

TRANSNATIONAL PLATFORM-LIVING: BRAZILIAN CONTENT CREATORS ON YOUTUBE AND DIGITAL LABOUR IN PORTUGAL

Dalvacir Xavier de Oliveira Andrade

Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade, Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade do Minho,
Braga, Portugal/Faculdade de Comunicação, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador, Brazil

ABSTRACT

This article examines how Brazilian migrant content creators in Portugal transform migratory experience into digital labour on YouTube, acting as mediators of migration under conditions of infrastructural dependency. It starts from the premise that producing migration-related content entails articulating personal trajectories, audience expectations, platform norms, visibility metrics, and monetisation opportunities. The study adopts a qualitative approach, combining the online observation of Brazilian creators' channels in Portugal with a material-discursive analysis of the platform's technical, normative, and discursive infrastructures. The analysis considers elements such as YouTube Creators, channel monetisation policies, Community Guidelines, and advertiser-friendly content guidelines, understanding them as devices that guide, shape, and regulate creators' practices. The findings suggest that the migratory experience becomes a recurring subject of content production, organised primarily around two axes: the documentation of everyday life and the provision of practical guidance on migration, including topics such as employment, documentation, housing, and adaptation to life in Portugal. At the same time, these productions are permeated by demands for regularity, authenticity, performance, and compliance with the platform's algorithmic and commercial logics. The article contributes to bringing migration studies, digital communication, and platform labour into closer dialogue, demonstrating that the migrant condition and the condition of being digital worker can be understood together through the sociotechnical mediations that shape the production, circulation, and monetisation of migration-related content on YouTube.

KEYWORDS

migration, digital labour, YouTube, content creators, digital platforms

VIDAS TRANSNACIONAIS EM PLATAFORMA: CRIADORES DE CONTEÚDO BRASILEIROS NO YOUTUBE E TRABALHO DIGITAL EM PORTUGAL

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa como criadores de conteúdo imigrantes brasileiros em Portugal transformam a experiência migratória em trabalho digital no YouTube, atuando como mediadores da migração sob condições de dependência infraestrutural. Parte-se da compreensão de que a produção de conteúdos sobre imigração envolve a articulação entre trajetórias pessoais, expectativas de audiência, normas da plataforma, métricas de visibilidade e possibilidades de rentabilização.

O estudo adota uma abordagem qualitativa e articula a observação online de canais de criadores brasileiros em Portugal com a análise material-discursiva das infraestruturas técnicas, normativas e discursivas da plataforma. A análise considera elementos como o YouTube Creators, as políticas de rentabilização de canais, as regras da comunidade e as diretrizes de conteúdo adequado para publicidade, entendendo-os como dispositivos que orientam, condicionam e modulam as práticas dos criadores. Os resultados sugerem que a experiência migratória se converte em matéria recorrente de produção de conteúdos, organizada sobretudo em torno de dois eixos: a exposição da vida quotidiana e a oferta de orientações práticas sobre imigração, incluindo temas como trabalho, documentação, habitação e adaptação em Portugal. Ao mesmo tempo, essas produções são atravessadas por exigências de regularidade, autenticidade, desempenho e adequação às lógicas algorítmicas e comerciais da plataforma. O artigo contribui para aproximar estudos de migração, comunicação digital e trabalho de plataforma, mostrando que a condição migrante e a condição de trabalhador digital podem ser pensadas em conjunto, a partir das mediações sociotécnicas que configuram a produção, a circulação e a monetização de conteúdos sobre imigração no YouTube.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

migração, trabalho digital, YouTube, criadores de conteúdo, plataformas digitais

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital ecosystems such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram has significantly reconfigured the processes of producing and circulating content related to the migratory experience. In the case of Brazilian immigration to Portugal, YouTube has stood out as a key platform for sharing information, advice, and accounts of life in the destination country. In the initial phase of the migration wave, which intensified from 2017 onwards, the platform became central both because of the concentration of content produced by Brazilians living in Portugal and because of more established monetisation opportunities, thereby fostering sustained video production and its configuration as a form of digital labour.

As studies on creator cultures, platform economies and digital labour have shown, the regular production of online content articulates personal expression, self-management and the exposure of everyday life with specific forms of labour precarity (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Poell et al., 2021/2022; Siciliano, 2021). Among migrant creators, this dynamic takes on particular contours, as migratory experience itself becomes a communicative and productive resource. At the same time as they record personal experiences, maintain ties with family and friends, or share useful information for other Brazilians, these creators also respond to the growing demand for content on migration, adaptation, and life in Portugal, thereby enabling sharing and audience building, increasing visibility and supporting monetisation.

It is precisely in this circulation between lived experience, practical guidance and transnational connection that the activity of these creators is inscribed within the broader framework of transnationalism, here mobilised to understand transnational lives marked by the simultaneous maintenance of relationships, practices, references and circuits of belonging that articulate origin and destination in the migratory process (Levitt & Schiller,

2004; Portes, 1999; Vertovec, 2009). Content produced by migrant creators thus becomes part of informational and belonging circuits that connect Brazilians at different stages of the migratory trajectory. These trajectories are also mediated by digital infrastructures that actively participate in organising migratory experiences. Content creation by migrants is, in this sense, framed by the logics of platformisation, datafication, and algorithmic performativity (Lemos, 2021; Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Poell et al., 2021/2022; van Dijck et al., 2018), which directly affect creators' activities.

Despite its growing relevance, the phenomenon remains underexplored at the intersection of migration and digital communication studies. The conversion of migratory experience into digital labour and its configuration through concrete sociotechnical mediations continues to be specifically overlooked. This gap becomes especially evident when seeking to understand the simultaneous roles of creators, audiences, metrics, algorithms, monetisation policies, usage guidelines, and interface affordances in structuring these communicative practices.

In this regard, Leurs and Ponzanesi (2024) argue that migration and digital technologies should not be analysed in isolation, as their entanglement constitutes a starting point for understanding contemporary everyday life. Within platform ecosystems, this implies recognising that the activity of migrant creators is relationally configured, in continuous negotiation with the communicative possibilities of interfaces and with the logics of visibility, monetisation and regulation that structure these environments. Within this framework, agency, visibility, infrastructural dependency and precarity are articulated.

Building on this problem, this article asks: how do Brazilian migrant content creators in Portugal transform migratory experience into digital labour on YouTube, acting as mediators of migration under conditions of infrastructural dependency? The aim is to empirically analyse the articulation between migration, content production, and digital labour, showing how migratory experience is converted into a productive resource and how YouTube infrastructures condition the forms of production, circulation, visibility, and valorisation of this content. To this end, the article draws on Actor-Network Theory (Callon, 2001; Latour, 2005/2012; Law, 1992) and the neo-materialist perspective on communication (Lemos, 2020; Lemos & Bitencourt, 2021) as analytical frameworks that illuminate the phenomenon's relational and sociotechnical dimensions. Rather than treating the platform as a mere backdrop, it is assumed that it actively intervenes in the configuration of observed practices through technical, metric, normative and discursive infrastructures that structure the YouTube ecosystem.

Empirically, the article is based on online observation of 32 channels of Brazilian migrant creators in Portugal and on a material-discursive analysis of platform institutional materials, with particular emphasis on YouTube Creators, channel monetisation policies, community guidelines, and advertising-friendly content standards. In this sense, the article seeks to contribute at four levels. First, to migration studies, by showing that contemporary transnational experiences are also organised through digital information and communication ecosystems. Second, to communication and platform studies, by demonstrating

that content production about immigration is embedded in forms of digital labour marked by infrastructural asymmetries and instability. Third, to the dialogue between these fields, by showing that the migrant condition and the condition of the digital worker can be considered analytically together rather than as separate dimensions. Finally, the article also contributes to digital cultural studies in a Lusophone context by analysing how Brazilian migratory experiences in Portugal are mediated, valorised and reorganised by digital platforms. This dimension makes it possible to understand migrant cultural production not only as a representation of mobility, but as a situated practice of mediation, labour and the construction of belonging within Lusophone digital ecosystems. The specific contribution of the article lies in demonstrating that, in this case, the mediation of migration operates not only as a communicative practice, but also as a situated form of digital labour that is dependent on the technical, normative and discursive infrastructures of YouTube.

The article is organised into five sections. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework, articulating migration and transnational lives, digital platform labour and socio-technical mediation. This is followed by a description of the methodological approach, clarifying the empirical focus, the *corpus*, and the procedures of observation and analysis. Section 4 examines the main empirical axes of the study, focusing on the conversion of migratory experience into content and digital labour, the role of creators as mediators of migration, the commercial dimension of visibility and the forms of infrastructural dependency that shape the activity of these channels. The discussion then relates these findings to the theoretical debates mobilised. Finally, the conclusion returns to the research question, summarises the main findings and sets out the article's contribution to migration studies, digital communication and platform studies.

2. TRANSNATIONAL LIVES, MIGRATION MEDIATION AND PLATFORM DIGITAL LABOUR

2.1. TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE DIGITAL MEDIATION OF MIGRATION

The notion of “transnationalism” has become central to understanding migratory experiences that are not exhausted by movement between two territories, but are formed through the simultaneous maintenance of ties, practices, references and circuits of belonging between origin and destination (Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Portes, 1999; Vertovec, 2009). From this perspective, migration is no longer understood solely as geographical relocation. Rather, it is approached as a relational and multi-sited process, sustained by continuous flows of information, affect, resources, and forms of coordination in everyday life at a distance. Transnationalism thus enables an understanding of transnational lives characterised by permanent connections across different points of the migratory network, in which decisions, expectations and migratory projects are produced and negotiated in a distributed manner.

In the contemporary context, these dynamics are increasingly shaped by digital platforms, mediated environments, and communicative infrastructures that actively participate in the migratory experience. As Hegde (2020) argues, media and migration should

not be understood as external or merely additive phenomena, since mediated environments help define the terms, conditions, and contexts in which migration is experienced, rendered visible, and contested. Mediation, in this sense, refers to the constitutive role of media and technologies in the material, political, and cultural production of migratory experiences. This formulation is particularly relevant for the present analysis, as it situates content produced by Brazilians in Portugal within digital ecosystems that shape its circulation, visibility, and modes of production.

This articulation between migration and digital infrastructures is further developed by Leurs and Ponzanesi (2024), who emphasise that the migrant and the digital are ontologically and epistemologically inseparable. Rather than treating technologies and platforms as merely external instruments, the authors show that they form part of the transnational social field itself and are negotiated, appropriated, and reconfigured by migrant subjects in contexts marked by inequalities, power asymmetries, and differentiated forms of belonging.

This perspective is particularly relevant for the analysis of migrant content creators, as it shifts attention from an instrumental view of platforms towards an approach in which migratory experience, the circulation of information and the very production of visibility are understood as co-produced processes within digital environments. The idea of digital mediation of migration thus makes it possible to shift the analysis from a perspective centred solely on migratory representations to one that is more attentive to the pragmatic, relational, and infrastructural dimensions of migratory communicative practices.

2.2. DIGITAL LABOUR, CREATOR CULTURES AND PLATFORM VISIBILITY

The expansion of digital platforms has profoundly reconfigured the production, circulation and valorisation of cultural goods, making visibility a central resource for creators, audiences and companies. As van Dijck et al. (2018) argue, platform society is built upon digital infrastructures that organise connections, interactions and exchanges according to their own commercial, metric and algorithmic logics. In the field of cultural production, this process has been described as “platformisation”, that is, the increasing integration of creative practices into the economic, technical and institutional architectures of platforms (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Poell et al., 2021/2022). Analytically, this dynamic can also be understood through the lens of the regime of platformisation, datafication and algorithmic performativity proposed by Lemos (2021), which highlights how digital platforms articulate data extraction, the modulation of visibility, and the orientation of social and communicative practices.

This transformation has fostered the consolidation of specific forms of digital labour associated with so-called creator cultures, in which the recurrent production of content is intertwined with the management of one’s online presence, audience building and attempts to convert attention into income. As Cunningham and Craig (2021) argue, creators occupy a distinctive position in contemporary digital culture, at the intersection of media production, entrepreneurship and self-presentation. Producing content, therefore, entails far more than publishing videos: it involves planning, editing, image management,

monitoring metrics, engaging with audiences, adapting formats and maintaining a regular publishing schedule. Creative activity thus becomes inseparable from the continuous management of visibility and platform performance.

The literature on digital labour has nevertheless emphasised the ambivalent character of this process. Rather than representing only autonomy, flexibility and self-expression, creators' work is also marked by instability, intensification and diffuse forms of precarity. Duffy (2017), in discussing aspirational labour, shows how the promise of "doing what one loves" can conceal prolonged and often uncertain forms of labour sustained by the expectation of future recognition. In dialogue with this perspective, Siciliano (2021) highlights that creative labour is organised around a persistent tension between creative control and subordination to market imperatives, visibility and profitability.

On YouTube, this labour is inseparable from the algorithmic logics that distribute attention and define patterns of relevance. Bucher (2018) argues that algorithms do not operate as neutral technical systems but as forms of power that shape action by establishing regimes of visibility, ordering and anticipation. Gillespie (2014), in turn, argues that algorithms must be understood in relation to the values, interests and institutional relationships that underpin their operation. This means that content production is continuously shaped by retention metrics, recommendation criteria, monetisation parameters and performance expectations, making visibility something that must be constantly produced, managed and adjusted.

It is here that Bishop's (2019) contribution becomes particularly relevant. In analysing how creators seek to manage their visibility on YouTube, she shows that the relationship with the algorithm is characterised by uncertainty, speculation, and continuous adaptation. Titles, thumbnails, posting frequency, keywords and other resources become part of optimisation strategies guided by perceptions of how the platform operates. Consequently, digital labour in environments such as YouTube develops within an ecosystem in which creation, circulation, recognition and monetisation depend upon continuous negotiation with infrastructural logics that exceed creators' own control.

2.3. THE PLATFORM AS TECHNICAL AND DISCURSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Understanding the digital labour of migrant creators on YouTube requires a shift in focus from viewing the platform as a mere technical support to recognising it as an active infrastructure that shapes observable practices. Drawing on Actor-Network Theory (Callon, 2001; Latour, 2005/2012; Law, 1992) and the neo-materialism of communication (Lemos, 2020; Lemos & Bitencourt, 2021), this analysis conceptualises YouTube as a sociotechnical ecosystem in which interfaces, metrics, algorithms, guidelines, monetisation policies, and institutional guidance mechanisms collectively shape creators' actions. This perspective recognises that content production is not solely the result of individual intentions, but is realised through an infrastructure that distributes visibility, defines criteria of relevance, and conditions forms of recognition and monetisation. This perspective allows us

to understand mediation as a relational process, in which different human and non-human elements intervene in the production of communication.

In the case of YouTube, creators' activity is shaped by retention metrics, recommendation systems, monetisation parameters, platform-valued formats and norms that regulate what may circulate, in what form and with what potential reach. The platform thus acts as a technical mediator by organising the material conditions of visibility, but also as a normative mediator by situating behaviours, performances and production expectations. This mediation is also discursive. YouTube shapes creators' practices through institutional materials that teach, guide and legitimise particular forms of content creation. Resources such as YouTube Creators (YouTube Creators, n.d.), the Community Guidelines (YouTube Ajuda, n.d.-c), channel monetisation policies (YouTube Ajuda, n.d.-b), advertising-friendly content guidelines (YouTube Ajuda, n.d.-a) and channel-growth support materials function as pedagogical devices of the platform. Through these resources, the creator is interpellated as a creative, autonomous and entrepreneurial subject, while simultaneously being steered towards alignment with metrics, formats, branding strategies and advertiser-friendly standards. In this way, the platform presents itself as part of this actor-network, a partner to the creator, while reinforcing a structurally asymmetric relationship of support, guidance and control.

In this sense, the notion of infrastructural dependency is central to this article. The visibility of content, the stability of monetisation, the recognition of channels and the circulation of particular themes do not derive solely from the quality or relevance of what is produced, but also from the capacity to adapt to platform logics. Infrastructural dependency does not eliminate creators' agency, but rather conditions it, making certain forms of digital labour possible while simultaneously subjecting them to metrics, norms, rankings and demands for continuous adjustment. Conceiving of YouTube as a technical and discursive infrastructure enables the analysis of the concrete conditions that facilitate (and constrain) the transformation of personal experiences into content that can circulate and be valorised on the platform.

3. METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a qualitative approach centred on the analysis of how Brazilian migrant content creators in Portugal convert migratory experience into digital labour on YouTube, in articulation with platform infrastructures. The empirical focus is the Brazilian immigration wave to Portugal, which intensified from 2017 onwards, a period in which YouTube became particularly central to the circulation of content produced by Brazilians about life in the country and offered more established conditions for the sustained monetisation of videos. The selection of the platform is thus justified by both the significant concentration of channels focused on migratory experience and its sociotechnical architecture, which is conducive to the regular production of content, the formation of audiences, and the conversion of visibility into economic and symbolic value.

The study is based, first, on systematic online observation of Brazilian migrant content creators' channels in Portugal, inspired by non-participant observation (Lakatos & Marconi, 1985/2003). This stage was preceded by an exploratory field-mapping phase conducted via YouTube searches for the keywords “viver em Portugal” (living in Portugal), “morar em Portugal” (moving to Portugal), and “brasileiros em Portugal” (Brazilians in Portugal). This mapping enabled the identification of a broad and dynamic set of channels and videos dedicated to the Brazilian experience in Portugal, with a particular concentration of content published since 2017. Systematic online observation was carried out between January 2022 and May 2024, focusing on a stabilised sample of 32 channels. The selected channels were produced by Brazilians residing in Portugal, whose output centred on their experiences living in the country. These channels published content related to both everyday personal life (such as routines, work, consumption, travel, leisure, and cultural adaptation) and advice and guidance on the migratory process, including documentation, regularisation, job-seeking, housing, and cultural differences.

Throughout the research process, channels that ceased publication, were removed from the platform, or redirected their content to other themes, countries, or personal projects were excluded from the sample. Conversely, new channels that emerged during this period and became prominent in the observed communicative dynamics were also incorporated, taking into account content recurrence, subscriber numbers, posting frequency and audience engagement. Accordingly, although the stabilised sample used in the analysis comprises 32 channels, systematic tracking covered 36 channels, accounting for entries and exits arising from the fluidity of the digital empirical field. The analysis privileged the digital traces embedded in creators' communicative practices, including videos, titles, descriptions, hashtags, thumbnails, comments, likes, view counts, subscriber numbers and posting frequency. These materials were systematised in written records, forming a digital field diary aimed at identifying recurring themes, narrative patterns, audience interaction strategies, visibility and engagement resources, the presence of products or services associated with channels, and how migratory experience was framed as content. Table 1 summarises the main methodological dimensions of the study.

METHODOLOGICAL DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
Systematic observation period	January 2022 to May 2024.
Observed universe	36 channels tracked throughout the study.
Stabilised sample	32 channels included in the analysis presented in the article.
Inclusion criteria	Channels produced by Brazilians residing in Portugal, with recurrent content on living in the country or the migratory experience.
Exclusion criteria	Channels that either ceased publication, were removed from the platform, or had their content redirected to other themes or no longer centred on the migratory experience in Portugal.
Observed materials	Videos, titles, descriptions, hashtags, thumbnails, comments, views, subscribers and posting frequency.
Analytical dimensions	Conversion of migratory experience into content and digital labour; migration mediation; monetisation; infrastructural dependency.

Table 1. Summary of systematic online observation

The study analysed only publicly available content on YouTube. Nevertheless, given that the subjects are identifiable in digital environments, channels or creators are not named when such identification is not essential to the analysis, with preference given to aggregated descriptions of observed practices. Comments were treated as public traces of interaction rather than private testimonies and were analysed in aggregated or paraphrased form in accordance with principles of contextual privacy and minimisation of subject exposure. This methodological choice follows a logic of contextual privacy and the minimisation of subject exposure, which is particularly relevant in research involving publicly accessible yet potentially identifiable digital traces (Nissenbaum, 2010).

Secondly, the article draws on a material-discursive analysis of YouTube's technical, normative, and discursive infrastructures, based on the premise that digital technologies are not neutral but embed values, interests, and guidance for action (Barad, 2007; Kitchin & Dodge, 2011). From this perspective, the platform is approached simultaneously as both a technical structure and a discursive space, capable of shaping creative practices through its functionalities, policies, design, norms, and institutional materials (Couldry, 2012; Gillespie, 2010). The analysis focused on organisational and promotional materials from YouTube, with particular attention to the YouTube Creators page (YouTube Creators, n.d.), community guidelines (YouTube Ajuda, n.d.-c), channel monetisation policies (YouTube Ajuda, n.d.-b) and advertising-friendly content guidelines (YouTube Ajuda, n.d.-a). Texts, images, videos and documents were analysed to identify the platform's conceptions of creativity, community, professionalisation and digital entrepreneurship, as well as how these orientations are articulated with its commercial interests and governance strategies.

The two sets of materials, drawn from creator channels and platform infrastructures, were analysed in an articulated manner, through a relational perspective inspired by Actor-Network Theory (Callon, 2001; Latour, 2005/2012; Law, 1992) and the neo-materialism of communication (Lemos, 2020; Lemos & Bitencourt, 2021). The study focused on four main dimensions: the conversion of migratory experience into content and digital labour; the role of creators as mediators of migration, as key actors in the circulation of information, guidance and experiential accounts; the commercial dimension of visibility, including both direct and indirect monetisation strategies; and the forms of infrastructural dependency manifested in YouTube's aesthetic, metric, normative and discursive demands.

4. RESULTS

4.1. MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE AS CONTENT AND DIGITAL LABOUR

A first relevant finding concerns how migratory experience becomes a recurrent object of content production. In the observed channels, living in Portugal emerges as a central communicative resource for recording personal experiences and providing practical information on immigration, adaptation, and everyday life in the country. Migration thus emerges as an organising axis of creators' activity. The materials analysed indicate two broad thematic clusters, which are frequently articulated with one another. The first

comprises content centred on creators' personal lives, including everyday routines, consumption, work, outings, travel, leisure and personal achievements. The second provides practical guidance on migration, including documentation, regularisation, job-seeking, housing, cultural differences, and adaptation strategies. Although the channels display different styles and levels of professionalisation, these two axes are consistently present and help explain how migratory experience is structured as continuous and diversified content.

This dual orientation is expressed through various modes of presenting migratory experience. For example, some channel descriptions frame life in Portugal as a kind of "real-life web soap opera", focusing on the continuous sharing of moments of joy, difficulties, routines, and challenges experienced by Brazilian migrants. References to daily video uploads and invitations to follow creators' lives regularly underscore how the migratory experience is transformed into a serial narrative, aligning with the platform's emphasis on entertainment, proximity, and authenticity. In other channels, the emphasis lay on practical guidance, with content presented as guides for migrants or prospective migrants, in which the experiences of those already living in Portugal are mobilised to anticipate doubts, explain procedures, and translate aspects of everyday life in the country. This orientation is evident in titles such as "As profissões que ganham mais dinheiro em Portugal" (The Highest-Paying Jobs in Portugal), "Melhores Cidades Para Trabalhar em Portugal" (The Best Cities to Work in Portugal), "Como Conseguir a Cidadania Portuguesa" (How to Obtain Portuguese Citizenship) and "Os Trabalhos Mais Comuns Para Imigrantes em Portugal" (The Most Common Jobs for Migrants in Portugal), which illustrate the centrality of themes related to work, regularisation, opportunities and migratory planning. Content addressing ordinary practices of migrant life was also recurrent, including supermarket shopping, work experiences, commuting, study, consumption, leisure, and the organisation of family life in Portugal. Titles such as "Como é Meu Dia de Trabalho em Portugal" (A Day in My Working Life in Portugal), "Conheça com a Gente Essa Cidade Maravilhosa em Portugal" (Join Us in This Wonderful City in Portugal) and "Compramos um Carro Bom e Barato. Veja como" (We Bought a Good and Cheap Car. Learn How) show how everyday activities, outings, consumption and personal experiences are transformed into shareable content.

These apparently simple themes become significant because they enable creators to present migration as a lived experience, offering concrete elements through which audiences can imagine costs, hardships, opportunities and forms of adaptation in the country. More personal content tends to foster proximity, identification, and narrative continuity, while more informational content addresses the demand for practical guidance, particularly among Brazilians planning to migrate or facing uncertainties regarding documentation, employment, housing, and adaptation. The two modalities reinforce one another: the visibility built around personal experience strengthens the reception of informational content, while its practical utility enhances channel relevance and supports audience retention.

The analysis further indicates that the production of such content is driven by multiple, overlapping motivations. Frequently, videos serve simultaneously as records of personal experience, updates for family and friends, resources for guiding other Brazilians, and

strategies for integration into a platform-based economy of visibility. Migratory experience, therefore, functions both as lived reality and as a productive resource. When transformed into video, narrative, advice, or demonstration, it becomes suitable for broader circulation, audience engagement, and potential monetisation. The continuity of publication further reinforces this point. Bureaucratic issues, practical challenges, legislative changes, housing difficulties, work experiences, and cultural differences can be turned into material for videos, series, and updates. Migrant life is thus reorganised into formats compatible with platform logics: it must be narratable, visualisable and circulable. Migration, therefore, becomes a lived experience, content and a form of digital labour.

4.2. CREATORS AS MEDIATORS OF MIGRATION

Beyond converting migratory experience into recurring content, the creators appear to play an important role in mediating migration. This function becomes visible in videos aimed at providing practical guidance to other Brazilians, in which personal experience is mobilised as a source of credibility, cultural translation, and advice-giving. By explaining bureaucratic procedures, discussing sociocultural differences, describing areas to live and work in, or sharing adaptation strategies, these creators come to occupy a position of reference for audiences at different stages of the migratory process. The mediating function of these channels is grounded in the articulation between lived experience and practical utility. Documentation, labour markets, housing, cultural differences, and the organisation of everyday life in Portugal are presented in accessible language, anchored in concrete examples, and legitimised by the authority of experience. In this sense, the videos function as anticipatory mediation of life in the destination country, enabling audiences still in Brazil or recently arrived in Portugal to imagine scenarios, assess difficulties, identify opportunities, and adjust migratory projects.

Although this article does not conduct a reception study in the strict sense, the comments observed across the channels constitute relevant public traces of how audiences receive and mobilise such content. Requests for clarification regarding documentation, regularisation, employment, cost of living, housing and access to services were recurrent, as were messages expressing appreciation for the clarity of the information shared. Accounts from subscribers were also observed, indicating that they were either planning to migrate or already in Portugal, seeking to resolve practical questions of adaptation. The comments suggest that the videos also circulate as resources for consultation, advice and anticipation of migratory experience.

The authority of creators is frequently grounded in lived experience. In some videos, guidance is accompanied by disclaimers indicating that creators do not speak as lawyers, immigration consultants or formal experts, but rather from their own experience. This form of enunciation delimits responsibility while reinforcing proximity to the audience, valuing migratory experience as a form of practical knowledge. In other cases, mediation is reinforced by the presence of invited specialists, such as professionals in migration regularisation, entrepreneurship, education, housing, or Portuguese citizenship. In this

way, the channels articulate different sources of authority to sustain their role in guiding.

4.3. VISIBILITY, MONETISATION AND THE COMMERCIAL DIMENSION OF CHANNELS

The observation of the channels shows that the conversion of migratory experience into content is not limited to the direct monetisation offered by YouTube. The visibility constructed around the experience of living in Portugal is typically extended into different forms of economic and symbolic valorisation, revealing the commercial dimension of these creators' presence on the platform. In this context, YouTube also serves as an infrastructure for personal and professional promotion, through which creators seek to convert audience reach, notoriety, and credibility into income-generating opportunities. Across the observed channels, several forms of indirect monetisation associated with migratory experience were identified. These include online courses, particularly in languages, digital marketing and entrepreneurship; consultancy and advisory services focused on migration planning, visa acquisition, documentation regularisation, Portuguese citizenship and relocation; digital products and guidance materials; tourism-related services, such as personalised tours, transfers and itineraries aimed at Brazilians in Portugal; real estate promotion, including the presentation of houses and apartments for rent or sale; commercial partnerships; external links to personal websites; and redirection to other platforms or professional contact pages. In some cases, channel-associated shops were also observed, offering customised products related to Portugal or to the creators' own identities.

The commercial dimension of the channels also highlights the heterogeneity of the observed profiles. The creators have diverse professional backgrounds and mobilise YouTube in different ways, combining, to varying degrees, the sharing of migratory experiences, the construction of a public persona and the promotion of skills or personal businesses. In some cases, the channel serves as an extension of activities already developed outside the platform; in others, its presence on YouTube appears to open new economic avenues. This diversity reveals the instability of digital labour. Since direct YouTube monetisation rarely provides a sufficient basis for economic sustainability on its own, creators tend to diversify income sources, expand their digital presence into other spaces, and combine different monetisation formats. This reflects the hybrid, unstable and expanded nature of the digital labour under analysis.

4.4. INFRASTRUCTURAL DEPENDENCY: AESTHETICS, BRANDING AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The materials observed show that the activity of Brazilian migrant creators on YouTube also depends on their ability to align content production with the platform's aesthetic, metric, and algorithmic demands. Channel visibility does not derive solely from the relevance of the topics addressed, but also from the articulation among content, modes of presentation, and circulation strategies. Infrastructural dependency becomes particularly evident in the aesthetic organisation of channels, the construction

of visual identities, and the recurrent use of resources to increase reach and interaction. The observation reveals significant variation in levels of professionalisation: some creators rely on basic equipment and emphasise an aesthetic of spontaneity and proximity, while others invest in high-definition cameras, controlled lighting, microphones, more sophisticated editing and advanced graphic resources. This heterogeneity reflects both differences in available resources and strategic choices regarding target audiences, the image channels seek to construct, and modes of differentiation within a competitive environment. The construction of coherent visual identities is also an important practice. Logos, colour palettes, standardised thumbnails, recognisable typography, and other graphic elements contribute to stabilising a channel's visual brand and audience recognition. Attention to branding responds to an ecosystem in which differentiation, visual memory and rapid recognition influence content circulation. Analysis of YouTube Creators reinforces this point by showing that the platform itself encourages creators to develop consistent visual identities, which are associated with channel growth, audience retention, and strengthened personal branding (YouTube Creators, n.d.).

Infrastructural dependency is also evident in engagement and optimisation strategies adopted by channels. The recurrence of videos longer than ten minutes, the use of attention-grabbing titles, appealing thumbnails, keywords, hashtags, calls to subscribe, and the pursuit of likes and comments all indicate ongoing efforts to align with the platform's visibility logic. The use of diverse formats, such as livestreams, Shorts and members-only content, further reinforces a logic of ongoing adaptation. Even channels less oriented towards direct monetisation depend on these dynamics, since visibility is a condition for content circulation and for promoting activities outside the platform. It is at this point that infrastructural dependency becomes most visible as a constitutive condition of digital labour. Creators exercise agency, develop strategies, construct brands and seek to leverage the visibility they obtain. However, this agency is enacted within a terrain shaped by recommendation systems, retention metrics, monetisation policies and platform pedagogies over which they have only partial control. The need to monitor performance, adjust formats, and reconfigure visual presentations demonstrates that the production of migration-related content occurs in continuous negotiation with an infrastructure that distributes attention unevenly and conditions the possibilities for recognition and monetisation.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. MIGRATION MEDIATION AND DIGITAL LABOUR

The findings suggest that the Brazilian migrant creators observed on YouTube play a significant role in mediating migration. This mediation is expressed both in the circulation of practical information on documentation, work, housing and adaptation, and in the production of symbolic references regarding what it means to live in the destination country. In this sense, the analysed channels participate in transnational circuits of information,

belonging and guidance, articulating lived experience, advice-giving and public visibility. This dynamic confirms the relevance of conceiving of migration not as a process external to media, but as an experience constitutively mediated by digital infrastructures, as suggested by Hegde (2020) and Leurs and Ponzanesi (2024).

The case under analysis allows for a more specific contribution to this debate: the mediation of migration here does not appear solely as the circulation of narratives or the production of representations, but as a situated practice of organising migratory experience in pragmatic terms. Creators help render bureaucratic procedures, migratory expectations, cultural differences and forms of everyday insertion in Portugal intelligible. In doing so, the content serves as a guide for audiences at different stages of the migratory process, from planning while still in Brazil to adaptation in the destination country. What is observed, therefore, is a form of mediation that operates simultaneously in the domains of information, identification and practical organisation of migratory trajectories.

This mediation is inseparable from its constitution as digital labour, in which migratory experience is transformed into a productive resource. Living in Portugal, commenting on that experience and translating it into advice, demonstrations, comparisons and updates become regular parts of content production. Migration thus ceases to be only lived and narrated and becomes work; namely, it is converted into a productive activity oriented towards sustaining audience engagement, building visibility and enabling potential monetisation. In this respect, the article contributes to bringing migration studies into closer dialogue with the literature on digital labour, showing that migratory experience can function as a basis for value production within platform ecosystems.

5.2. VISIBILITY, MONETISATION AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DEPENDENCY

The analysis also shows that the transformation of migratory experience into digital labour takes place under conditions of infrastructural dependency. The creators observed do not operate in a neutral space of self-expression but in an environment where visibility, reach, and monetisation depend on YouTube's metrics, formats, guidelines, and institutional pedagogies. The notion of the platform as a technical and discursive infrastructure becomes central: YouTube participates in defining the conditions under which such content becomes circulable, recognisable and economically exploitable.

This point connects the findings to discussions of the platformisation of cultural production (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Poell et al., 2021/2022) and of regimes of platformisation, datafication, and algorithmic performativity (Lemos, 2021). In the observed channels, production regularity, visual organisation, video duration, the use of thumbnails, keywords, livestreams, Shorts and calls for engagement all evidence continuous work aimed at adapting to platform logics. Migratory experience, to circulate, must be formatted in accordance with performance parameters that exceed creators' intentions.

This observation helps qualify the ambivalence of digital labour described by authors

such as Duffy (2017) and Siciliano (2021). While YouTube enables forms of autonomy, self-management and income diversification, it simultaneously demands constant monitoring, production intensification and ongoing adjustment to infrastructural conditions that are both variable and often opaque. Since direct monetisation rarely provides sufficient economic stability, many creators transform their channels into showcases for consultancy services, courses, products, services and partnerships. Visibility gained on the platform thus becomes a resource to be converted into multiple forms of value, reinforcing the hybrid, unstable and expanded nature of this labour.

Infrastructural dependency is not limited to technical or algorithmic dimensions. The analysis of YouTube Creators shows that the platform also guides creators through discursive devices that teach best practices, encourage professionalisation, reinforce the importance of branding and associate growth with behaviours deemed appropriate within the ecosystem (YouTube Creators, n.d.). The creator is interpellated as a creative, entrepreneurial, and autonomous subject, yet this autonomy is continually framed by monetisation rules, advertiser-friendly standards, expectations of regularity, and visibility strategies (YouTube Ajuda, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The promise of creative freedom thus coexists with ongoing mechanisms of institutional and commercial alignment.

5.3. MIGRATION, PLATFORMS AND VALUE PRODUCTION

Based on the findings, it can be argued that the creators whose productions were analysed operate at the intersection of migration, cultural production and the platform economy. Migratory experience becomes content, content becomes visibility, and visibility can be converted into different forms of economic, symbolic and relational value. This sequence is neither linear nor guaranteed, but it constitutes a recurring dynamic across the observed channels. The article thus shows that migration, when articulated on YouTube, is incorporated into an ecosystem in which attention and public circulation can be leveraged as assets.

This enables two specific contributions to be advanced. The first is to show that the digital labour of migrant creators cannot be reduced to the logic of the “influencer” in a strict sense, nor can it be understood solely as individual entrepreneurship. It is produced within a contact zone between migratory experience, informational utility, public visibility and platform dependency. The second is to demonstrate that the mediation of migration, when carried out in environments such as YouTube, is already shaped by the economy of visibility. Informing, advising, narrating and guiding are activities structured by platform logics, becoming part of the labour involved in sustaining presence, attracting audiences and opening up possibilities for monetisation.

In this way, the case under study contributes to the dialogue between migration studies and digital communication studies by showing that the migrant condition and the condition of a digital worker can be understood together. Brazilian creators in Portugal appear simultaneously as subjects of mobility, content producers, mediators of

migration and platform workers. Within this overlap, the specificity of the phenomenon becomes evident: lived migration and migration as a productive resource mutually constitute one another within an ecosystem of visibility, monetisation and continuous adaptation. The study adds an integrated analysis of transnational lives, content production, and infrastructural dependency to the field of communication and migration, showing that the circulation of information about immigration occurs under technical, normative, metric, and commercial conditions that shape the production, visibility, and value of such content. Socially and politically, the findings are relevant because they highlight the role of platforms in the contemporary organisation of migratory experience and in the unequal forms of mediation, recognition and monetisation that traverse it, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the transnationality/vulnerability dyad.

6. CONCLUSION

The analysis conducted allows us to conclude that Brazilian migrant content creators in Portugal transform migratory experience into digital labour on YouTube, operating as mediators of migration under conditions of infrastructural dependency. Based on online observations of the channels and a material-discursive analysis of the platform's technical, normative, and discursive infrastructures, the analysis shows that content production about living in Portugal is not limited to spontaneous sharing of personal experiences. It constitutes a regular, strategically organised activity in which migratory experience is converted into a communicational resource with potential economic, symbolic, and relational value.

The findings demonstrated, first, that migratory experience constitutes a central object of content production, organised primarily around two recurring axes: the documentation of everyday life and the provision of practical guidance on immigration. Second, the study showed that these creators perform an important mediating function by circulating information, expectations, advice, and forms of cultural translation to audiences at different stages of the migratory process. Third, it became evident that the visibility constructed around such content is frequently extended into forms of monetisation that go beyond direct platform capitalisation, including consultancy services, products, and other modalities of economic valorisation of audience reach. Finally, the analysis revealed that these practices unfold under conditions of infrastructural dependency, insofar as the circulation, recognition and valorisation of content depend on YouTube's metrics, algorithms, norms, interfaces and discursive devices.

The main contribution of the article lies in showing that, in the case studied, migration is not only narrated or represented on the platform but also converted into digital labour. This conversion cannot be understood outside the sociotechnical mediations that shape cultural production in digital environments. In doing so, the article brings migration studies, digital communication and platform labour into closer dialogue, highlighting that the migrant condition and the condition of being digital worker can be understood together. The case of Brazilian creators in Portugal thus makes visible a

phenomenon in which lived experience, migration mediation, public visibility and value production are inseparably articulated.

Although the article has prioritised channel observation and platform analysis, without a detailed examination of audience reception, creators' perspectives, or cross-platform comparisons, the chosen scope has nonetheless enabled the identification of relevant patterns for understanding the role of YouTube in the contemporary organisation of migratory experience. In future research, it may be useful to compare this phenomenon with other platforms and migratory contexts. Even so, the case analysed allows us to affirm that, within the YouTube ecosystem, migratory experience becomes simultaneously content, mediation and labour, under conditions marked by uneven visibility, continuous adaptation and infrastructural dependency — findings that point to relevant developments for Lusophone cultural studies.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Dalvacir Xavier de Oliveira Andrade holds a PhD in Communication Sciences from the University of Minho. Her doctoral thesis examined the sociotechnical communication dynamics of the digital labour of Brazilian YouTubers in Portugal. Her research brings together the neomaterialist perspective on communication and Actor-Network Theory, with a particular focus on the infrastructural mediations of digital platforms, sociotechnical controversies, migration and digital labour within platform ecosystems. She is a researcher at the Communication and Society Research Centre, University of Minho, and at Lab404 – Laboratório de Pesquisa em Mídia Digital, Redes e Espaço (Lab404 – Research Laboratory in Digital Media, Networks and Space), Federal University of Bahia, where she contributes to projects on digital culture, platformisation, datafication and algorithmic performativity. Her research interests include neomaterialist methodologies, digital ethnographies, and critical studies of labour precarity and inequalities in digital environments.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8886-4038>

Email: dalvacirx@gmail.com

Address: Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade, Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade do Minho, Campus de Gualtar, 4710-057 Braga, Portugal

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