COMUN. MÍDIA CONSUMO, SÃO PAULO, V. 23, E3104, JAN./DEC. 2026
https://doi.org/10.18568/cmc.2026.e3104

ARTICLE

Female entrepreneurship on TikTok: an exploratory analysis

Empreendedorismo feminino no TikTok: uma análise exploratória

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates how Brazilian microentrepreneurs use TikTok and how such use shapes an emerging entrepreneurial profile. Drawing on qualitative interviews, the findings identify the emergence of a hybrid figure: the entrepreneur-influencer, simultaneously a craftswoman of her product and an architect of her image. The results reveal tensions between spontaneity and algorithmic discipline, visibility and vulnerability, and empowerment and precarization. Although TikTok expands reach and monetization opportunities, it also intensifies workload and dependence on opaque algorithms. By illuminating these dynamics, the study contributes to debates on the interdependencies among entrepreneurship, gender, and social media.*

Keywords: *female entrepreneurship; TikTok; microentrepreneurs; digital influencers; social media.*

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Editors: Eliza Casadei and Gabriela Almeida.

RESUMO: *Este estudo investigou como microempreendedoras brasileiras utilizam o TikTok e como esse uso configura um novo perfil empreendedor. Por meio de entrevistas qualitativas, identificou-se a emergência de um perfil híbrido: a empreendedora-influenciadora, artesã do produto e arquiteta da própria imagem. Os achados revelam tensões entre espontaneidade e disciplinamento algorítmico, visibilidade e vulnerabilidade e empoderamento e precarização. Conclui-se que, embora o TikTok amplie o alcance e a monetização, ele intensifica a sobrecarga e a dependência de algoritmos opacos. Assim, este estudo contribui para o aprofundamento do debate sobre as interdependências entre empreendedorismo, gênero e mídias sociais.*

Palavras-chave: *empreendedorismo feminino; TikTok; microempreendedoras; influenciadoras digitais; mídias sociais.*

Introduction

In Brazil, micro and small enterprises play a central role in economic development, consolidating entrepreneurship as a driving force for the nation's growth (REDAÇÃO, 2022). However, a gender-based perspective reveals that entrepreneurial activity remains predominantly male (DATASEBRAE, 2022). Women face several barriers, such as investor bias and the double burden of work, which compels them to reconcile business responsibilities with family and domestic duties, thereby limiting the time available for managing their ventures (GAWEŁ; MIŃSKA-STRUZIK, 2023).

In this context, social media (hereafter referred to as SM) are perceived by this group as pathways to entrepreneurship (PINHEIRO-MACHADO *et al*., 2024), despite the inherent tensions and ambiguities involved (VAN DIJCK; POELL; DE WAAL, 2018). On the one hand, SM are recognized for fostering innovation, job creation, and economic growth in emerging economies (MCADAM; CROWLEY; HARRISON, 2018; RASUL; HOQUE; AREFIN, 2020; OLSSON; BERNHARD, 2021; CAMACHO; BARRIOS, 2022; BRAHEM; BOUSSEMA, 2023). On the other hand, work on these platforms is characterized by algorithmic opacity and power asymmetries that subject entrepreneurs to engagement-oriented forms of discipline (ZUBOFF, 2015; COULDRY, 2019; VAROUFAKIS, 2024), imposing a continuous pressure for results and conditioning self-esteem to metric performance (FREIRE FILHO, 2010; 2011). As a consequence, the boundaries between personal life and work become increasingly blurred (CRARY, 2013), transforming visibility into an imperative for survival and generating an emotional strain (EHRENBERG, 1991; CASTELLANO, 2015). Given the increasing dependence of microentrepreneurs on SM, a scenario of growing precarity emerges (PINHEIRO-MACHADO *et al*., 2024).

Within this context, TikTok stands out as one of the pioneers in the distribution of short-form user-generated videos. In 2022, it was the most downloaded application in the world, with Brazil representing its third largest market in terms of users, 52% of whom are women (STATISTA,

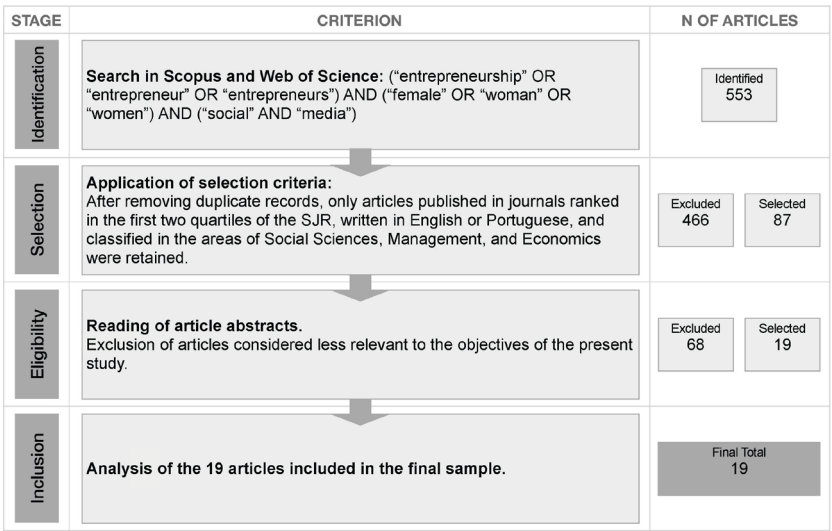
2023; TIKTOK, 2023). Therefore, its consolidation likely influences the dynamics of female microentrepreneurship in Brazil.

Given the rise of TikTok and the contradictions discussed in the literature regarding the relationship between female microentrepreneurship and social media, the following question arises: How do Brazilian female microentrepreneurs utilize TikTok in their businesses, and in what ways does this use contribute to the emergence of a new entrepreneurial profile within the social media context?

Literature Review

A systematic literature review (MOHER *et al.*, 2009) was conducted to map the state of the art regarding the relationship between female entrepreneurship and SM. The stages and criteria for article selection are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Systematic Literature Review Stages



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The literature analysis identified various categories, subsequently grouped into four thematic macro-categories based on their semantic

similarity (MILES; HUBERMAN; SALDAÑA, 2014): social capital, technical skill development, empowerment, and management challenges. These are explored below.

Social capital

The "Social Capital" macro-category refers to the use of SM by entrepreneurs to expand contact networks and increase business visibility, encompassing the categories "Customer Relationship" and "Notability".

Entrepreneurs utilize these platforms to strengthen ties with the audience while simultaneously achieving notability (JOSE, 2018; SULTAN; SULTAN, 2020; OLAMIDE; OGBECHIE, 2021; CHAKRABORTY; BISWAL, 2023).

These strategies are synergistic: by sharing personal routines, as mother-entrepreneurs often do, they build emotional connections with their audience, thereby strengthening business reputation and performance (MEHTAP; OZMENEKSE; CAPUTO, 2019; HASSAN; MIR; KHAN, 2021; BOUFARES TAYAA; BOUZAABIA, 2022).

Technical skill development

The "Technical Skill Development" macro-category addresses the use of SM by entrepreneurs for self-improvement, driven by the monitoring of business performance data.

Regarding self-improvement, entrepreneurs learn through online interactions — with peers, family, and professionals — or by following successful models on SM, facilitating the exchange of experiences and the formation of support networks (KUHN; GALLOWAY; COLLINS-WILLIAMS, 2016; OLSSON; BERNHARD, 2021). However, the diversity of knowledge accessed may be conditioned by the structure and reach of these connections (DY; MARTIN; MARLOW, 2018).

Furthermore, SM platforms facilitate the monitoring of valuable data, helping entrepreneurs identify improvements, understand consumer behavior, anticipate trends, and discover market niches. This feedback is particularly useful for those with scarce resources, supporting product

enhancement and opportunity generation (JABEEN *et al.*, 2019; CAMACHO; BARRIOS, 2022; BRAHEM; BOUSSEMA, 2023).

Empowerment

The "Empowerment" macro-category, derived from the category of the same name, explores how SM assists women in asserting themselves as entrepreneurs, promoting independence, authority, and creative freedom.

The literature distinguishes between two primary forms of empowerment: psychological and economic. The former refers to the strengthening self-esteem and self-confidence, allowing women to take control of their careers (CHAKRABORTY; BISWAL, 2023). Economic empowerment, on the other hand, involves achieving financial independence, expressed through increased contribution to family income and greater decision-making autonomy (GOLZARD, 2020; RASUL; HOQUE; AREFIN, 2020; HEIZMANN; LIU, 2022; MINIESY; ELSHAHAWY; FAKHRELDIN, 2022).

Management challenges

The "Management Challenges" macro-category, also derived from the category of the same name, refers to the difficulties faced by women in managing their businesses. Among these, a constant need to acquire new technological skills to keep up with the evolution of platforms, maintain an active digital presence, and produce relevant content stands out — these being tasks that require time, effort, and dedication. Such "hyperconnectivity" creates stress, particularly due to the expectation of constant availability, compromising the balance between professional and personal life (OLSSON; BERNHARD, 2021).

Dealing with negative criticism also represents a challenge. The lack of support networks further aggravates this scenario, leaving many entrepreneurs alone in facing these pressures (BOUFARES TAYAA; BOUZAABIA, 2022; KELLY; MCADAM, 2022).

Chart 1 summarizes the macro-categories that describe how entrepreneurs use social media in their businesses, presenting definitions, the main related authors, and the originating categories.

Chart 1 – Use of Social Media by Female Entrepreneurs

Macro--category	Definition	Authors (Non exhaustive)	Originating Categories	Definition
Social Capital	Use of SM to build connections and networks for business development	KUHN; GALLOWAY; COLLINS-WILLIAMS, (2016); JOSE (2018); MEHTAP; OZMENEKSE; CAPUTO (2019); RASUL; HOQUE; AREFIN (2020); SULTAN; SULTAN (2020); HASSAN; MIR; KHAN (2021); OLAMIDE; OGBECHIE (2021); OLSSON; BERNHARD (2021); BOUFARES TAYAA; BOUZAABIA (2022); CHAKRABORTY; BISWAL (2023)	*Customer Relationship*	How SM facilitate proximity and strengthen relationships with customers
			Notability	How SM contribute to promoting the entrepreneur and increasing the visibility of the business
Technical Skill Development	Use of SM for learning	DY; MARTIN; MARLOW (2018); JABEEN *et al.* (2019); OLANREWAJU *et al.* (2020); OLSSON; BERNHARD (2021); CAMACHO; BARRIOS (2022); CHEN; LIU (2023)	*Self-improvement*	How SM make training and skill development more accessible
			Data Monitoring	How SM facilitate access to feedback and data on markets and trends
Empowerment	Use of SM to assert themselves as entrepreneurs	GOLZARD (2020); RASUL; HOQUE; AREFIN (2020); HEIZMANN; LIU (2022); MINIESY; ELSHAHAWY; FAKHRELDIN (2022); CHAKRABORTY; BISWAL (2023)	*Empowerment*	How SM strengthen women's independence
Management Challenges	Challenges faced in managing their activities on SM	OLSSON; BERNHARD (2021); BOUFARES TAYAA; BOUZAABIA (2022); KELLY; MCADAM (2022)	*Management Challenges*	Challenges experienced in the use of SM in their businesses

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Methodology

Female entrepreneurship on SM constitutes an emerging and still underdeveloped field (OLANREWAJU *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, an exploratory qualitative approach was adopted, which is appropriate for generating insights and enhancing the understanding of phenomena at an early stage of development (GIL, 2017). In-depth interviews were conducted with ten microentrepreneurs from different sectors (Chart 2).

Chart 2 – Interviewees' Profile

Code	Sector	Age	Location	TikTok followers (in thousands)
Entrepreneur 1	Gastronomy	24	SP	225
Entrepreneur 2	Gastronomy	23	RJ	22.4
Entrepreneur 3	Gastronomy	33	PN	27.3
Entrepreneur 4	Artisanship	37	RS	107.3
Entrepreneur 5	Artisanship	41	BA	24.5
Entrepreneur 6	Artisanship	28	CE	25.3
Entrepreneur 7	Fashion	26	PR	20.6
Entrepreneur 8	Fashion	22	CE	65.7
Entrepreneur 9	Fashion	27	ES	42.4
Entrepreneur 10	Makeup	22	RJ	29

Elaborated by the authors.

Selection followed purposive sampling, targeting microentrepreneurs with public TikTok profiles and a regular posting frequency focused on the promotion and sale of their offerings. Participants were identified on the platform, contacted via direct messages, and voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. The number of interviews, conducted remotely (via Zoom) and recorded with prior consent, was determined by data saturation.

The interview guide was developed based on the macro-categories identified in the literature review. The interviews lasted an average of 58 minutes and were examined using content analysis (BARDIN, 2016). The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the authors' institution.

Results

Interviews were analyzed in light of the macro-categories presented below.

Social capital

The macro-category "Social Capital," derived from the categories "Notability," "Customer Relationship," and the emergent category "Credibility," refers to the gains obtained through connections with customers and other TikTok users.

Notability

Interviewees consider that TikTok offers greater reach than other SM platforms, such as Instagram: "I can only sell outside my region because it [TikTok] delivers the content to a lot of people. One of my videos there gets 100 thousand views; on Instagram it gets 2 thousand" (Entrepreneur 8). Several interviewees reported greater difficulty in "growing" on Instagram: "It took years to reach the 25 thousand followers I have today on Instagram" (Entrepreneur 1).

Thus, the reach facilitated by TikTok increases notability, attracting customers from different regions: "Today people come from places I've never heard of and say, 'I saw you on TikTok!'" (Entrepreneur 2). Another aspect highlighted is the longer lifespan of content on the platform, which favors the growth of notability: "TikTok reaches more people faster and keeps the content alive longer [...] On other platforms, the content is abandoned in 24 hours; on TikTok, it lasts 15 days… and people keep coming" (Entrepreneur 5).

The notability provided by TikTok also generates recognition from companies, resulting in collaborations that enable access to resources at low cost: "I managed to get partnerships [...] with a shipping platform, a website platform, a traffic manager, mentoring partnerships [...] all for free" (Entrepreneur 6).

Customer relationship

According to the interviewees, the content distributed on TikTok tends to be more spontaneous than on other SM, fostering empathy between them and their customers: "On TikTok people show up more naturally [...] I didn't put on makeup to be here; I'm simply in my everyday routine" (Entrepreneur 9).

Interviewees believe that spontaneous videos portraying "*daily life as it is*" tend to go viral because users value authenticity. Entrepreneur 1 highlights that personal and genuine stories strengthen bonds with the audience:

> *When they come to pick up their order, [...] they comment: "You talked about a cake you made for your friend!" or "the story you told was funny!". They pay attention to that and [...] they tell me so I know they're following me. On Instagram it's a bit more distant [...] on TikTok it creates more of a community (Entrepreneur 1).*

Despite TikTok's potential to strengthen relationships with audiences, interviewees acknowledge that this connection depends on the combined use of different SM. TikTok is used as a space for initial presentation, where they share behind-the-scenes content and personal aspects of their routines. Instagram, in turn, is used in situations that require more formal interactions: "Instagram is more planned [...] the Instagram content schedule is prepared one month in advance. On TikTok, I record ten videos on a Saturday and say 'okay, that's fine'" (Entrepreneur 7).

Microentrepreneurs also rely on a third SM throughout different stages of their relationship with customers: WhatsApp. As one of them

explains: "*[The customer] watches me on TikTok, then goes to Instagram and gets my contact (...) and then orders on WhatsApp.*"

Credibility

For the interviewees, SM such as Instagram and WhatsApp are perceived by customers as more trustworthy environments. TikTok, in contrast, is still viewed as a relatively new platform focused on entertainment and informality: "TikTok is still seen as something playful" (Entrepreneur 1).

According to the interviewees, TikTok lacks certain features found on other SM, such as reposting customer content and saving information in highlights, which function as social proof of their work, conveying transparency and reliability.

Technical skill development

The macro-category "Technical Skill Development", based on the categories "Self-improvement", "Data Monitoring" and the emergent category "Knowledge Dissemination," addresses TikTok as an informal learning tool through which entrepreneurs enhance their skills and keep themselves updated.

Self-Improvement

Interviewees reported using TikTok as a space for informal learning: "I use TikTok's search tool to find people who are teaching how to solve my problem". This process contributes both to the technical development of their work and to the management of their business profiles.

In the first case, the use of the platform expands creative repertoires and references: "I really like having a spy profile to see what it will deliver to me in the accessories area, because it shows me a lot of things from abroad... it's good for inspiration, learning, and getting to know other artisans" (Entrepreneur 4). In the second case, TikTok is used as a tool for market research and for understanding the dynamics of reach and

engagement: "I search by hashtag to see [...] who is going viral. What did that person do to go viral?" (Entrepreneur 2).

Data monitoring

The interviewees emphasize the importance of data monitoring to inform their posting strategies, observing, for instance, the audience's age demographics to tailor their content: "TikTok's audience is younger, while on Instagram it goes up to around 40 years old... That's data you have to know how to use to your advantage [...] On TikTok I can use more slang..." (Entrepreneur 1).

However, entrepreneurs observed that the information provided by the platform is not always easy to understand: "I only take a quick look. I would like to work more with data [...] but I also think I don't have enough skills to analyze all this data like a good marketing professional" (Entrepreneur 7).

Such difficulties hinder the improvement of activities and generate frustration: "I don't understand... I replicated the same things from other videos, [...] I gathered the analytics and applied them to the subsequent video. Even so, I didn't achieve the same result" (Entrepreneur 1).

Knowledge dissemination

Microentrepreneurs who master both their craft and the management of their social media profiles become references for others, acting — albeit unintentionally — as disseminators of knowledge: "Many girls sent me messages like: 'You inspired me... I'm starting to do the same thing you do'" (Entrepreneur 8).

Thus, they attract two distinct audiences: final customers (interested in their products) and novice entrepreneurs (seeking knowledge). Some interviewees created courses in response to this demand, while others reported difficulties in doing so, although they recognized this potential: "It was there [on TikTok] that people asked me the most for a

course... I kept thinking: 'My God, I'm losing money [...] they want to buy and I have nothing to offer!'" (Entrepreneur 4).

Empowerment

The macro-category "Empowerment", derived from the category of the same name and the emergent category "Monetization", refers to the use of SM to assert a position as entrepreneurs.

Empowerment

The interviewees highlight how TikTok helps them affirm themselves as entrepreneurs, validating their work and overcoming insecurities: "It's so wonderful when we find people who like what we do [...] it brings an amazing sense of empowerment. I had no idea that so many people could like my work" (Entrepreneur 4).

Indeed, some interviewees stated that TikTok led them to be recognized as authorities in their fields, strengthening their self-confidence and financial independence through the generation of their own income: "I started my business [...] when I was 21 [years old]. Today I have a healthy business that grows every month because of social media [...] It's my company, [...] and it's still just me. Everything here happens because of me" (Entrepreneur 7).

Monetization

For many interviewees, a notable aspect of TikTok is the possibility of content monetization, which is considered an important source of income: "Today I see it as a second source of income. I believe that at some point it could even become the primary one because it generates returns", states Entrepreneur 3.

Even when users do not become customers, the platform remains attractive to entrepreneurs due to the additional income derived from the exhibition of their content: "They may not buy, but the more people watch me, the more TikTok pays me" (Entrepreneur 4).

Entrepreneur 6, for example, has a larger profile on Instagram, with nearly 150 thousand followers, while on TikTok she has around 25 thousand. Nevertheless, TikTok monetization proves to be relevant: "My Instagram is much bigger than my TikTok, but TikTok monetizes in dollars."

Management challenges

The macro-category "Management Challenges" encompasses obstacles faced by the interviewees, based on the emergent categories "Criticism Management" and "Algorithmic Demands."

Criticism management

This category refers to a constant exposure to negative comments. Entrepreneurs point out that the proximity generated by TikTok encourages users to comment freely: *"People think they have the right to give their opinion... Social media opens those doors a bit [...] and that bothers me"* (Entrepreneur 4).

Viral content dissemination on TikTok broadens entrepreneurs' reach to heterogeneous publics, including individuals beyond their target audience, which may trigger negative or decontextualized engagement: "The video reaches every type of audience. Then some people say, 'Gosh, that clothing is vulgar'. Then I say, 'Who said it was meant to be elegant?'. And the person goes, 'Can't you handle criticism?'" (Entrepreneur 9).

Some interviewees, however, view criticism as an asset for feeding the algorithm, turning toxicity into engagement: "Criticism brings engagement... I'm learning that. I used to think... how do celebrities deal with so much criticism? Then I thought... 'I get it, it's good, it generates engagement!'" (Entrepreneur 3).

Algorithmic demands

This category addresses the overlap of tasks required to satisfy TikTok's algorithm while simultaneously running a business. Thus, the findings

point to a fusion between entrepreneurial performance and algorithmic performance. Producing, editing, and posting content, serving customers, and interacting with the audience are part of a routine that often encroaches on personal time: "I have lunch while replying [to customers], and when I lie down, I'm still replying" (Entrepreneur 5).

The pressure for performance is also illustrated by testimonies from microentrepreneurs who felt penalized when they reduced their posting frequency: "I was on board for nine months, without easy access to social media. When I came back [...] it seemed like the platform wanted to punish me: my videos were no longer being delivered" (Entrepreneur 2).

These testimonials suggest that content production becomes fundamental to the business, requiring planning, creativity, and technical skills: "I need time to produce [...] I need to sit down and edit, narrate, and post" (Entrepreneur 2). This forces entrepreneurs to maintain consistency even amid exhausting routines, generating emotional impacts: "I started having anxiety attacks when I began working on the internet" (Entrepreneur 10).

Furthermore, comparison with other profiles may affect their motivation: "I keep comparing whether someone else's work is better [...], I lose focus on what I'm doing or I get discouraged" (Entrepreneur 6).

Discussion

The results indicate that the use of TikTok by Brazilian microentrepreneurs reinforces an environment in which success depends on the ability to interpret ambiguous signals from the algorithm, sustain a constant online presence, and transform aspects of everyday life into engaging content.

Three axes of tension structure this use: spontaneity versus algorithmic discipline; visibility versus vulnerability; and empowerment versus precarization. These axes are not independent but rather interrelated: the discipline imposed by an opaque algorithmic system sustains a regime of continuous visibility that, while expanding opportunities for recognition

and income generation, also exposes these women to work overload and emotional risks.

On the one hand, while TikTok expands possibilities for economic participation, it simultaneously fosters a new and controversial form of female entrepreneurial subjectivity: at once autonomous and dependent, empowered and vulnerable, the creator of her own brand yet subservient to algorithmic fluctuations.

The success of these entrepreneurs is increasingly contingent upon the synergy between two distinct fronts: the provision of competitive offerings and the production of compelling content designed to drive engagement and thereby achieve algorithmic amplification.

Unlike their experiences on other SM, the interviewees share a tacit understanding that content perceived as "spontaneous" tends to generate greater engagement on TikTok, being rewarded with increased reach and visibility. At the same time, they observe what other profiles do to go viral and report that replicating successful formulas does not guarantee future performance, suggesting unstable algorithmic behavior (ZUBOFF, 2015; VAN DIJCK; POELL; DE WAAL, 2018), and influencing the type of content produced (COULDRY, 2019).

This adds a new nuance to a dilemma characteristic of SM. Rather than simply reconciling the binary opposition between "being yourself" and "being someone" (FREIRE FILHO, 2010), these entrepreneurs engage in a controlled variation of authenticity. It is not a matter of alternating between the genuine and the artificial, but rather of calibrating self-presentations that, although strategically adjusted, remain within a spectrum that each individual considers faithful to her own identity. What emerges is regulated spontaneity: performances that seek to preserve the appearance of naturalness while being modulated according to the algorithmic dynamics presumed by the microentrepreneurs.

Those who manage to "decipher" the algorithm's preferences tend to achieve greater visibility and, consequently, recognition. In doing so, they become references and sources of inspiration for other women in their digital communities. In this process, not only are the products of

their craft consumed but their personal trajectories are too, operating as symbolic goods of an aspirational nature. This demonstrates that, on SM, it is not only the product that is consumed, but also the entrepreneurial identity and narrative. Such visibility may generate emotional gains, as public validation reinforces self-confidence, as well as economic gains, either through increased sales or through content monetization.

However, this expansion of visibility carries costs. As their reach grows, these women intensify their exposure to criticism, thereby straining the boundaries and management of their private lives. As their content often incorporates elements of personal life — albeit in a modulated manner —, criticism is directed not only at the business but also at the entrepreneur's own identity. In addition, the algorithm penalizes microentrepreneurs who post infrequently, increasing the pressure for constant content production. This need to maintain continuous presence and performance also contributes to blurring the boundaries between personal and professional life, intensifying emotional overload (EHRENBERG, 1991; CRARY, 2013; CASTELLANO, 2015).

Consequently, visibility emerges as an ambivalent value factor, acting concurrently as a driver of recognition and revenue and a catalyst for vulnerability and emotional burnout. The very mechanism that scales economic opportunities reinforces a reliance on perpetual validation, exposing the structural tension between visibility and vulnerability inherent to the microentrepreneurial journey on TikTok.

These tensions affect the working conditions of microentrepreneurs, which is where the duality between empowerment and precarization becomes evident. On the one hand, TikTok is described as a powerful tool for learning how to achieve success as a microentrepreneur, enabling these women to convert attention into both economic and symbolic capital. On the other hand, such empowerment relies on the internalization of attention economy logics — a demanding undertaking, given that interviewees reported challenges in interpreting the massive data streams provided by the platform. Consequently, their autonomy becomes tethered to the ability to decode these very metrics.

Furthermore, the interviewees believe that TikTok still does not convey sufficient credibility for completing sales. Although it is effective for initiating and strengthening relationships with customers, consolidating the business requires the integration of different SM — TikTok for attraction, Instagram for credibility, and WhatsApp for conversion —, multiplying work fronts, required competencies, and time investment. Consequently, credibility emerges not as a personal attribute but as a discursive construction resulting from the integration of multiple SM. The simultaneous management of these platforms intensifies the workload and deepens dependence on an integrated digital ecosystem in which the absence of one of these resources may significantly compromise business performance (PINHEIRO-MACHADO *et al.*, 2024). This scenario suggests that, rather than being merely auxiliary tools, social media become a constitutive infrastructure of entrepreneurial activity itself, challenging the possibility of microentrepreneurship dissociated from these platforms.

Therefore, a convergence can be observed between the roles of microentrepreneurs and digital influencers, with similar tensions. As occurs with influencers (SILVA; CHIMENTI, 2021), the microentrepreneur's content is expected to authentically reflect personal life, yet remuneration depends on visibility, exposing them to the constant risk of failing to engage audiences and receiving personally directed criticism. To mitigate this risk, much like an influencer (KHAMIS; ANG; WELLING, 2017), the microentrepreneur must become the architect of her own brand, strategically adjusting — whenever possible guided by data — her image and content in order to maximize impact.

Thus, a hybrid "entrepreneur-influencer" identity emerges — one whose success is contingent upon both the quality of their craft and the capacity to transmute visibility into value. Their practice articulates material and symbolic production, intertwining business management with the management of their own subjectivity, thereby signaling a reconfiguration of what it means to "be an entrepreneur" in algorithmically mediated environments.

In this sense, the empowerment enabled by TikTok does not eliminate precarization; rather, it is produced under the conditions imposed by the platform. While it may be experienced as an expansion of independence and recognition, it remains anchored in working conditions characterized by blurred boundaries between personal and professional life and by algorithmic instability and opacity. Thus emerges an entrepreneurial subjectivity that is simultaneously emancipated and subordinated.

Final Considerations

This study investigated how Brazilian microentrepreneurs utilize TikTok and how such use contributes to the configuration of a new entrepreneurial profile. The findings indicate that the platform functions as an ambivalent space: while it expands reach, learning, and income generation opportunities, it also intensifies exposure, performance pressure, and dependence on opaque algorithmic dynamics.

The experiences reported by the interviewees reveal three structuring tensions — between spontaneity and algorithmic discipline, visibility and vulnerability, and empowerment and precarization — that shape their practices and subjectivities. Success on TikTok hinges not only on the quality of the craft itself but also on the ability to interpret metrics, maintain a persistent online presence, and transmute elements of daily life into engaging content.

Within this context, a hybrid "entrepreneur-influencer" profile emerges: one who is simultaneously a craftswoman of her product and an architect of her public image, whose success stems from the articulation between material and symbolic production. This entails a multi-channel performance in which TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp fulfill complementary functions throughout the customer relationship, expanding opportunities while simultaneously increasing the workload.

From an academic perspective, the study contributes by empirically exploring the use of TikTok by Brazilian women microentrepreneurs, identifying the rise of this hybrid profile, as well as emergent categories

such as "Credibility," "Knowledge Dissemination," "Monetization," "Criticism Management," and "Algorithmic Demands". In doing so, it advances the debate on the interdependencies between entrepreneurship, gender, and social media, thereby addressing gaps identified by Olsson and Bernhard (2021) and Camacho and Barrios (2022).

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that effective strategies on TikTok require calibrated authenticity, strategic data analysis, and cross-platform integration. Simultaneously, they highlight the need for attention to the emotional impacts and working conditions inherent in the attention economy.

As a limitation, this study focuses specifically on Brazilian microentrepreneurs that are active on TikTok. Future research could compare different genders, sectors, or platforms, broadening the understanding of how algorithms shape entrepreneurial practices and subjectivities.

Conflict of interest: nothing to declare.

Funding: none.

Authors' contributions: Mattos, G.: conceptualization, formal analysis, data curation, writing – first draft. Rodrigues, M.: formal analysis, writing – first draft, writing – review and editing. Gouveia, T.: formal analysis, writing – first draft, writing – review and editing .

Data availability statement: The entire dataset supporting the results of this study is available upon request to the corresponding author. The dataset is not publicly available as it contains information that could compromise the privacy of research participants.

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Received: 12/02/2025
Accepted: 03/02/2026