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# Precarity Through Affective Labour in Content Production: Brazilian Live Streamers in the Global South

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## Abstract

This study explores the intersection of platform labour, precarity, and subjective meaning within the context of Brazilian live streamers, examining how structural inequalities in the Global South shape digital content production. Focusing on Twitch - a platform that promotes itself as a space of belonging while profiting from unpaid or underpaid labour - this research investigates the contradictions of work framed as leisure. Through digital ethnography and in-depth interviews with seven Brazilian streamers, the analysis uncovers how precarity is both materially embedded and symbolically rationalized in platform economies, particularly within contexts characterized by systemic informality.

In Brazil, live streaming operates within a labour landscape marked by "viração" (Abílio, 2017), a survival strategy that compels individuals to juggle multiple income sources to support themselves. Despite low monetization, becoming a streamer emerges as a crucial aspect of identity, providing affective rewards such as community, recognition, and skill development - attributes that stand in contrast to the alienation found in other forms of work. However, this "surplus of meaning" is co-opted by platforms: Twitch capitalizes on streamers' passions through its "do what you love" ethos (Duffy, 2017), effectively masking exploitation as autonomy. By obscuring streaming's labour nature, the platform justifies non-payment, framing financial success as a meritocratic outcome of dedication.

Precarity in the Global South is distinctly shaped by informality. For Brazilian streamers, their labor operates at the blurred boundaries of formal and informal economies, relying on unstable monetization tools, while sustaining the activity through the income obtained in other work activities. This contrasts with streamers in Global North, where the remuneration through subscriptions and ads is higher (Twitch, 2025) and partnerships are more common (Streamcharts, 2025). Furthermore, in Brazil, informality is not merely an exception but a systemic condition that exacerbates vulnerabilities tied to platform dependency (Antunes, 2023).

The study identifies affective labour as pivotal in perpetuating precarity within the streaming industry. Streamers often rationalize their underpayment through narratives centered on passion and community, aligning their subjectivities with the platform demands. This rationalization softens conflicts, embedding exploitation within the perceived autonomy (Viana

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Braz, 2020). The research underscores how platform governance in the Global South exploits historical inequities, transforming social and affective investments into extractable value. It calls for reimagining labour rights in digital economies, emphasizing the lived experiences of creators in Global South, whose precarity often remains obscured by celebratory narratives of creativity and entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** live streaming, affective labour, precarity, viração, global south.