Spotlight: Amplifying Youth Innovation & Entrepreneurship in Namibia
Namibia
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Summary

Spotlight by Bertha Tobias is a limited television series chronicling the stories of prolific young Namibian entrepreneurs in the fields of retail, social enterprise, food, fashion, science, environment, financial services, performing arts, entertainment, government, law, public policy, beauty and lifestyle. Spotlight creates a national discursive platform about youth entrepreneurship while addressing the dire need for local creative content in Namibia, Africa & beyond.

Project Description

Generously funded by the Projects for Peace Fellowship, Spotlight was a monumental endeavour over the summer. Specifically, it entailed the production of a comprehensive 12-episode talk show podcast-style television series. This series was meticulously crafted to chronicle the remarkable journeys of Namibian entrepreneurs hailing from diverse sectors. Through this project, we aimed to spotlight the entrepreneurial spirit that serves as the bedrock for innovation and economic growth in Namibia. We provided these entrepreneurs with an influential platform to narrate their stories, share their challenges, and celebrate their victories, all with the hope of inspiring both budding business leaders and the broader community.

Our journey into the world of Namibian entrepreneurship was born out of a sense of purpose and passion. We recognized that entrepreneurship was a frequently overlooked facet of Namibia’s economy and society, and we were fervent about redefining that narrative. Our approach was to craft a high-quality talk show podcast-style television series that would allow these entrepreneurs to authentically and comprehensively share their experiences. The decision to focus on Namibian entrepreneurs was far from arbitrary; we believed that these individuals held the potential to serve as role models and instigators of change within their communities. By sharing their stories, we aspired to cultivate a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation that could resonate across borders.

Ensuring the success of this ambitious endeavour required a meticulous approach. We decided to film the entire series over the course of two intensive days. To execute this vision, we assembled an eight-person production team exclusively dedicated to this project. This team consisted of highly skilled professionals in various roles, including camera operators, sound technicians, and editors. Each member of the team shared a profound passion for storytelling and a commitment to our project’s mission.

One of the pivotal aspects of our production process was the establishment of on-screen chemistry between the host (myself) and the featured entrepreneur. Achieving this required a pre-interview coffee session with each guest. These intimate meetings allowed us to build rapport, ensuring a more authentic and engaging on-screen conversation. Furthermore, these discussions enabled me (interview and project lead) to formulate the right questions to ask during the actual interviews, guaranteeing that we captured the essence of each entrepreneur's unique journey.

According to the latest Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report, Namibia is the third-worst country in Southern Africa in youth innovation & entrepreneurship, with only 33% of young people in the country starting and/or running their own businesses. More importantly, Namibia’s youth unemployment rate currently stands at 46.1%. Upon scrutiny of the set of conditions surrounding youth entrepreneurship in Namibia, it is evident that one of the inhibiting factors to innovation is simply the lack of compelling conversation. Even when we do talk about innovation, it is not in a dialogical fashion that resonates with young Namibians. The Namibian Youth Investment Conference Biz is one of few (albeit unpopular) platforms that encourages conversation about youth innovation and entrepreneurship. I wanted more conversation about Namibian youth entrepreneurship.
Spotlight’s success was enhanced by collaborating with local, often overlooked, young Namibian creatives. While the production company was pre-existing and came on board with its own team, we still managed to integrate emerging Namibian talent, including videographers, photographers, a makeup artist, and a production assistant. This collaboration brought fresh perspectives and local insights to our project, enriching its authenticity. Additionally, our production company's industry reputation facilitated agreements with major local networks, broadening the reach of our series.

As is the case with any ambitious project, we encountered unforeseen challenges that necessitated adjustments to our original plans. One significant obstacle was a communication breakdown with our initial broadcast partner. This was a key challenge because the content must be aired and subsequently viewed. We quickly terminated our contract with the primary broadcast partner and initiated a negotiation process with a second broadcast partner. In response to these challenges, we demonstrated our adaptability by reorganising our anticipated broadcasting.

Surprisingly, the allocated $10,000 was not sufficient to cover all of our costs. Specifically, the budget would not allow us to cover promotional tv content for all episodes, which must be aired by a tv station before they can air the actual interview. To remedy the financial shortfall, I applied to the national Namibia Film Commission for additional funding. I also used some of my savings.

The profound impact of our project has left us with an unwavering desire to continue our mission beyond Namibia. Looking ahead, we plan to broaden our scope to feature entrepreneurs from other African countries, effectively creating a global network of inspirational stories. Specifically, we would like to eventually sell the series to a global broadcast partner.

**Reflection:**
One of the significant conflicts we encountered during our project was the delicate balance between the expectations of our featured entrepreneurs and our production constraints. This conflict, which primarily revolved around scheduling and logistical challenges, required us to navigate with care and sensitivity. We addressed this challenge through transparent and open communication, working collaboratively with our featured entrepreneurs to find mutually beneficial solutions. This experience underscored the importance of flexibility and adaptability in project management, skills we will carry forward into future endeavours.

My understanding of peace has experienced a profound evolution through the course of this project. Peace is a concept that extends beyond the mere absence of conflict. It is a state in which individuals are empowered to pursue their dreams with dignity and verve. Entrepreneurship is a celebration of the peaceful conditions necessary for enterprise to thrive.

Spotlight has fundamentally altered the way I perceive the world. It has illuminated the incredible potential and resilience of individuals, even in the face of daunting challenges. It has challenged and broadened my preconceived notions about entrepreneurship, inspiring me to continue supporting and promoting business ventures as catalysts for positive change.

**Personal Statement/Quotation:**
"This project has reaffirmed my belief in the transformative power of entrepreneurship. Through the stories of these exceptional entrepreneurs, I’ve learned that adversity can be a driving force for innovation and success. I am deeply committed to continuing Spotlight’s mission of celebrating and empowering entrepreneurs, not just in Namibia but in Africa and around the world." – Bertha Tobias, Namibia

As I conclude this report, I look back on the journey that led me to celebrate Namibian entrepreneurship and its role in fostering peace and prosperity. I’m grateful for the Projects for Peace Fellowship’s support in enabling us to bring these inspiring stories to a global audience. The impact of this project will continue to resonate, motivating us to champion entrepreneurship and its potential to create a more peaceful and prosperous world.