The Production of Cyberspace and Tourism: Reflections of Neoliberal Ideology through an Analysis of Instagram Memes[1]

A PRODUÇÃO DO CIBERESPAÇO E O TURISMO: REFLEXOS DO IDEÁRIO NEOLIBERAL A PARTIR DE UMA ANÁLISE DE MEMES DO INSTAGRAM

Nilma Silva Rezende dos Santos
Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brasil
nilmarezendes@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Considering the growing relevance of cyberspace and social practices on the internet, the purpose of this study is to examine Instagram memes related to the themes of work and travel, highlighting how they contribute to the construction of cyberspace and their ability to reflect an emerging neoliberal subjectivity. To achieve this, a bibliographic research and content analysis were conducted on 65 Instagram memes, based on socio-spacial discussions, resulting in 6 attributed thematic categories: Social / Corporate Critique; Desire to travel; Financial scarcity; Dissatisfaction and/or suffering at work; Satisfaction and/or conformity at work; and Travel and escapism from daily life. Among the main findings, the importance of memes in the cultural influence landscape, identity formation, and political participation stood out, along with the relevance of considering this type of language in its expressions about tourism and its connection with studies about space production for deeper reflections on the effects of the new neoliberal rationality. Furthermore, through the memes, reports of suffering in work relationships, romanticize of traveling in the face of dissatisfaction with daily life, frustrations with lack of financial resources, workplace hostilities, as well as challenges in advancing these reflections in light of the obscurity of algorithmic logic were highlighted. As a central result, it was identified that the study of memes expressing tourist imaginary within the

---

[1] This article was presented in the fourth edition of the Forum ABRATUR - 2023, performed in São Luís, Maranhão.

analyzed categories constitutes an important starting point for conducting future investigations on this theme.

Keywords: Tourism Memes, Cyberspace, Neoliberalism, Subjectivity, Work.

INTRODUCTION

According to Urry &Larsen (2022), to act as a tourist emerges as an essential trace of modernity, associated to deep transformations in the universe of paid work. Once modern societies are built by multiple mobilities, which approach both physical as social and cultural aspects (Urry & Sheller, 2006), it highlights, contemporaneously, the intensification of digital flows (Freire-Medeiros *et al.*, 2018).

Within such context, for tourism, it becomes highlighted movements of new imaginary meanings, once that traveling and imaginary have always walked side by side (Gastal, 2005). In addition, to Souza *et al.* (2022) the available content on the web assume great relevance in the processes of decision making and travel planning, whether to tourism professionals, or to the travelers themselves. Therefore, it is not strange that, mainly from 2014 on, there has been a remarkable growth in the Brazilian scientific production on the relation between Tourism and Information and Communication Technologies (Soares *et al.*, 2022).

Considering that the internet has significantly expanded the patterns of sociability and production of views, including from tourists (Urry & Larsen, 2022), it has become, therefore, imperative, to deepen our comprehension of these new forms of social capital (Recuero, 2012). Thus, in face of an each day more digital tourism market (Albuquerque *et al.*, 2022), to advance in the comprehension of cyberspace is crucial to the analysis of tourism in all its dynamism (Gastal, 2005). Hence, the complexity of such phenomenon reveals itself in the socio-spatial practices (Fratucci, 2000), which involve overlays of several territoriality and social agents in living and in dispute (Fratucci, 2014).

Pierre Lévy (2007) defined that cyberspace is a space of creation and cultural production with innovating possibilities through human interactions mediated by digital Technologies. However, it is imperative to examine the deep inequalities that surround such technological advances and the context of globalization in which they are inserted (Freire-Medeiros & Lages, 2020; Santos, 2022). In such direction, the fact of the strengthening of neoliberalism be pointed out as the main booster of social injustices (Dardot & Laval, 2017) motivate us to comprehend how such new rationality also reflects on the web's subjectivity.

However, although the cyberspace has shown the ability to reproduce or to create inequalities and forms of exploitation (Lévy, 2007), it also enables the appearance of protagonists and creative expressions which confront hegemonic structures (Antoun, 2015; Bentes, 2015; Lévy, 2007). In communication, such processes are anchored in broad conversational interactions that break the old "monopoly of the speech" associated to television (Antoun, 2016). Therefore, it appeared, during this study, the interest on the roles of the internet memes, one of the most habitual signs of contemporary communication, according to Werneck (2020), and that currently represent a participative form with great influence on the cultural formation (Dynel, 2016; Shifman, 2013, 2014; Werneck, 2019).

To focus the role of speeches that come from social media take into consideration still the perspective of Henri Lefebvre (1981) regarding the view of the daily as search for the reinvention of the social life. Therefore, the focus of this analysis falls on the expressions of memes that surround the influence of the neoliberalism on the work relations, contrasting with the perspectives regarding trips. After all, according to Urry & Larsen (2022), the tourism view is molded by the contrasts with non-touristic experiences, depending on the system of activities and social signs.

Therefore, this study finds justification on the crescent importance of tourism in the digital scenario. Still, under a neoliberal ideology, which surrounds several aspects of daily life (Dardot & Laval, 2017), the needs and hopes for work routines and tourism leisure are a dialogue in which human searches for meaning are expressed (Gastal, 2005) in a life marked by precariousness (Han, 2015). In addition, the absence of identified publications that explore the intersection between tourism and internet memes highlights even more the relevance of such research, fulfilling a gap in the academic knowledge to the area.

This way, the following research questioned appeared: in what way do memes that are part of the production of cyberspace reflect speeches from work relations, trips and tourism leisure and how can they reflect the role of emergent subjectivity in the neoliberal context? In methodological terms, through an approach that combines bibliographic research and content analysis, together with inspirations derived from virtual ethnography, the study aimed at comprehending the narratives associated to the questions of work, trips and tourism leisure in the dissemination of memes on Instagram.

At last, this article is structured into five sections. After this introduction, the following section will present a brief review of the literature, focusing on the relations between the narratives of tourism in the production of cyberspace and the theme of neoliberalism and subjectivation. In addition, the methodology of this study is described in the section 3, followed by critical analysis of a representative sample of data and discussion of the found results. It finishes with the section of final considerations.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

1. Conceptualization of memes

According to Shifman (2013), the memes are a group of units of digital content that share common characteristics of content, shape and/or position.

For Shifman (2013, p. 367): "such units are circled, imitated and/or transformed through the internet by many users", creating, therefore, a shared cultural experience. The author also defends that internet memes are prone to a particular cultural logic and, therefore, are dependent on their context, in addition to being created with consciousness of one another (Shifman, 2013).

Werneck (2019) comprehends memes as signs that initially are spread in a format of exchange between individuals (peer to peer), however, more recently following a pattern that can be described as directed from the individual to the general public (*peer to all*), massively through the internet. Within this sense, the polivocal ability of the expression of memes, which allow that several opinions and identities become discussed and negotiated (Milner, 2013) imputes such language to a globally significant role within the scenario of political participation and of cultural transformations (Shifman, 2013).

Dynel (2016), on the other hand, defined memes as any artifact that appears on the internet capable of generating derivatives that are imitated, remixed and quickly spread by several participants, being able, still, to represent specific status within a subculture (Miltner, 2014). This way, they are spread through a variety of means, including images, videos, texts and other forms of communication (Shifman, 2013). However, for analysis purposes present in this study, the most popular category was chosen, which consists on images and overlay texts.

It is repeatedly considered in the literature that the expression "meme" comes from a neologism created by Richard Dawkins by appropriating the term "mimeme", from Greek origin, in his book: The Selfish Gene, from 1976, in which the authors reduced the word so that it would resemble to a gene in reference to the biological process. For Dawkins, just as the genes are responsible for replicating content, the memes would be "a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation" (Dawkins, 1976, p. 192), as cultural replicators of ideas and behaviors.

Further on, the initial and debatable approaches of Dawkins would be reviewed by other researchers, such as Susan Blackmore (2000), to whom the memetic, or study of memes, would search the point of view of the culture itself, and not from humans, in a way that subjects would work as "memes machines" (Blackmore, 2000, p. 16). Since then, such studies have been evolving with new approaches and as an emergent phenomenon of the social media that has become each day more present, awaking the interest of researchers in distinct areas.

Limor Shifman is one of the contemporary researchers that explores the theme of memes on virtual sphere, highlighting the quick dissemination and the broad reach due to the characteristics of the internet (Miltner, 2014; Shifman, 2013). According to Shifman (2013), the memes have the potential to mold behaviors and perceptions, playing a role in the popularization of ideas and even confronting some ideas. However, the author clarifies that ambiguities and multiple possible interpretations, as well as variations in their contexts, bring influences that are challenging to be measured, in a way that one may focus more on the broader content in which the memes are produced and consumed becomes indispensable (Shifman, 2013).

Chen (2012) questions the artistic and cultural value of the internet memes, exploring whether they represent a limitation by the false consciousness of a capitalistic economy or, in fact, provide a new protagonist in the cultural production, allowing people to explore a broader creative potential. After all, Chen (2012) recognizes the potential of the memes in exerting a significant influence on social values of a community, even in face of the difficulties observed in the evolution of the definition of such concepts, both regarding memes as the own internet culture itself (Willians, 2020).

It is important to highlight that, even when frequently associated only to humor, the internet memes may be quite critical and reflexive, as it happens with cartoons (Yoon, 2016). In addition, according to Castells (2005), there are

Marketing & Tourism Review • Belo Horizonte - MG - Brazil • v. 9, n.1 , 2024
NEECIM TUR • Center for Studies and Strategies in Integrated Marketing and Tourism Communication •
UFMG

times when wealth is not limited to the material aspect and the technological transformation currently are integrated to the social process of creation, manipulation of symbols, production and distribution of goods and services. Within such context, the human mind emerges as a force of direct production, where the insertion of information reorganizes the social structure (Castells, 2005).

In face of all of this, by the increase of presence of the language of memes in the relations and daily practices of communication, it has been observed that they have become an important part of the digital culture and have been used in different contexts of representation. This way, it is also considered that they may bring significant content linked to the practices and imaginary associated to tourism, as it will be explored further on.

2. **Mobility, tourism and the production of cyberspace:**

A great challenge for intellectuals, highlighted by Santos (2022), is on the need to update the concepts of space through a critical analysis of the society. Harvey (2005), on the other hand, highlights that, despite representing an essential sphere of the human life, the notion of space has been frequently underestimated. In this same context, Haesbaert (2004) underlines the importance of the symbolic dimensions, emphasizing the group of representations on space or the geographic imaginary that integrates such discussions.

In face of this, the term "cyberspace" currently widely used to describe the virtual universe, first appeared from a science fiction novel by William Gibson, called *Neuromancer*, from 1984. In the book, according to Pierre Levy, the term designated the universe of digital webs as being "a battlefield between multinationals, stage of world conflicts, new economical and cultural frontier" (Lévy, 2007, p. 123). Since then, several authors have appropriated themselves from the term to reference the virtual space.

Therefore, the reflections about the space involve each day more the consideration of the digital, having at sight the intersection of the info-communicational processes with the urban space (Lemos, 2008). In addition, machines, images, information and ideas are in constant movement, recreating nets at even faster speed through the world (Urry & Sheller, 2006). This way, the "I" has become mobile in a series of traces in cyberspace, according to Urry & Sheller (2006).

Indeed, it is worth mentioning that Cruz (2003) pointed out tourism as the main object of consumption in the geographic space. Therefore, due to the experiences in cyberspace each day more compose dimensions of tourism practices (Souza *et al.*, 2022; Soares *et al.*, 2022), the circulation of imaginary linked to tourism on the web also assumes great relevance (Gastal, 2005). After all, we are reminded by Urry & Sheller (2006) that the internet growth has also contributed to virtual and imaginary forms of travel.

But, beyond the tourism phenomenon, Urry & Larsen (2022) understood that the influence of images and circulating information, builders of views from tourists, may also be used to comprehend other elements of the society in general. Santos (2002) already discussed the importance of the subjectivity in the spacial construction, in a way that it is considered in its totality, from life and society in movement.

However, to investigate such movements for the apprehension of the spacial relations meets what Urry & Sheller (2006) criticized as a static character of the social sciences, which would neglect the look to the spheres of human mobility boosted by objects and technologies. The authors also highlighted the absence of recognition of the dynamic of intermittent movement of images and communications that organize the social life (Urry & Sheller, 2006). In such sense, it is valid to remember that, according to Foucault (1996), power relations can also be manifested by the creation of speeches and symbolic

spread representations that, on the other hand, will produce new speeches and materiality.

This way, to approach the information territories requires the analysis of its strengths in conflict, as well as the several forms of mobile inequalities that manifest themselves contemporaneously (Freire-Medeiros & Lages, 2020; Urry & Sheller, 2006). Considering that we live in a world of exclusions aggravated by social unprotection, characteristic of the neoliberal model (Santos, 2022), Milton Santos criticized the inequalities in the path of globalization, which was called "industry of perversity" (Santos, 2022, p. 19).

Therefore, according to the contradictions that integrate the production of space, tourism and the multiple mobility, it is imperative to extend the discussion to the role of a new neoliberal emergent rationality (Dardot & Laval, 2017). Thus, in the following section some theoretical basis will be presented to reflect on how the neoliberalism can influence the production of subjectivity that reflects on the cyberspace in which the internet memes are inserted.

3. Neoliberalism and the production of subjectivity

Inspired by Foucault (1996), who first situated the advent in a new way to conduct the individuals by "governmentality", Dardot & Laval (2017) criticized the trend to interpret the neoliberalism as a simple "come back" to the original liberalism. Instead, they proposed to perceive it as an imposition of a new rationality, in which the development of the market's logic, normative and generalized, will impact "from the State up to the closest of subjectivity" (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 31).

Thinking about these new power exercises, Byung-Chul Han (2015) interprets the contemporary society as spread by an excess of work culture and insatiable search for efficiency, where constant stimulation to the production and the personal performance relegate the human value to its productive

capacity. In similar way, Dardot & Laval (2017) explore the concept of "neosubject", a highly in charge of one's performance entity, but, at the same time, needy of strength of political power.

In such case, instead of imposing limits or prohibitions as elderly disciplining societies would work, it is demanded from the individuals to be constantly productive (Han, 2015). For só, the discursive practices fulfill a significant function by establishing rules and values, since, as stated Foucault, the power works through the speech, which is also a strategic display of such relations (Foucault, 2008). As consequence, a universe of generalized competitions reveals itself, with the social relations following a market's model of economical fight among the subjects, in addition to an exacerbated individualism, justifying inequalities and, at last, individuals installed to conceive themselves as a company:

> The distrust as principal and evaluating surveillance as methods are more characteristics traces of a new art to govern men [...]. The neoliberal re-structure transform the citizens into consumers of services that never have anything beyond their selfish satisfaction, which makes them to be treated as such for procedures of surveillance, restriction, punishment and "responsabilization". (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 319).

However, Achille Mbembe (2018) has been dedicated to emphasize the intrinsic relation between neoliberalism and racism. He also suggests that the neoliberal state exerts influence on our subjectivity and perception of life, however, he uncovers as a metamorphose of colonialism. It becomes highlighted, then, the importance of the racial issue as a central element in the configuration of the violent existence modes, that perpetuate in the necropolitics (Mbembe, 2016).

The feminist criticism, on the other hand, also considers the broaden of the feminine oppression by the specific ways for which women are subjectively and materially affected by neoliberalism (Ribeiro & Heinen, 2023). Therefore, it is important that the adoption of a pretentiously universal approach is avoided,

having at sight that different social groups will not be crossed by such process equivalently.

In addition, Foucault (1999) presented the idea of a subjectivity in movement that continuously detaches from itself when it is still product of historical determinations and the work upon itself. To him, the subject is capable of "continuously carry the level of one's subjectivity over, form constructing oneself in an infinite and multiple series of different subjectivities that never reach an end" (Foucault, 1999, p. 40). Within such context, we are each day more compelled to examine the processes of subjectivations produced by the digital dynamics of communication that reconfigure the relation between subjectivity and visibility (Bruno, 2006).

After all, according to Buckingham (2007), the subjective construction is also something that answers to the technological demands, once that the technology is responsible for a great transformation in our mental functioning, in the relations and in the concepts of knowledge. Hence, considering that Foucault defended that the relations have the power of being dissolved by the social tissue in a kind of micro-physics net that spreads throughout all the social structure (Foucault, 1996), to dedicate attention to what is communicated on the internet may be an alternative to try to understand the power of its ramifications.

For such, it is necessary to face the challenge of exploring such complex and broad theme with cuts that allow a methodological approach that will not sacrifice the complexity of the dynamic on the web, as evaluates Antoun (2015). However, by reviewing the literature to map repercussion on social media upon the subjectivity of the users, Marra & Santos (2015) already alerted that the predominance of studies that highlighted their positive and negative aspects would limit the comprehension of new possible interpretations, which

would result in lack of comprehension of the impact of social media the contemporary subjective production (Marra & Santos, 2015).

Therefore, on the digital platforms, considering that "what is at stake is a psychic economy of algorithms that, with their own strategies, extracts value and capitalizes our attention, our psychic and affective states" (Bruno *et al.*, 2019, p. 17), it matters to question in what way the production of suffering in the work relations and in the way of life in general (Dardot & Laval, 2017) would, in fact, be reflected in the speeches about tourism that are in abundance in social media.

In order to walk through such investigation, in the following section, we will move towards the analysis and discussion of the obtained results from the gathering of 65 memes from Instagram, focused on the themes of work and travel. Such empiric investigation will allow more concrete examples of how such dynamics are manifested in the contemporary digital culture.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This bibliographic research was performed through the definition of the main concepts regarding the questions guiding the research, after the initial exploration of the discussions. As follows, an input of books and scientific data basis, was performed, mainly in the areas of knowledge of tourism, geography, philosophy and social theory, such as: *web of Science* and Tourism Publications. Therefore, raises of the bibliographic base were structured, notes, listings, filters and reading of books and articles as main bibliographic strategies of the research.

In addition, although this work is not properly configured as an ethnography, the method of virtual ethnography has influenced some actions, having at sight that the personal profile on Instagram was used to processes of search and gather of memes, what brings, only by itself, particular implications

of algorithm, of views and of accesses. Considering yet the immersion in the digital environment (Hine, 2011) and the role of the social livings themselves provided by the web on the reached reflections, the inspiration of the virtual ethnography in this study can not be denied.

For the analysis of the memes, having at sight the particularities of such object of investigations, the content analysis was chosen by being a methodology with high flexibility in adapting itself to several theme categories, according to Prasad (2018). The method has shown itself to be quite favorable to the identification of trends that may be related to the studied literature and to the purposes of the research, in addition to allowing to analyze several contents, converging to the diversity of the elements present in the memes.

It is important to highlight, yet, that in face of the use of social media to gather information, it was possible to notice that each platform needs to be explored from its particularities, once that its functions and tools will determine the possibilities of data that might be gathered. In case of Instagram, by being a social media focused on sharing images and videos, in addition to allowing the editing of such sort of media, the platform favors its circulation. In addition, since the visual interactions on Instagram allow likes, comments on posts, use of hashtags, legend, etc., such resources also communicate with other important references, collaborating to the understanding of the context in which the posted memes are inserted and the answers from users to such speeches.

Steps:

1. Description of the samples: the gathered memes were systematically extracted from the Instagram platform after research in the exploration tab of the terms "travel memes" and "work memes" in January 2023. The 50 first results of the search were selected from each of the terms, resulting in an initial

collection of 100 samples. In this step, then, an exploratory observation was performed of the found material, aiming at understanding the main issues and hypothesis of the research that could be identified. As follows, the established criteria for the inclusion was: memes with images and texts that expressed perspectives regarding the experience of working and traveling and that presented a representative content regarding the object of the research. As criteria for exclusion, it was established that duplicated memes would be excluded from the body of the research, as well as memes not fit into the scope of the research. This way, 35 memes were excluded, resulting in 65 samples to be used.

2. **Attributed categories and categorization of the memes:** based on the empiric observation of the finally selected memes, six categories were selected to the final collection: Social/Business Criticism; Wish to travel; Financial scarcity; Dissatisfaction and/or suffering at work; Satisfaction and/or conformation at work and Traveling and escapism of the everyday. The 65 memes were gathered through a tool of screen capture and, following, detailed information was input on an Excel spreadsheet with field to fill regarding origin pages, legend and follow-up hashtags, number of likes, description of the type of image and transcript of the units of written language. Such content was read and classified regarding the previously defined categories, taking into consideration the interpretation of meanings and context. As follows, a field for details of each category was created in other subcategories with the purpose to portrait the variety of elements within the same groups. The differences among them were guided, mainly, through a perspective of the central rectory identified in the memes.

With the content analysis performed by a single researcher may be more bias (Bardin, 2006), it was necessary to take actions to mitigate the risks, as the performance of repeated pre-tests to ensure that the categories were clear and broad enough. In all cases, such measures did not exclude the consult

and obtention of feedback from more experienced tourism researchers, in addition to the constant reflection on the subjectivity regarding the data interpretation.

Within such sense, the ethnographic inspiration in combination with the content analysis, from the previous monitoring of the social media throughout the year of 2022 for online behavior observation regarding the share of memes from such theme was another important point to validate the classification. Since the criteria for the categories and the codification of data were clearly defined, in order to ensure greater emphasis on the reflections of a neoliberal ideology on the work and leisure relation, it was chosen to restrict a few amount of variable to make the gather and analysis viable.

However, this research is considered prone to constant review, having at sight the own fluid nature of memes on the internet as emergent genre, in a way that the monitoring should persist. Still, it is recognizable that the involvement of multiple researchers would have enriched the analysis and strengthened the reliability of the results, offering a cross validation of the interpretations.

3. Analysis and discussion of the data: after the previous steps, an identification of the main frequencies of the categories found in the memes, as well as patterns of occurrences and interpretation of meanings in articulation with the discussions pointed out in the section of theoretical reference of this study were performed. The discussion of the results was performed based on the literature of support considering, yet, the elements present in the visual composition of the memes, such as: environment, expressions, type of characters and protagonisms. The context of production of speeches was also observed, such as the chosen textual structures, the rectory devices and possible hidden internationalization. According to the announcements and contexts.

It is worth mentioning that the incipience of studies, which are based on the gather of internet memes, make some ethical considerations yet to be developed, after all, there are obstacles in the checking of the sources, consent and attribution of author rights from such material in many cases. However, it was understood that such challenges are characteristics of the own constitution of the phenomenon, which the internet memes are, created with purposes of visualization and quick spread (Shifman, 2014). Still, it is highlighted that the own Instagram platform itself presents a privacy policy in which the users have the choice of not allowing their content to be open. Hence, it was chosen to point out the identification of the sharing page of the exposed memes, even if that does not ensure that this is its primary origin of creation.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

In the Board 1, it is possible to verify the categories that were established from the gathered memes and the themes that were highlighted:

Board 1.

**Categories of the 65 analyzed memes (2023).**

Attributed Category	Main themes found:
Social/Business Criticism;	Demand of productivity, lack of labor rights, demands, irony in corporate speeches.
Wish to travel;	Missing traveling.
Financial scarcity;	Lack of money to live and to travel; debts, need to work more and/or have more jobs.
Dissatisfaction and/or suffering at work;	Wear, burnout, stress, sadness, pressure, apathy, vigilance, hostilities suffered a work.
Satisfaction and/or conformation at work;	Productivity and fun at work.
Traveling and escapism from the everyday;	Traveling as synonymous of happiness, abandon of the place of origin, escapism sadness by returning from the trip.

The analysis of the categories showed that: Dissatisfaction and/or suffering at work represents, being highlighted, the greater part, with 41.54% of the total, followed by the group Trip, Escapism of the everyday (24.61%) and Social/Business Criticism (20%) with more recurrent content from the central rectory categorized point of view, as follows (Figure 1):

Figure 1.

Categories attributed to the gathered memes.
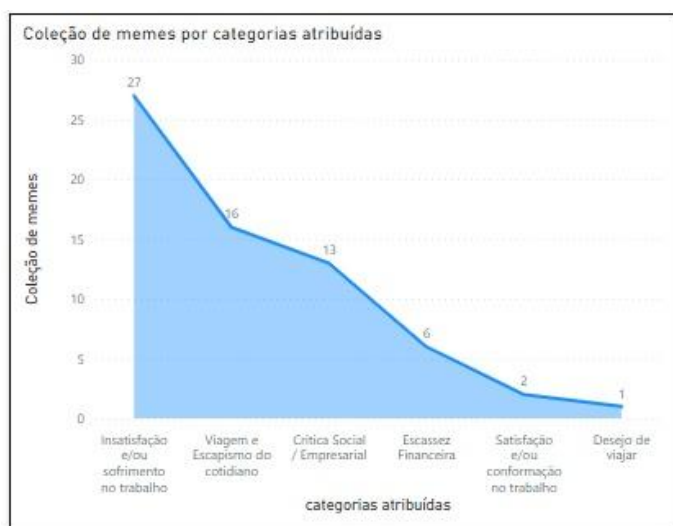
By examining the category of Dissatisfaction and Suffering at Work (Figure 2), it was identified that the majority of the announcements were related to elements that represented feelings as burnout, sadness, wear, frustration and stresses due to the pressure, demand of productivity and constant surveillance in those environments. Such fundamentals correspond to the attributes of the mode of life which emerges from the capitalist production model under the rule of the neoliberalism (Dardot & Laval, 2017; Han, 2015). Since, according to Safatle *et al.* (2021), the neoliberal logic creates patterns of suffering aiming at maximizing the exploitation at work and the wear, meanwhile it minimizes the juridical risks.

Figure 2.

Memes that narrate the dissatisfaction and/or suffering at work.

Source: Compilation from memes gathered form the Instagram pages: @memesdetrabalho and @telesincera (2023).

In addition, the results of the research indicated that the memes which made mention to work colleagues within such category reflected negative perceptions of such relations, reinforcing the perspective of Dardot & Laval (2017, p. 353) over the new subject, characterized as "competition man". An additional challenge from such weakening of the collective is that not only it impacts the labor relations, but it also restrains the opportunities of mobilization in face of the logic of precarization.

As pointed out by Milton Santos (2002), at each new division of the work and social transformation, the constructors of meanings need to renew the ideologies and symbolic universes. It is in that direction that the neoliberalism convenes the workers to engage themselves in economical conflicts one against the others and, therefore, demands a justification of inequalities each day more accentuated (Dardot & Laval, 2017).

However, within the group Trips and Escapism of the Daily Routine, it was possible to notice comic narrations of suffering in face of the need to return to the habitual life, as seen in Figure 3:

Figure 3.

Category: Traveling and Escapism.

Source: Compilation from memes gathered from the Instagram pages: @vcmtravel; @7ilhasviagem; @surteiviajeioficial and @oslugaresincriveisdobrasil (2023).

Mainly, relates that explored the idea of "abandoning everything" and choosing the touristic place as permanent living were observed. In an ironic way, some speeches linked to the category "Trips and Escapism" also mentioned extremes measures to attend the need to travel, including debts and even "organs selling".

In addition, tourism activities were presented as synonymous of happiness, escape from problems and reason for envy and ostentation.

Figure 4.

Traveling as synonymous of happiness and escape from problems.

Source: Compilation from the memes gathered from the pages of Instagram: @escolhacertaturismo and @viajandopormilhas (2023).

In the category Social /Business Criticism, the content focused on criticisms about the corporate environment in a broad form, approaching mainly the theme of labor rights (Figure 5). It can be seen, therefore, the potential of memes in also representing the narratives guided by the collective

expression of dissents regarding the hegemonic speeches, perpetuating or challenging stereotypes (Milner, 2013; Shifman, 2014).

Figure 5.

Critical memes.

Source: Compilation from the memes gathered from the pages of Instagram: @memesdetrabalho; @monaacida; @antimanicomialap and @sindicato.dos.memes (2023).

On the other hand, the category: Financial scarcity brought a comic view on the relation of work, finances and traveling, establishing a great

convergence with previous categories and approaching the feelings of stress at work and in face of financial difficulties (Figure 6):

Figure 6.

Financial scarcity.

Source: Compilation from memes gathered from pages of Instagram Instagram:@memesdetrabalho; @yourhostelbc; @otariano and @economizeviagens.

It is noticed that the desire to escape and the search for leisure and rest moments through traveling is defended even if it means to spend money when it is not available or when it might compromise other basic expenses. There is also an interest perception in some content that the solution to financial difficulties would be to work even more. The idea to divide the trips in several times or to gather the money through many jobs is ironically presented as a possibility, which reveals the difficulty in finding solutions for such eager.

In addition, by analyzing the pages of origin of the memes in such category, it is noticed that the speech of becoming in debt is frequently used by tourism service providers, as travel agencies on social media. This reveals an instrumentalization of comic narratives of suffering at work and even becoming in debt as touristic marketing strategy. Such practices emphasize the crescent recognition from ICTs as ways to increase the online presence of tourism agencies in search of competitive advantage (Albuquerque et al., 2022). In addition, according to Souza et al. (2022), the digital content marketing (DCM) has been highlighted as one of the most innovative marketing strategies lately.

As for the last categories, one of the memes that brough a speech of Satisfaction and/or Conformation at work did not necessarily raise labor conditions, but the context of fun during the working hours. On the other hand, in the category: Desire to travel, only one meme was found due to the fact that it was the single registry that did not associate such with to the will of running away, burn out, or even greater, even if pointing uncomfrtable conditions, according to Figure 7.

Figure 7.

Fun at work and missing traveling.

Source: Memes gathered from the pages of Instagram: @guerreirineo and @oslugaresincriveisdobrasil (2023).

Regarding to the type of image used in the creating of the analyzed memes in all the categories, it was possible to realize that, in general, there is great variety of content, being the most common highly related to animals, cartoons, television series and pop culture in general. The great variety of elements and of characters found, whether famous or anonymous, shows how diverse content may be appropriate to the formulation of memes. Still, the frequency of content with children's origin content as image is another point for reflection, considering that they circulate in digital platforms with adult indication.

However, in the majority of the cases, the text appeal found has been the most simple character, some of the memes highlighted by a critical more sophisticated criticism, as the case shown as follows (Figure 8):

Figure 8.

Meme with reflections on discussions about neoliberal subjectivity.

Source: @meltedvideos (2023).

This meme from Figure 8, liked by more than 83 thousand people, was extracted from the humor page *@meltedvideo*, which currently has around 1,794 million followers. Among the over 300 comments generated up to the moment, many make reference to the capitalist logic and the suffering form it.

In addition to the convergence with the theoretical reference on the neoliberal ideology, the image gives an example of the inter-textuality of the memes and their dynamics of re-appropriation described by Shifman (2013), in addition to the acceleration of the mobility in communication and character of the global circulation (Urry & Sheller, 2006), considering that the reference of origin from such meme is North American. Indeed, a research of such image in Google allowed to find out a chain of related memes and adapted to different context. Therefore, it was able to recover the original sentence of base to such meme: "*Help...I've fallen and I can't get up*", which initally appeared in a scene from a commercial of a company Life Call in the 80's, which offered a system of medical alarm and protection to the elderly (Rowe, 2015).

In its context, the commercial presented a scene in which an old lady named Mrs. Fletcher, after falling in the bathroom would say the sentence: "I've fallen and I can't get up", which became famous in the popular North American culture. Therefore, it was possible to identify this text and other images that made associations to it in several applications and forms of media, even in the title of some scientific articles of the Health area in research bases.

Another example of complex discussion that may be presented by an internet meme was observed as follows (Figure 9), extracted from the page @decaronapelomundo and fit into the category: Traveling and Escapism from the daily routine:

Figure 9.

Discusion about traveling and escapism.

Source: @decaronapelomundo (2023).

The evoked discussion about the meme (Figure 9) highlights a substantial change in the perception of the internet by part of people. Previously, it was seen as an escape from the real world, however, currently many face certain physical spaces as an opportunity to escape from the constant stimulation, distraction and overload offered by the virtual environment.

In addition to the increase of the online dedicated time, it is imperative to consider the crescent dependency of electronic devices and the proliferation of the digitalization in several spheres of life, such as in the professional relations, access to public services, educational practices, among others. However, it is worth mentioning that, according to Soares *et al*. (2022), as in the international literature there is a wide range of studies that aim at identifying and mapping the relation between ICTs and tourism in a broad form, in the Brazilian context, thus, the studies that explore such relation are still very incipient.

In addition, when the relation between the acceleration and work is considered (Dardot & Laval, 2017; Han, 2015), it is possible to establish connections with the discussion on algorithmis. The data gathering generated by users and the time dedicated to the screens, being capitalized by major corporations (Zuboff, 2023) suggests that the same cyberspace where such narratives of suffering at work ciruclate, whether in form of conformism, trivialization or confront, also works as a work environment for the generation of data that makes technology companies richer (Lippold & Faustino, 2022).

Therefore, it is necessary to also investigate in what way such processes contribute to the increase of the overloads and demands that impact the individuals and their subjective constructions, once that even the act of traveling may be interpreted as a productivity performance in face of the contemporary stimulation to competition. This occurs through the recognition that, in a contradictory form, both pleasure and fulfillment demand a maximum performance in the current society (Han, 2015). In addition, it is still important to consider that traveling has evolved as symbol of status (Urry & Larsen, 2022).

The same way, it has become necessary to recognize that the influence of the neoliberal rationality affects diverse groups in potentially discrepant forms. Therefore, the participative character emphasized in the memes (Shifman, 2013) should be approached with a critical analysis of the usage of cyberspace, which is characterized by a heterogeneity of elements and inequalities.

In the Brazilian context, the study conducted by the Locomotive Institute (2022) revealed that less than a third of the population is completely connected, meanwhile the rest, specially those belonging to the C, D and E classes, spent half of the month without internet access, being that 58% of the Brazilian use exclusively smartphones. Therefore, the structural racism is reflected on the impositions of exclusion and difficulties in the internet access.

Furthermore, it also presents itself on the digital platforms, which still allow the manifestation of explicitly racist messages. Indeed, such violence are by times expressed by the own language of memes on the internet (Shifman, 2014). However, discriminating aspects may be manifested in several media devices, such as ads recommended to users, modes for facial identification, filters in selfies apps, among other daily micro-violences (Silva, 2020).

Under such perspective, as pointed out by the report on gender violence on the internet elaborated by the InternetLab (2017), the perception of violence against women in the virtual context presents a significant scarcity of data. Unfortunately, the events are sub-notified, just as it happens with other cases of gender violence outside the virtual environment.

In addition, to approach the work theme is urgent to recognize that women face the challenge of dealing with work and the responsibilities in addition to take care of children and of the household itself, many times without the due support of public policies, employers or partners. Therefore, it is of vital importance to consider te singular way in which women are inserted in such reports of suffering, burn out and wear, analyzed here.

It is highlighted, still, that poor citizens tend to be affected in distinct forms by the neoliberal rationality, once that policies that aim at reducing the size of the State and intensifying the responsibility of individuals for all their own social-economical vulnerabilities, frequently, lead to cuts in essential social services (Dardot & Laval, 2017; Han, 2015).

Thus, by considering the role of speeches present in the memes and their relation with the production of the cyberspace, it has become evident that the issue of social-spacial inequalities is essential in facing the conditions of suffering daily exposed in the virtual environment. According to what was highlighted by Milton Santos (2022), the world is configured as a group of possibilities that depend on the opportunities provided by the places for their performance. In this sense, there is no other way to imagine possible paths that are not putting

Marketing & Tourism Review • Belo Horizonte - MG - Brazil • v. 9, n.1 , 2024
NEECIM TUR • Center for Studies and Strategies in Integrated Marketing and Tourism Communication •
UFMG

the human being in all its diversities of conditions, at the center of the alternatives, to break this scenario of trivialization of the discuss with work and with the everyday up, at last, is life itself.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of analyzing the sharing of Instagram memes from the production of the cyberspace and with content related to the act of working and traveling themselves had as main purpose to approach the role of such memes in the expression of the influence of an emergent neoliberal subjectivity. Therefore, to investigate such speeches in a reflective form under the light of the social-spacial discussion has revealed meaningful to the advance of the comprehensions on tourism and the imaginary that such phenomenon is capable of producing in the virtual environment.

In face of this, the results corroborate that, contemporaneously, the narratives of sadness, stress and burn out are abundant in the work relations. There is also a steep competition and impoverishment of the bonds between the workers. Therefore, the memes have shown to be a useful tool for the analysis of expression, both conformist as well as fighting regarding such social chart.

The majority of the analyzed categories, even considering a modest sample, has revealed that traveling and touristic leisure play a significant role as an eager in face of the discuss with the everyday and the work relations. Such inclination was promptly incorporated by many tourism service provides in their speeches of marketing on social media. Reports of content with the everyday work were scarce, with the majority of the memes resulting in vents and critical positioning within such relations.

Regarding tourism, as one of the greatest points of frustrations, the lack of financial resources to travel was presented, point that originated many

memes with jokes about debts and extreme solutions. However, although money has shown to be one of the main obstacles for the fulfillment of such oppositions to the wear at work, other speeches were identified that which attributed feelings to blame the idleness and the rest, in a way that such prohibitions have also been shown in a subjective order and not only material.

The potential of the memes in reflecting several vents aligned to the theme and to the theoretical reference has shown to be very fruitful. However, even considering that the dynamics of communication allow several critical manifestations contrary to the neoliberal logic and have demonstrated satisfaction in some of the discussions through the language of the memes, there are still questioning about up to what point such speeches are capable of generating mobilizations. Or, on the contrary, whether they end up soothing and re-affirming realities through the collective identification and trivialization of the circumstances that internet users, in an apathetic way, conceive as already natural.

In face of the obscurities in the algorithm logic of the virtual platforms, it is questioned whether how much of such spaces of production and circulation of memes is not already also considered a modern work category, which demands performances focused on generating data to the commerce of major technology companies. Anyway, it is undeniable that the memes allow a reconfiguration in the protagonisms of speech by the possibility of highlighting claims that, previously, would be easily silenced, in addition to offering shares that spread collectives voices in a context of weakening bonds.

Therefore, the ability of memes to confront hegemonic narratives of romanticism in the productivity excess should not be underestimated. Furthermore, we still know that technology is capable o bringing several ambiguous transformations from the social well-being point of view, in a way that it's up to us, tourism researchers, to appropriate ourselves from such tools to, primarily, get to know their mechanisms and possibilities and, therefore,

search to submit them to the critical and reflexive use, based on ethical and socially fair values.

On the limitations and recommendations for future researches, certainly, the results here discussed may be enriched with studies that analyze distinct social groups, by the gender cut, race and varied social-economical profiles, in addition to gathering memes in digital platform different from Instagram, also aiming at exploring categories with broader themes. Regarding future researches, it is still recommended exploratory studies with memes from other countries, which would allow deepening in such discussion in a global sense, in addition to the possibility of analysis that deepen in the comments and reactions generated by the memes that are part of such theme with the purpose of approaching other dimensions of such phenomenon.

REFERENCES

Albuquerque, M. C. B., de Almeida Barros, A. E., & Ferreira, L. V. F. (2022). Uso das Capacidades Dinâmicas–Análise da Presença Online das Agências de Turismo Receptivo. Revista Turismo em Análise, 33(2), 308-327. https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1984-4867.v33i2p308-327

Antoun, H. (2015). Para uma Internet política das subjetivações. *Revista Eco Pós*, *18*(2). https://doi.org/10.29146/eco-pos.v18i2.2278

Antoun, H. (2016). Conversação, Mediação e Transformação na cultura da Rede. *Logos*, *23*(2). https://doi.org/10.12957/logos.2016.27516

Antoun, H., & MALINI, F. (2013). *A internet e a rua: ciberativismo e mobilização nas redes sociais*. Porto Alegre: Sulina.

Bardin, L. (2006). *Análise de conteúdo*. Lisboa: Edições 70.

Bentes, I. (2015). *Mídia-Multidão: estéticas da comunicação e biopolíticas*. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X.

Blackmore, S. J. (2000). *The Meme Machine* (2nd ed., vol. 25 of Popular science). Oxford, UK: OUP Oxford. ISBN 019286212X, 9780192862129.

Bruno, F. (2006). Dispositivos de vigilância no ciberespaço: duplos digitais e identidades simuladas. *Revista Fronteiras*, *8*(2), 152-159.

Bruno, F. G., Bentes, A. C. F., & Faltay, P. (2019). Economia psíquica dos algoritmos e laboratório de plataforma: mercado, ciência e modulação do comportamento. *Revista Famecos*, 26(3), e33095-e33095. https://doi.org/10.15448/1980-3729.2019.3.33095

Buckingham, D. (2007). *Crescer na era das mídias eletrônicas*. São Paulo: Edições Loyola.

Castells, M. (2005). *A sociedade em rede* (Vol. 1, No. 6). São Paulo: Paz e terra.

Chen, C. (2012). The creation and meaning of internet memes in 4chan: Popular internet culture in the age of online digital reproduction. *Habitus*, 3, 6–19.

Cruz, R. D. C. A. D. (2003). *Introdução à geografia do turismo*. São Paulo: Editora Roca.

Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2017). A nova razão do mundo: ensaio sobre a sociedade neoliberal. São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial.

Dawkins, R. (1976). *The selfish gene*. New York, Oxford University Press.

Dynel, M. (2016). "I has seen image macros!" Advice animals memes as visual-verbal jokes. *International Journal of Communication*, *10*, 29. Recuperado de https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/4101

Foucalt, M. (1996). *Microfísica do Poder*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal.

Foucault, M. (1999). *As palavras e as coisas*. São Paulo: Martins.

Foucault, M. (2008). *A arqueologia do saber*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária.

Fratucci, A. C. (2000). Os lugares turísticos: territórios do fenômeno turístico. *GEOgraphia*, 2(4), 121-133. https://doi.org/10.22409/GEOgraphia2000.v2i4.a13390

Fratucci, A. C. (2014). Turismo e território: relações e complexidades. *Caderno Virtual de Turismo, 14*(1), 87-96. ISSN 1677 6976

Freire-Medeiros, B., & Lages, M. P. (2020). A virada das mobilidades: fluxos, fixos e fricções. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais, 123*, 121-142. https://doi.org/10.4000/rccs.11193

Freire-Medeiros, B., Telles, V. D. S., & Allis, T. (2018). Apresentação: Por uma teoria social on the move. *Tempo Social*, *30*, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.11606/0103-2070.ts.2018.142654

Gastal, S. (2005). *Turismo, imagens e imaginários*. São Paulo: Aleph, 147-160.

Gibson, W. (2019). *Neuromancer (1984)*. In C. Greer, Crime and Media: A Reader (pp. 86-94). London: Routledge.

Haesbaert, R. (2004). *O mito da desterritorialização: do" fim dos territórios" à multiterritorialidade*. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil.

Han, B. C. (2015). *Sociedade do cansaço*. São Paulo: Editora Vozes Limitada.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A produção capitalista do espaço*. São Paulo: Annablume.

Hine, C. (2011). *Etnografía virtual*. Catalunya: Editorial uoc.

Instituto Locomotiva (2022). O abismo digital no Brasil. Como a desigualdade de acesso à internet a infraestrutura inadequada e a educação deficitária limitam nossas opções para o futuro. *Pricewaterhouse and Coopers (PwC), Instituto Locomotiva*. Recuperado de https://www.pwc.com.br/pt/estudos/preocupacoes-ceos/mais-temas/2022/O_Abismo_Digital.pdf

Internetlab, C. R. (2017). *Violências contra mulher na internet: diagnóstico, soluções e desafios*. Contribuição conjunta do Brasil para a relatora especial da ONU sobre violência contra a mulher. Recuperado de https://www.internetlab.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Relatorio_ViolenciaGenero_ONU.pdf

Lefebvre, H. (1981). *Critique de la vie quotidienne: Tome 3, De la modernité au modernisme, Pour une métaphilosophie du quotidien*. Paris, L'Arche.

Lemos, A. (2008). *Mídia locativa e territórios informacionais*. Estéticas tecnológicas. São Paulo, SP: Educ.

Lévy, P. (2007). *Cibercultura*. São Paulo: Editora 34.

Lippold, W., & Faustino, D. (2022). Colonialismo digital, racismo e acumulação primitiva de dados. *Germinal: marxismo e educação em debate*, *14*(2), 56-78.

Marra, G. A., & dos Santos, B. R. (2015). Repercussões das Redes Sociais na Subjetividade de usuários: uma revisão crítica da literatura. *Temas em Psicologia*, *23*(4), 913-927. http://dx.doi.org/10.9788/TP2015.4-09

Mbembe, A. (2018). *Crítica da Razão Negra*. São Paulo: Editora N-1.

Mbembe, A. (2016). Necropolítica. *Arte & ensaios*, *2*(32), 122-151. https://doi.org/10.60001/ae.n32.p122%20-%20151

Milner, R. M. (2013). Pop polyvocality: Internet memes, public participation, and the Occupy Wall Street movement. *International journal of communication*, *7*(34). Recuperado de https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1949/1015

Miltner, K. M. (2014). "There's no place for lulz on LOLCats": The role of genre, gender, and group identity in the interpretation and enjoyment of an Internet meme. *First Monday*, *19*(8). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v19i8.5391

Prasad, B. D. (2008). Content analysis. *Research methods for social work*, *5*, 1-20. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.1748.1448

Recuero, R. (2012). O capital social em rede: Como as redes sociais na Internet estão gerando novas formas de capital social. *Contemporânea Revista de Comunicação e Cultura*, *10*(3), 597-617. https://doi.org/10.9771/contemporanea.v10i3.6295

Ribeiro, L. N., & Heinen, L. R. (2023). Para uma crítica feminista ao neoliberalismo: a socialização do trabalho doméstico. *Revista Brasileira de Sociologia do Direito*, *10*(1), 52-79. https://doi.org/10.21910/rbsd.v10i1.558

Rowe, J. (2015). "I've Fallen and I Can't Get Up," a Basic Primer for Caregivers to Understand Falls in Persons With Dementia, Alzheimer's Disease, and Cognitive Impairment. *Home Health Care Management & Practice*, *27*(3), 126-134. https://doi.org/10.1177/1084822314559833

Safatle, V., Silva, N., Jr., & Dunker, C. (2020). *Neoliberalismo como gestão do sofrimento psíquico*. São Paulo: Autêntica.

Santos, M. (2002). *A natureza do espaço: técnica e tempo, razão e emoção* (Vol. 1). São Paulo: Edusp.

Santos, M. (2022). *Por uma geografia nova: da crítica da geografia a uma geografia crítica* (Vol. 2). São Paulo: Edusp.

Shifman, L. (2014). The cultural logic of photo-based meme genres. Journal of visual culture, 13(3), 340-358. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412914546

Silva, T. (2020). *Racismo Algorítmico em Plataformas Digitais: microagressões e discriminação em código*. Comunidades, algoritmos e ativismos digitais: olhares afrodiaspóricos, 121-135.

Soares, R. A. M. D. C., Albuquerque, T. V. D., Mendes-Filho, L., & Alexandre, M. L. (2022). Revisão sistemática da produção científica brasileira sobre turismo e tecnologia da informação e comunicação (TIC). *Revista Brasileira de Pesquisa Em Turismo*, 16, e-2629. https://doi.org/10.7784/rbtur.v16.2629

Souza, J., Mendes Filho, L., & Marques Júnior, S. (2022). Marketing de conteúdo digital como influenciador no processo de planejamento de viagens: Uma análise a partir do Technology Acceptance Model estendido. *Marketing & Tourism Review*, *8*(2). https://doi.org/10.29149/mtr.v8i2.7357

Urry, J., & Sheller, M. (2006). *The new mobilities paradigm*. Environment and Planning A, 38(2), 207-226.

Urry, J., & Larsen, J. (2022). *O olhar do turista 3.0*. Edições Sesc SP.

Werneck, A. (2019). Política e ridicularização: uma sociologia pragmática da "graça" da crítica em cartazes das "Jornadas de Junho". Interseções. Revista de Estudos Interdisciplinares, 21(21-3). https://doi.org/10.12957/irei.2019.47254

Werneck, A. (2020). Graça em tempos de desgraça? A jocosidade como operador da crítica nos memes na pandemia. *DILEMAS: Revista de Estudos de Conflito e Controle Social*, 1-16.

Williams, A. (2020). Black memes matter:# LivingWhileBlack with Becky and Karen. *Social Media+ Society*, 6(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051209810

Yoon, I. (2016). Why is it not just a joke? Analysis of Internet memes associated with racism and hidden ideology of colorblindness. *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*, 33(1).

Zuboff, S. (2023). *The age of surveillance capitalism*. In Social Theory Re-Wired (pp. 203-213). Routledge.