, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Brazilian communities, mental health concerns, and the implications of cross-border data sharing in EU public health and security policies. These studies call for culturally sensitive interventions and systemic support to address disparities affecting vulnerable migrant groups (Costa, 2020; Di Spirito, 2023; Hilário et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024).

In the ‘Mobility’ theme, the articles explore diverse forms of migration and transnational movement involving Portugal. Research topics include lifestyle migration, student mobility, irregular and return migration, and the role of digital media in shaping migratory aspirations. Additional areas of inquiry involve religious migration, diaspora formation, historical transnational connections, and the function of migrant-owned businesses as infrastructures of mobility. Together, these studies reveal the complexity of contemporary mobility patterns and their sociocultural implications (Augusto et al., 2022; Dekker et al., 2016; Eriksson et al., 2025; Feldman-Bianco, 2018; Formenti, 2018; Gaspar & Mathias, 2023; Jolivet & Pereira, 2021; Jung & Buhr, 2022; Liz, 2022; Lourenço & Cachado, 2018; Malet Calvo, 2018; Mapril, 2021; Molina Caminero & McGarrigle, 2023; Monteiro et al., 2021; Montezuma & McGarrigle, 2019; Oliveira & Nolasco, 2024; Padilla & López, 2021; Silva, 2018).

In the ‘Politics – Xenophobia’ theme, the articles analyse the intersection of immigration policy and political discourse in Portugal, particularly considering institutional reforms and latent anti-immigration mobilization. One study investigates the desecuritisation of migration governance through the dismantling of the Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF) and the establishment of the Agency for Integration, Migration, and Asylum (AIMA), reflecting a strategic shift away from security-oriented approaches. Another study examines how xenophobic narratives and far-right activism persist in Portugal, sustained by transnational diffusion mechanisms despite a low politicization of migration in public discourse. Collectively, these studies reveal the coexistence of institutional de-securitization and the covert resilience of exclusionary political mobilization (De Sousa C.U., 2024; França T., 2025).

Finally, the ‘Social Integration’ theme addresses the multidimensional aspects of immigrant integration in Portugal. Research highlights life trajectories, educational and professional pathways, linguistic identities, family relations, and cultural expressions across diverse migrant groups. Special focus is placed on the role of art, music, and community-based initiatives—such as Creole rap and participatory art projects—in promoting inclusion. Institutional efforts, including language training programs and university-based integration strategies, are also examined as crucial facilitators of social cohesion (Daré, 2021; De Sousa C.U., 2024; Desille & Lacroix, 2025; Ferro et al., 2016; Ferro et al., 2018; França T., 2025; Gaspar & Iorio, 2022; Gaspar S., 2018; Gott, 2018; Jardim & Marques da Silva, 2021; Jiménez Sedano, 2020; Johnson, 2016; Lam, 2025; Machado et al., 2019; Marinho, 2021; Márquez Reiter & Martín Rojo, 2019; Oliveira, 2017; Pinho & Ançã, 2022; Ramos et al., 2015; Raposo et al., 2021; Rochira et al., 2024; Santinho & Rebelo, 2024; Santinho, 2022).

Table 6 – Articles Published on Migration to Portugal by Country of Origin

Country of origin	# articles	%
Brazil	21	31.81%
Venezuela	1	1.51%
Angola	5	7.57%
Guinea-Bissau	3	4.54%
Cape Verde	5	7.57%

Mozambique	1	1.51%
Morocco	1	1.51%
Africa	2	3.03%
China	4	6.06%
India	1	1.51%
Bangladesh	1	1.51%
Ukraine	3	4.54%
Romania	1	1.51%
Eastern Europe	1	1.51%
United Kingdom	1	1.51%
Sweden	1	1.51%

Source: own elaboration

Brazilian migration to Portugal reveals a remarkable alignment between population volume and academic interest. Brazilians constitute the largest foreign nationality in the country, accounting for 35.3% of the total foreign resident population (AIMA, 2023), and they are the most studied group, with 21 articles (31.81%) dedicated to this country of origin. This alignment suggests that academic production closely reflects the demographic prominence of this community.

Similarly, former Portuguese colonies in Africa (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique) and Diu (India) collectively represent 22.7% of the articles listed in Table 6 and Figure 7, while their share of the resident population, considering Angola (5.3%), Cape Verde (4.7%), São Tomé and Príncipe (2.5%), Mozambique (0.78%), and India with 4.2% (AIMA, 2023), totals approximately 17.48%. This higher proportion of articles relative to population size can be attributed to the deep historical, cultural, and linguistic ties that sustain continued scholarly interest in these communities.

In contrast, there is a disproportionate lack of academic attention to other migrant groups, particularly the new migration waves from Asian countries such as India (4.2%), Nepal (2.9%), and Bangladesh (2.46%), which together account for 9.56% of the foreign population in Portugal. Articles on Bangladesh represent only 1.51% of academic production, and Nepal does not appear at all in Table 6 or Figure 7 as a studied country of origin. This gap in scholarly research is concerning, as these groups represent a growing and significant segment of Portugal's migrant population. Their absence or underrepresentation may be compounded by how these communities are portrayed and treated in the media. As reported, the Portuguese media has at times intensified xenophobia and discrimination against immigrants, including Indians and Nepalese, perpetuating stereotypes and hindering their social and academic visibility and integration (Record Europa, 2025).

The AIMA Report (2023) highlights a significant number of foreign residents from European countries, including the United Kingdom (4.5%), Italy (3.5%), France (2.6%), Germany (2.19%), and Spain (1.97%). Collectively, these five countries represent approximately 14.76% of the total foreign resident population in Portugal. However, analysis of Table 6, which details the number of articles published by country of origin, reveals a stark underrepresentation of these migratory flows in academic research. Among these countries, only the United Kingdom appears in Table 6 and Figure 7 with a single article (1.51%), while Italy, France, Germany, and Spain have no articles explicitly dedicated to their migrant communities. This disparity suggests a gap in scholarly understanding of the experiences and integration processes of these groups, which, despite being numerically significant and originating from Western European contexts, appear to attract less academic attention.

In contrast, academic production shows a stronger focus on other European nationalities which, although their population percentages are not detailed in the AIMA Report (2023), are notably present in Table 6 and Figure 7. Ukraine, for example, is the subject of three articles (4.54%), Romania of one article (1.51%), with an additional article categorized under "Eastern Europe" (1.51%). Sweden is also mentioned in one article (1.51%). The attention given to countries like

Ukraine and Romania may reflect specific migratory dynamics, such as more recent migration waves or particularities in their integration processes that generate greater scholarly interest. The discrepancy between the significant demographic presence of Western European migrants and the near absence of studies about them (compared to the greater academic visibility of certain Eastern European migrations) points to a selectivity in research focus. This may suggest that academia tends to prioritize groups perceived as more “problematic” in terms of integration or that present sociodemographic characteristics that draw greater scrutiny, to the detriment of communities that may integrate more “silently” or whose trajectories are considered less complex.

4.3. Notes regarding the screening process of immigrant entrepreneurship articles

Following the steps proposed by Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003), the selection process occurred in five phases: identification of studies through the Scopus database and time period; screening based on titles and abstracts; eligibility assessment through full-text reading; inclusion of the AIMA Report (2023); and final inclusion of 5 additional articles that met the criteria. At the end of the process, a total of 18 documents were selected.

The analysis of the selected articles was guided by a multiscalar approach grounded in the mixed embeddedness framework (Kloosterman & Rath, 1999). This perspective enables an understanding of how individual, contextual, and institutional factors interact to shape the entrepreneurial trajectories of immigrants in the Portuguese context. The findings were organized into three levels of interpretation: micro, meso, and macro.

4.3.1. Micro Level: Individual Factors and Entrepreneurial Agency

At the micro level, the focus is on the individual characteristics of immigrant entrepreneurs, such as motivations, intentions, sociocultural profiles, and human capital. Cruz et al. (2020) highlights that variables such as age at arrival, educational level, and migration status play a crucial role in the decision to undertake entrepreneurial activities. For example, immigrants with a longer residence in Portugal tend to perceive fewer barriers to entrepreneurship, whereas recent arrivals face additional challenges, such as bureaucracy and limited access to formal financing. Furthermore, family and community networks play a strategic role by facilitating access to resources and providing essential emotional support to overcome initial disadvantages (Cruz et al., 2020; Padilla et al., 2024).

4.3.2. Meso Level: Social Networks and Community Context

At the meso level, the analysis encompasses the relational and intermediate institutional aspects that connect individuals to communities and social networks. This includes the role of social capital, understood as support networks, links with associations, and access to resources through interpersonal and community connections (Bourdieu, 1986). This level also covers the formation of ethnic enclaves, which can facilitate access to specific markets and create favorable environments for business development. For example, Indians and Nepalese in Lisbon use connections with their countries of origin to import ingredients or specific technologies, demonstrating how social capital can be mobilized transnationally (AIMA, 2023; Malheiros & Padilla, 2015).

4.3.3. Macro Level: Institutional Structure and Media Representations

At the macro level, the analysis focuses on broader structural and institutional dimensions that shape the environment in which immigrants operate. This includes public policies, legal regulations, economic conditions, and the labor market. The impact of media representations is also situated at this level, as it influences both social acceptance and the availability of business opportunities (Kloosterman & Rath, 1999; Padilla et al., 2024). Studies show that positive narratives can enhance the visibility of immigrant entrepreneurs, facilitating access to social networks and local markets. Conversely, negative stereotypes or discourses of exceptionalism

tend to perpetuate inequalities by limiting access to formal resources and creating additional barriers (Ratten & Pellegrini, 2019; Padilla et al., 2024).

This integrated approach enables the identification of how individual, contextual, and institutional factors interact to shape immigrant entrepreneurial trajectories, offering a comprehensive view of the phenomenon. The analytical matrix based on the mixed embeddedness framework reveals significant gaps, such as the underrepresentation of less-studied migrant groups (e.g., Indians, Nepalese) and the scarcity of analyses on digital technologies and transnational networks within the Portuguese context (Sarkar et al., 2022; Verga Matos et al., 2024).

5. Key Findings

The systematic analysis of the 13 selected articles reveals that immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal is closely linked to individual, contextual, and institutional factors, organized across the three levels of the mixed embeddedness framework: micro, meso, and macro. This structure allows for the identification of patterns, contrasts, and gaps in the literature, thus addressing the research question concerning the factors, challenges, and opportunities that characterize this phenomenon.

5.1. Gaps Identified in the Literature

Table 7 summarizes the gaps identified in the literature on immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal, organized by country of origin. It highlights underexplored research areas and themes, emphasizing the need for more in-depth investigations.

Table 7 – Gaps identified in the Literature on Migrant Entrepreneurship by Country

Country of Origin	Examples of Gaps in the Literature
Brazil (35.3%)	Studies on ethnic niches and cultural adaptation (Cruz & Falcão, 2020)
Angola (5.3%)	Gaps regarding adaptation to local markets (Cruz & Falcão, 2020; Gaspar, 2019)
Cape Verde (4.7%)	Lack of studies on creative entrepreneurship (Gaspar, 2019)
United Kingdom (4.5%)	The impact of post-Brexit policies on the mobility and entrepreneurship of British citizens in Portugal (inferred from Cruz et al., 2020)
India (4.2%)	Scarcity of analyses on Uber/delivery platforms (Sarkar et al., 2022)
Italy (3.5%)	Underrepresentation in creative industries (Reaes Pinto et al., 2024; Gaspar, 2019)
Guinea-Bissau (3.1%)	Limited understanding of networking strategies (Malheiros & Padilla, 2015)
Nepal (2.9%)	Lack of research on cultural adaptation (Sarkar et al., 2022)
China (2.7%)	Underrepresentation in creative industries (Reaes Pinto et al., 2024; Gaspar, 2019)
France (2.6%)	Policies tailored to return migrants (Dinis, 2021)
São Tomé and Príncipe (2.5%)	Lack of empirical research (Dinis, 2021; Olim et al., 2015)

Fonte: own elaboration.

For example, in the case of immigrants from Brazil—who account for 35.3% of the foreign resident population—there is a notable lack of studies on ethnic niches and cultural adaptation, particularly in business sectors related to gastronomy, beauty services, martial arts, and other Brazilian cultural elements (Cruz & Falcão, 2020; da Silva et al., 2022). This gap limits our understanding of how Brazilian entrepreneurs leverage their cultural heritage to create market opportunities in the Portuguese context. Additionally, Brazilians are active in a wide range of businesses in Portugal, including construction and repairs, residential and commercial cleaning, consultancy and mentoring, startups, venture capital, logistics, as well as liberal professions such as accounting, law, dentistry, medicine, and psychology (França & Padilla, 2018; Oltramari et al., 2023). Given the size of the Brazilian community and its economic relevance, numerous theoretical approaches and empirical investigations into this group’s entrepreneurial practices are still needed.

Among immigrants from Asian countries such as India (4.2%), Nepal (2.9%), Bangladesh (2.46%), and Pakistan (1.64%), there is a significant absence of research on the impact of digital

platforms (e.g., Uber, Glovo) and on the cultural adaptation processes of migrants from these countries (Sarkar et al., 2022). This points to a broader neglect of issues related to precarious labour conditions and the role of digital technologies in shaping migrant entrepreneurship (Fonseca & Soeiro, 2024).

In the case of immigrants from China (2.7%) and Italy (3.5%), both groups are underrepresented in research on creative industries such as tourism and design, despite their potential to contribute with multicultural competencies (Reaes Pinto et al., 2024; Gaspar, 2019). This suggests the need for public policies that encourage business diversification and support the entrepreneurial potential of these communities.

These gaps reveal how different migrant groups face unique challenges that are often overlooked in the literature and may offer valuable insights for the development of more inclusive public policies and business strategies.

5.2. Directions for Future Research

Table 8 presents future research questions that emerged from the systematic review. These questions were formulated based on the identified gaps and have the potential to guide new investigations on immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal.

Table 8 – Future Studies on Migrant Entrepreneurship by Country of Origin in Portugal

Country of origin	Research Questions for Future Studies
Brazil	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do Brazilian entrepreneurs adapt traditional cuisine to regional preferences in different Portuguese cities? 2. What strategies are used by Brazilians in the tourism sector to attract audiences beyond the diaspora? 3. In what ways do Brazilian entrepreneurs in service sectors build cultural bridges to reach the mainstream market?
Angola	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do institutional barriers affect the growth of Angolan businesses in the trade and transport sectors? 2. What public policies could facilitate the formalization of Angolan businesses in these sectors? 3. How do ethnic and transnational networks contribute to access to logistics opportunities?
Cape Verde	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can Cape Verdean entrepreneurs be encouraged to enter creative industries beyond construction and services? 2. In what ways can Cape Verdean cultural practices be transformed into tourism products? 3. What barriers do they face in sectoral diversification, and how can these be overcome?
United Kingdom	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the impact of post-Brexit changes on British businesses in the tourism sector in Portugal? 2. How do British migrants use digital platforms to start businesses in the Portuguese market? 3. How do international networks influence British entrepreneurship in digital service sectors (such as digital nomads)?
India	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do Indian entrepreneurs reconcile work in urban transport with training in technology? 2. What obstacles do they face in launching tech startups in Portugal? 3. How do platforms like Uber and Glovo influence the social mobility of Indian migrants?
Italy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why is there underrepresentation of Italians in creative industries despite their strong cultural background? 2. How do Italians leverage service-sector experience to transition into creative fields? 3. What networks and support programs could facilitate this transition?
Guinea-Bissau	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do informal trade networks affect the formalization of businesses among Guinean entrepreneurs? 2. What opportunities exist in the formal service sector for entrepreneurs from Guinea-Bissau? 3. What types of partnerships with local entrepreneurs have the greatest impact on the growth of Guinean businesses?
Nepal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are Nepalese cultural elements incorporated by entrepreneurs in the delivery sector? 2. What obstacles do they face in accessing microcredit, and how can these be addressed? 3. How can public policies include Nepalese migrants in urban planning for services?
China	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What prevents the diversification of Chinese businesses beyond retail and technology? 2. How do Chinese descendants perceive institutional barriers to entering the tourism and arts sectors? 3. In what ways can public policies support the transition to creative industries?

France	1. How do returning French migrants apply their experience in education and tourism to entrepreneurship? 2. What policies support the reintegration of these migrants as innovative entrepreneurs? 3. How do Franco-Portuguese networks influence hybrid business models?
São Tomé and Príncipe	1. What challenges do migrants from São Tomé and Príncipe face in the service and agriculture sectors in Portugal? 2. How can public policies integrate them into sustainable value chains? 3. What business models are most viable for São Toméan entrepreneurs in rural and urban areas?

Source: own elaboration based on the 13 articles analysed and AIMA Report (2023))

5.3. Connection with the Mixed Embeddedness Framework

The findings from the systematic review demonstrate that the mixed embeddedness framework (Kloosterman & Rath, 1999) remains a relevant interpretive structure for understanding immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal. However, the data systematized in Tables 7 and 8 reveal significant gaps that call for an expansion of the theoretical framework to better capture the contemporary dynamics of the phenomenon. Based on the findings, the inclusion of three new analytical categories is proposed, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9 – Expanded version of the mixed embeddedness framework with new categories

Level	Classic category	Proposed expansion
Micro	Personal networks, human capital	Digital embeddedness (use of apps for business creation)
Meso	Sectors of activity, ethnic networks	Aesthetic embeddedness (cultural valorization in the product)
Macro	Policies, institutions, stigmas	Narrative embeddedness (impact of social representations)

Source: own elaboration

5.3.1. Digital Embeddedness

The integration and dependence on digital platforms emerge as a central aspect of contemporary migrant entrepreneurship. This category reflects how migrants use digital technologies to create, manage, and expand businesses, especially in informal sectors or those with low entry barriers, such as delivery services and sustainable tourism. For example, platforms like Glovo facilitate resource mobilization and the formation of transnational networks, allowing Nepali and Brazilian migrants to quickly enter the labour market (Cruz et al., 2020). This form of embeddedness cuts across all three analytical levels (micro, meso, and macro) and should be empirically operationalized to assess its impact on entrepreneurial trajectories. Table 8 advances this discussion by proposing research questions that explore how Asian migrants mobilize digital and familial networks to sustain microenterprises in sectors such as delivery and transportation.

5.3.2. Aesthetic/Cultural Embeddedness

The use of symbolic elements (cuisine, art, design, and bodily aesthetics) emerges as a strategic resource for market differentiation. This category highlights how migrants transform cultural repertoires into competitive advantages, creating ethnic niches and distinctive products. For instance, Brazilians often use cultural elements such as music, dance, and cuisine to attract both local and international consumers. Similarly, Chinese, and Indian migrants have explored cultural aesthetics in emerging sectors such as fashion and design (Gaspar, 2019). This form of embeddedness is particularly relevant at the meso level, where business sectors and ethnic networks are shaped by the cultural valorisation of products. Table 5 suggests research pathways that involve the role of cultural and aesthetic competencies in migrant business models, highlighting the need to expand the scope of the mixed embeddedness framework to include creativity and innovation as dimensions of sectoral embeddedness, especially in post-industrial contexts.

5.3.3. Narrative Embeddedness

Media and institutional narratives play a crucial role in legitimizing (or marginalizing) certain migrant groups. This category reflects how social discourses and representations influence public acceptance and the business opportunities available to immigrant entrepreneurs. For example, positive narratives about Venezuelan migrants may increase their visibility and ease access to social networks and formal markets, while negative stereotypes may reinforce stigmas and limit economic opportunities (Padilla et al., 2024). This form of embeddedness is most evident at the macro level, where public policies and institutional stigmas shape the entrepreneurial environment. The articulation between public policy, stigma, and economic opportunity emerges as a central axis that should be more explicitly integrated into theory. This extended approach brings the theory closer to empirical reality, highlighting that immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal is neither homogeneous nor fully explained by traditional typologies.

6. Final Considerations

This study aimed to map research gaps on immigrant entrepreneurship in the context of the “new migration wave” to Portugal, based on a systematic review of 13 academic articles published between 2015 and 2025 in the Scopus database. The findings show that entrepreneurial trajectories are shaped by a complex interplay of individual factors (personal networks, human capital), sectoral dynamics (access to ethnic niches, hybrid strategies), and institutional dimensions (public policies, media representations).

The corpus of 68 peer-reviewed articles on immigration to Portugal published between 2015 and 2025 depicts a research landscape that is both vibrant and uneven. Output surged after 2017, peaking in 2018, 2021 and—most sharply—in 2022, before tapering off and regaining momentum in 2024, mirroring the “new migration wave” registered in official statistics. Thematically, scholarship concentrates on social-integration processes (33 %), mobility patterns (27 %) and gendered experiences (20 %), while health (6 %) and policy-oriented examinations of xenophobia (3 %) remain comparatively scarce. Brazilians dominate the discussion—accounting for 32 % of all articles and reflecting their demographic weight—followed by communities from former Portuguese colonies in Africa, whose cultural and historical ties continue to attract scholarly attention. In contrast, rapidly growing Asian populations (e.g., Indians, Nepalese, Bangladeshis) and Western Europeans (e.g., Italians, French, Germans, Spaniards) are markedly under-represented, exposing blind spots in the literature. Overall, the findings reveal an expanding but thematically imbalanced field that privileges well-established Lusophone and Latin American flows while overlooking emerging migrant groups and critical policy and health dimensions of Portugal’s evolving migration mosaic.

Social capital emerges as a key resource that facilitates access to opportunities and resources. However, structural challenges remain significant, such as limited access to formal financing, excessive bureaucracy, and media narratives that reinforce negative stereotypes, especially for underrepresented groups such as Nepalese, Indians, and Guineans. The analysis also reveals that trajectories vary not only across individuals but also across distinct national, cultural, and technological profiles, requiring more segmented approaches to capture their specificities.

The multilevel analysis demonstrated that at the: (i) micro level, local and transnational social networks are essential to overcoming initial vulnerabilities, though there is a lack of empirical studies on lesser-documented groups, such as African and Asian migrants (Cruz et al., 2020); (ii) meso level, immigrant enterprises tend to cluster in traditional ethnic niches, with little research on hybrid strategies or entry into creative industries; and (iii) macro level, public policies and social representations reveal significant asymmetries, privileging certain migrant profiles while marginalizing others. Tables 7 and 8 organize the identified gaps and underscore the need for further research on underrepresented groups, such as the Nepalese, and on the impact of digital technologies on immigrant entrepreneurship. This study proposes research

directions that include the role of digital platforms, the use of cultural elements as competitive resources, and the influence of institutional narratives on the legitimacy of migrant businesses. Despite its contributions, this study recognizes its limitations. Restricting the search to the Scopus database may have excluded relevant perspectives found in other sources, such as Web of Science or regional databases. Additionally, the absence of triangulation with primary data limits the empirical validation of the patterns identified. Understudied migrant groups, such as African and Asian communities, remain underrepresented in the reviewed literature, reinforcing the need for more inclusive methodological approaches (Sarkar et al., 2022).

Among the theoretical contributions, this study proposes an update to the mixed embeddedness framework by incorporating three new categories: digital embeddedness, aesthetic/cultural embeddedness, and narrative embeddedness. This expansion reflects contemporary transformations in immigrant entrepreneurship, such as the use of digital platforms, the valorisation of cultural repertoires, and the influence of media discourses.

From a practical perspective, the findings point to the urgent need for more inclusive public policies that are sensitive to the cultural, legal, and sectoral specificities of different migrant profiles. Future studies should (i) empirically test the new categories in the expanded mixed embeddedness framework across varied case contexts; (ii) examine how platform work, digital tools and transnational networks reconfigure migrant entrepreneurship under informality, precarity and shocks such as COVID-19; (iii) broaden samples to long-overlooked groups, e.g., Indians, Nepalese and elderpreneurs in rural areas—while tracing their integration into local value chains; and (iv) analyse how media frames, institutional narratives and tailored policies (microcredit for non-citizens, creative-industry incentives) influence the legitimacy, resource mobilisation and resilience of migrant businesses.

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