

SUBJECTIVITY IN THE WORK OF BRAZILIAN IMMIGRANT MOMPREENEURS IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL NOMADISM

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial identity can be defined as the supra identity that arises from the negotiation of cultural, social, individual, and contextual factors affecting entrepreneurial activity (JONES et al., 2019), which ultimately influence business owners' behavior (NEWBERY et al., 2018). So far, the context that permeates entrepreneurial identity construction has received a lot of attention in research on this topic. However, little progress has been made in understanding entrepreneurial identity in the digital context (JONES et al., 2019), one that has been attracting several women who need to reconcile work and personal life during or after motherhood (GATRELL, 2007). Such a context becomes even more problematic if we consider international mobility as a premise for the career advancement of women and men who end up taking their families to live abroad (FRAGA; ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA, 2020). Given this scenario, this research aims to analyze the entrepreneurial identity of Brazilian mothers who produce content and work as digital nomads in Europe. To this end, we conduct a comparative five-case study, following an interpretive epistemology with primary data collected in cyberspace, specifically in blog posts and YouTube videos. The data is then interpreted using French discourse analysis. The results indicate that the entrepreneurial identity formed within the scope of digital nomadism highlights the possibility of female emancipation in the face of representations and maternal expectations rooted in the Brazilian cultural context, which position mothers as mere caregivers, housewives, or subjects that need to sacrifice personal well-being for the sake of formal work and children.

Keywords

Entrepreneurial identity. Female entrepreneurship. Subjectivity at work. Motherhood. Brazilian diaspora.

SUBJETIVIDADE NO TRABALHO DE BRASILEIRAS IMIGRANTES MÃEMPREENDEDORAS NO CONTEXTO DO NOMADISMO DIGITAL

RESUMO

A identidade empreendedora pode ser definida como a supra identidade que nasce da negociação de fatores culturais, sociais, individuais e contextuais que afetam a atividade empreendedora (JONES *et al.*, 2019), terminando por influenciar o comportamento dos donos dos negócios (NEWBERY *et al.*, 2018). Até então, o contexto que permeia a construção da identidade empreendedora tem recebido bastante atenção nas pesquisas sobre essa temática, entretanto, pouco se tem avançado no entendimento da identidade empreendedora no contexto digital (JONES *et al.*, 2019), o qual tem atraído diversas mulheres que necessitam conciliar trabalho e vida pessoal durante ou após a maternidade (GATRELL, 2007). Tal contexto torna-se ainda mais problemático se considerarmos a mobilidade internacional como premissa para a progressão de carreira de mulheres e homens que acabam levando suas famílias para morar no exterior (FRAGA; ROCHA-DE-OLIVEIRA, 2020). Diante deste cenário, a presente investigação visa analisar a identidade empreendedora de mães brasileiras produtoras de conteúdo que trabalham como nômades digitais na Europa. Para tanto, faz-se um estudo comparativo entre cinco casos, seguindo uma epistemologia interpretativa, com dados primários coletados no ciberespaço, especificamente em postagens de *blog* e vídeos do *Youtube*. Os dados são então interpretados a partir da análise do discurso francesa. Os resultados apontam que a identidade empreendedora formada no âmbito do nomadismo digital evidencia a possibilidade de emancipação feminina frente às representações e expectativas maternas oriundas do contexto cultural brasileiro, as quais posicionam as mães como meras cuidadoras, donas de casa, ou como sujeitos que necessitam sacrificar o bem-estar pessoal em prol do trabalho formal e dos filhos.

Palavras-chave

Identidade empreendedora. Empreendedorismo feminino. Subjetividade no trabalho. Maternidade. Diáspora brasileira.

Introduction

The content published in blogs and social networks has increasingly appeared as an alternative to the hegemonic culture of the mass media, allowing discourse analysts to acknowledge the authentic production of meanings by subjects whose languages are (re)elaborated and materialized in the virtual sphere (PAPACHARISSI, 2002). Hence, digital media studies have enabled the investigation of discursive practices in the construction of identities in transit (GEDALOF, 2000), which permeate various geographical and digital spaces in postmodernity (GIDDENS, 1990, 1991), representing an essential advance in the scholarship of migratory movements involving social actors historically silenced by the dominant culture, such as female subjects and minority groups. The current study is placed within this field, aiming to analyze entrepreneurial identity construction from an immigrant perspective, intersecting with gender issues inscribed in media culture production within digital nomadism.

Materials and Methods

For this purpose, five case studies of self-employed Brazilian women working as content creators and living in Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, and Norway were collected on *Youtube* videos and online blog posts. This study's design can thus be classified as an interpretivist comparative case study (STAKE, 2006; LEPPÄÄHO; PLAKOYIANNAKI; DIMITRATOS, 2015). Data selection criteria involved an inductive thematic categorization around our intended objective, therefore, keywords related to these females' universe were used as filters, such as "women", "motherhood", "marriage", "work", "gender", "relationships", "bilingualism", "language learning". The narratives were then analyzed using French Discourse Analysis (FDA), following Maingueneau's (1999, 2007) reflections on the linguistic-discursive construction of marginal voices coming from ethnic minority groups within the migratory context. For the said author, discourse is a system of restrictive rules occurring on four to eight planes of global semantics, namely (i) *vocabulary*; (ii) *themes*; (iii) *enunciative deixis*; (iv) *enunciation manner*; (v) *intertextuality*; (vi) *the enunciator's statutes*; (vii) *the interlocutor's statutes*; and (viii) *cohesion manner*. Arguably, navigating through these eight planes would allow us to transition between discourse as merely a representation system—as found in the Althusserian understanding of discourse—to a global semiotic system that is able to reflect an individual's subjectivity and identity as two distinctive things inscribed in an ideology towards migration and digital entrepreneurship that is socially constructed (MAINGUENEAU, 1999, 2007).

Results

Partial results highlight that adopting a nomad lifestyle has been associated with women's digital entrepreneurship prior to motherhood, as a means of enhancing their own social capital to deliver high-quality content and achieve success through digital work (VERSHININA; PHILLIPS; MCADAM, 2022). Nevertheless, digital nomadism has not been described as these women's first labor option, but rather as a result of communal choice (BARNES, 2022): (i) an effect of their husband's necessity to resettle either to study or work abroad; (ii) an effect of their citizenship status' update after getting married to a native male partner; (iii) a consequence of a family decision to look for better living conditions. In our analysis, we identified that, even though the migration decision-making process has not been essentially led by females, they extended the positive outcomes of their entrepreneurial careers as content producers to when they became mothers in a foreign country later on, since such an experience allowed them to contest maternal representations and expectations ingrained in their home country's cultural background (e.g., mothers behaving as mere caregivers and housewives), or as subjects who were required to sacrifice their professional career success to the benefit of their family wellbeing.

Conclusions

Our conclusions show that becoming mompreneurs through digital media in a foreign country turned out to be associated with a discourse of female emancipation, social capital increase (BOURDIEU, 1980), and independence for both mothers and children, as well as work-life balance achievement (MCADAM; CROWLEY; HARRISON, 2020; VERSHININA; PHILLIPS; MCADAM, 2022). These elements ultimately affected Brazilian migrant women's subjectivity as a means to counteract the inevitable dispute for power and male submission in the adaptation process to a foreign environment (LOCKE; LAWTHOM; LYONS, 2018), due to the negotiation of a gendered entrepreneurial identity that remained linked to their national roots but also reflected some new aspects of each destinations' symbolic culture (SERRANO-PASCUAL; CARRETERO-GARCÍA, 2022). Interestingly, our findings advance the research subfield on the narratives of migration under a gendered perspective, by incorporating entrepreneurial/labor dynamics in the linguistic-discursive self/historical/social representation of Brazilian self-employed immigrant mothers resettled in different European countries. In addition to that, we provide a consistent methodological path and framework to scrutinize ethnic minority migrants' narratives through Maingueneau's FDA analysis.

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