

# Click farm platforms

An updating of informal work in  
Brazil and Colombia

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## ABSTRACT

The article analyses work on click farm platforms in Brazil and Colombia. It argues that work on these platforms updates and renews the historical informality of work in Latin America. Drawing on click farm ethnography, worker interviews and digital ethnography on WhatsApp and Facebook groups and Youtube channels, the research highlights: first, the cultural marks of Brazil and Colombia in the interactions between workers, typical of Latin American digital culture; second, the role of Youtubers as skill makers, responsible for the initiation of workers into click farm platforms and the circulation of neoliberal and entrepreneurial ideology; third, practices and discourses relating to reselling accounts, photos and bots as a new version of the historical resale markets in the region; and fourth, the boundaries between informality and illegality at work on click farm platforms. The article argues that, in addition to informal work that preceded and is connected to work on click farms, informality gains new dimensions with work on click farms, with the platformisation of labour representing an articulation between the old informality and new market practices and infrastructures.

## KEY WORDS

Click farm, platform labour, Latin America, Brazil, Colombia

## Introduction

The expression 'gig economy' has been used to understand the growing use of digital platforms to carry out work activities (Woodcock & Graham, 2019). However, this word has a Eurocentric origin. It originates from the 2008 crisis in Europe, in which more people started to undertake gig work. However, the gig economy could be seen as a historic norm of the economy in Latin America. Informal work is the characteristic feature, not the bug, of the Latin American working class (Muñoz, 2017). It was the ordinary state of most workers before the emergence of digital technologies. What is new is the subordination of workers to digital platforms and their mechanisms (Poell, Nieborg & Van Dijck, 2019) in the context of the platformisation of labour (Casilli & Posada, 2019). Thus, platform labour intensifies and renews the old informality of work through new modes of control and exploitation. The interrelationships between the so-called 'old' informality and the 'new' platform labour intensify with the addition of new layers.

The literature on platform labour (e.g. Howcroft & Bergvall-Kareborn, 2018; Vallas & Schor, 2020; Casilli, 2021) has suggested many typologies of digital labour platforms. In general, workers may work on the streets or based in their homes through digital platforms. Among the platforms, there are the so-called 'micro-work platforms' (Casilli, 2019; Gray & Suri, 2019; Roberts, 2019). The labour in these Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms accelerates the platformisation of labour through the process of 'taskification of labour' and the production of data for automation. On these platforms, workers perform data tasks in a fragmented way. The best known are platforms where workers are data annotators, such as Amazon Mechanical Turk, Appen and Lionbridge.

There is a geopolitics of micro-work platforms, with most workers located in the Global South, especially in Latin America (Grohmann & Araújo, 2021; Miceli & Posada, 2021). In Brazil, around 50 micro-work platforms are operating in the country (Braz, 2021). According to Phil Jones (2021:13), 'micro-work truly represents not the phoenix of the South but a further twist in our planetary crisis of work'. Thus, micro-work platforms represent 'the sum of the same processes of sluggish growth, proletarianisation and declining labour demand that have ballooned the informal sectors of countries such as India, Venezuela and Kenya' (Jones, 2021:13).

One lesser-known type of micro-work platform is the click farm platform. Click work platforms are web-based platforms where workers are paid to click, follow and like accounts on social media platforms – Instagram, TikTok and Youtube, among others. The clients of these platforms are influencers, politicians, celebrities and organisations that want to boost their social media accounts. Click farm platforms promise 'real followers' to their customers. And they outsource these tasks to workers for less than a penny per task (Grohmann et al., 2022). They also act as parasite platforms in relation to the infrastructures of social media platforms, that is, in 'platform tree' (Van Dijck, 2021). In this way, workers are forced by the click farm platforms to scam social media platforms (Grohmann et al., 2022).

Most click farm platforms are located in Southeast Asia (Lindquist, 2018; Ong & Cabanes, 2019; Lindquist, 2021) and Latin America. Thus, they are predominantly found in 'peripheral platform capitalism' as an expression of the world of work in the Global

South and a specific type of contemporary work and workers. In some ways, click farms are one of the biggest expressions of asymmetries and inequalities in the international division of labour in relation to the platform economy. Platform labour does not work the same everywhere (Graham & Anwar, 2019). Click farm platforms connect low-tech workers from the periphery, considered unskilled or hidden (Raval, 2021), to the infrastructure and logic of social media platforms, generally from the North. The literature on click farms oscillates between connections with the disinformation industry (Ong & Cabanes, 2019) and illicit digital economies (Lindquist, 2021). The accent is on the creation and circulation of fake profiles as an integral and central part of the digital economy, as followers' factories. Lindquist (2021) even speaks of click farms as 'impostor infrastructure'. The point of view of work – and workers – in click farm platforms has not yet been sufficiently explored in the literature in this area.

This article is part of broader research on the present and future of workers in the Global South, in which Brazil and Colombia are prominent countries. Click farms emerged in the region in the second half of the 2010s, but their use intensified among workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Brazil presents a unique scenario in the world in relation to click farms, because it is related to an internal market of production and consumption. Colombia is an example of what happens in other Latin American countries, connected to a broader market globally. The main click farm platforms in Brazil are GanharNoInsta, Dizu, FarmaSocial and SigaSocial, all based in Brazil, in cities such as Goiânia, in Goiás State and Santa Rosa, in the Rio Grande do Sul State. In Colombia, the main click farm analysed is SEOsprint, a Russian platform. Both cases are connected by the issue of informal work that both precedes the emergence of digital platforms and presents new dimensions with click farms.

This article argues that click farm platforms update and renew the historic informality of work in Latin America. This happens through the history of these workers, with roots in informal work and the language and interaction of platform workers. In the context of high unemployment, workers find out about click farms through Youtube channels promising extra and easy income, selling courses and mentoring. This is the gateway to multiple markets on and off the platforms. This process involves selling and buying fake accounts and bots, with the possibility for a worker to resell followers to another worker (Grohmann et al., 2022). WhatsApp groups act as hubs for parallel markets, which challenge the borders of illegality, which are always blurred or unclear. This is in line with past research on informal work in Latin America (e.g. Pinheiro-Machado, 2017), but now with added layers in the case of platform labour.

The methodology involved ethnography on click farm platforms, digital ethnography on WhatsApp and Facebook groups, analysis of Youtube channels and interviews with workers between September 2021 and January 2022. All the research carried out with click farm platforms in Brazil and Colombia. All steps of digital research were conducted following the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR)'s Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0.<sup>1</sup> The multi-methodological strategy enabled a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://aoir.org/ire30/>

deeper understanding of the phenomenon, especially in the relationship between click farm platforms and informal work more generally.

This article analyses the relationship between click farm platforms and work informality in Brazil and Colombia in relation to four aspects: first, the cultural marks of Brazil and Colombia in the interactions between workers, typical of Latin American digital culture; second, the role of Youtubers as skill makers, responsible for the initiation of workers into click farm platforms and the circulation of neoliberal and entrepreneurial ideology; third, practices and discourses relating to reselling accounts, photos and bots as a new version of the historical resale markets in the region; and fourth, the boundaries between informality and illegality at work on click farm platforms.

## Culture and language of informal work

In Brazil, unlike the situation on microwork platforms in many other countries, knowledge of other languages is not required to work on click farms. In Brazil, click platforms are all Brazil-based, in Portuguese and located mainly in medium and small cities, with workers spread across the country. The main platforms are GanharNoInsta, Dizu and SigaSocial. In the rest of Latin America, platforms are more diffuse and may be foreign, with English being the predominant language. In Colombia and Venezuela, the main platform, SEOSprint, is Russian, and payment is in US dollars.

This means that Brazilian platforms were designed to consider the culture and language of Brazilian workers. The name of the 'GanharNoInsta' platform, means 'make money on Instagram'. Platforms promise workers that they can make money easily while using only social media. They also admit that while the money may seem very little, only quick tasks are involved. In SEOSprint, in addition to social media click tasks, other work activities are also available, similar to other micro-work platforms such as Captcha or transcription tasks. There are also other activities on Telegram. In SEOSprint, tasks are less automated in terms of algorithmic management (Woodcock, 2020) than GanharNoInsta and other Brazilian click farms. This is because the choice of a task for a worker is automated and with opaque rules on Brazilian platforms. On other platforms such as SEOSprint, available tasks appear in a manual list, like a forum.

Platforms are the workplace, but it is in Facebook and WhatsApp groups that the social class composition (Englert, Woodcock & Cant, 2020) of the click farm workforce becomes visible. It is there that workers exchange tips and produce emerging, contradictory, and entrepreneurial solidarities (Soriano & Cabanes, 2020; Soriano et al., 2020), and where they also advertise job vacancies and opportunities. This means that there is a mixture of mutual aid and competition amidst the struggle for economic survival.

In Brazilian groups, most of the vacancies advertised are more directly related to click farm platforms. In Colombian groups, there is a greater diversity of vacancies being advertised by workers, in sectors such as beauty, transcription/participation in surveys and other microtasks. There are also few details about these vacancies, with no mention of companies. The descriptions of these vacancies involve only estimations of what earnings might be and a very simplified description of the function. In both countries, the posts only describe the advantages of these tasks and vacancies.

A strategy used by workers in both countries is to publish screenshots of PayPal banking transactions to show other workers that transactions are secure, and, in the case of Colombia, these transactions are made in US dollars. These posts also denote that activities can take place in parallel with other jobs. A particularity of Colombia is that there are advertisements around topics such as cryptocurrencies, bitcoin and investments. Many of these posts refer workers to groups on Telegram specialising in these topics. Thus, there is also a role for digitised finance (Paraná, 2020) in updating informal work in the context of click farm platforms.

The research reveals a strong gender component in the social composition of click farm workers in Brazil and Colombia, in line with other research on home-based work and digital platforms (Altenried, 2020; Tubaro et al., 2022). That is, there is a combination of crowd work with care work and reproductive labour, intensified by platform labour. Women are the majority in WhatsApp and Facebook groups in Brazil and Colombia. Many of them lost their jobs during the pandemic and had to survive through click farm platforms, often with the help of their families (Posada, 2021). These are reports from two women interviewed: 'I ask for cell phones from husband and son to work with multiple devices at the same time', 'I was once a waste picker. With the pandemic, even that was competitive. I have two children to take care of and I need to work'.

In Colombian groups, many women ask for help and job referrals to get some income: 'help, I need financial freedom', 'I need to generate income, since my husband doesn't even give me a piece of gum.' The vulnerable way they present themselves when looking for tasks is very different from posts made by men, who do not ask for help, but always claim to be looking for 'something that is profitable.' Brazilian men expose their financial difficulties more, and also thank the platforms for the increase in payments: 'Thanks, GanharNoInsta. I see that I am evolving with the values. It's not easy, so don't ever give up. Go upstairs!'

There are cultural marks, from Latin America and specifically from Brazil and Colombia, in the language and interactions of click farm workers. This can be understood as an updating of entrepreneurial rationality (Dardot & Laval, 2013), as a 'neoliberalism from below' (Gago, 2017) in Latin America. The discourse is marked by a mixture of Catholic ethics (there are several thanks to God) with economic logic, revealing the everyday life of Latin American families. How this rationality appears in the discourses of click farm workers does not only demonstrate a connection with the economic field but is also related to family and religion.

WhatsApp and Facebook groups, in the context of click farm platforms, are also a place for updating ways of consuming and producing digital content, with language playing a central role. There is a production and circulation of meanings (Silverstone, 1999) in interactions between workers, which reinforce feelings of recognition and identification and occur both in content and in form. One of the main elements of language is the use of emojis and stickers in posts, sales and advertisements as a cultural aspect of the use of social media, especially WhatsApp in Latin America, where visual and audiovisual consumption is central (Pereira, Camargo & Parks, 2021). The use of these emojis serves both to generate feelings of identification, for example, hearts at the end of posts, and to reinforce elements of entrepreneurship and financial value. Most messages in WhatsApp groups have more pictures than texts. They also include social

media cards and audio. Emojis and stickers are also central elements in sales and reseller ads in WhatsApp groups, signalling issues such as opportunity and urgency.

Added to this is the circulation of popular sayings such as 'time is money' and phrases with emotional appeal: 'I will always want to turn your dreams into reality', 'the person who chooses whether they want to rest or earn money in their spare time'. These statements signify an approach to financial ideology through choices and dreams. There are also direct appeals to people's need for money: 'do you want to automate your sales and earn more than 4 thousand Reais [Brazilian money] like I did?', 'I will help you overcome the financial crisis that we are experiencing in Brazil'. The apparent solidarity with the other workers serves to reproduce a neoliberal ideology. Thus, the help only makes sense if it is to follow the meritocracy, but from the apparent proximity of another worker. For example, workers use expressions related to popular and informal imaginary, such as 'pay attention, my jewellery' to attract the attention of other people who want to buy beads: 'I have a good price, great quality, one of the best on the market', 'message my inbox'. Discourses about entrepreneurship also appear in the groups: 'imagine getting paid to do something you already do in your daily life', 'I will offer you a great tip for you to start entrepreneurship'.

Therefore, the form of emojis and the language typical of the informal and popular market in Latin America is combined with the discourse of entrepreneurship in the sense of circulation of entrepreneurial and neoliberal meanings among click farm workers. These languages signify a renewal of entrepreneurial rationality among workers and, at the same time, of the very language of informality in the context of click farm work. Another central element in this context is the Youtubers, who work as skill makers (Soriano & Panaligan, 2019), responsible for the initiation into click farm platforms and circulation of neoliberal and entrepreneurial ideology.

## Youtubers as skill makers

Latin American workers discover click farm platforms mainly through YouTube channels promising extra and easy money, 'learn how to make money on the internet'. YouTubers work as central links in updating the meanings of informality through click farms. If the WhatsApp and Facebook groups reveal the circulation of meanings around neoliberalism and entrepreneurship, those who are mainly responsible for activating these discourses are the Youtubers. They act as skill makers (Soriano & Panaligan, 2019) and are responsible for transitioning and providing informal learning to people who want to start working for click farm platforms. According to Soriano and Panaligan (2019:1), skill makers are 'specialist coaches who attract and train platform workers into this labour market and the skill-making economy, which is playing a crucial role in the local popularity and viability of platform labour'. Thus, these Youtubers are coaches responsible for initiating workers and transitioning them to an entrepreneurial mentality. Many Youtube channels feature imperative titles such as 'make easy money', 'make money fast' and 'make money passively'.

In Brazil, the main Youtuber is Sávio Augusto, who calls himself a 'digital entrepreneur'. He teaches tips and sells courses on working on click farm platforms. In Colombia, there is no single prominent channel. In general, in both countries, skill

makers are white men, aged between 20 and 40, who talk about topics such as entrepreneurship and digital marketing. The aesthetics of the videos relate to kitsch, with many colours, use of many fonts on the same card, trying to draw the attention of workers to earn extra and easy income. These Youtubers provide training, education and pedagogy, informally. They teach people how to work, adapt and repair fissures in platform practises (Ferrari & Graham, 2021). They also provide tutorials, mentorships and courses as a way of preparing skills for work, not for freedom (Freire, 2000), but to follow a neoliberal and entrepreneurial grammar, including training in the use of tools, software and techniques.

The most prominent words in Youtube videos are 'money', 'time', 'micro-task', 'payment' and 'dollar'. The content of the videos on Youtube is dedicated to explaining to workers how easy and simple it is to work on click farm platforms. One of the examples is: 'You need to dedicate yourself and invest time in this work as if you were in a company to get results'. Thus, the discourse relates the informality of click farm platforms to a regular job, in an aspirational work context (Duffy, 2016). The informality of click work thus feeds into more general social aspirations in a way that is contrasted with doing a formal job. The discourses of the Youtubers reinforce meanings that, if workers make an effort, they will get good results and a good amount of money: 'it's not easy, but if I did it, you can do it', 'it's boring, but it's worth it'.

On the other hand, some YouTube comments reveal feelings of gratitude and learning toward skill makers. Some Colombian comments are: 'Thank you for sharing this site to earn money. Greetings.' 'Friend, I'm in apprentice mode and I can't withdraw payment. I've been doing tasks for 1 month... How can I level up on the platform??'. 'Hello friend, these platforms are very good for those who want to earn at least a dollar a day for free'. Workers often call YouTubers 'friends' and ask for more tips to make more money on click farm platforms.

On the Brazilian channel, workers always reinforce that they can only earn money as a result of the efforts of the Youtuber, and also call him a 'friend': 'Congratulations, very good! I started using these platforms thanks to you, my friend, over a year ago. May God bless you for your work.' 'Hello Sávio, I started using these platforms on your recommendation.' 'Good morning, Sávio. You teach in an easy way, anyone can understand. You should record a course. I would be the first person to buy it. You explain very well, step by step. I'm very satisfied with your channel', 'I'm starting to work for these platforms today. Your videos are helping me to understand. You will still grow a lot in your life!', 'Sávio, I want to be your student in a more orderly way. Can you help me?' There are mentions of God and aspirational discourses, which are at the same time related to capitalism (Illouz, 2007) and platform practices (Poell, Nieborg & Duffy, 2021). Thus, the workers' comments reveal desperate quests for survival, a need to learn how to use platforms faster to make more money and a show of gratitude and recognition towards creators/skill makers. There are even children and teenagers asking for tips on working on click farm platforms.

The Youtube channels of these skill makers are the hub for the production and circulation of neoliberal and entrepreneurial ideology, in terms of training and mentoring. However, the reinforcement and spread of these discourses occur in WhatsApp groups. This means there are also skill makers in these groups, who



activate their discourses especially by selling ebooks to increase sales, providing mentoring on quick sales strategies, in addition to promising access to more than 30,000 groups, so they can sell social media accounts. In WhatsApp groups, workers announce that they have 'open mentorships', and ask those interested to send messages to their inbox.

An example is the ebook *How to Profit from Selling Instagram Followers: Simple, Easy, No-Investment Strategies to Turn Your Free Time into a Sales Machine*. It is authored by a skill maker present in many WhatsApp groups and is published by a company 'focused on training entrepreneurs and aspirants with a focus on services for social media'. The company states that its 'mission is to promote entrepreneurship simply and objectively. There are more than 5,000 students enrolled in our training'. The ebook states that 'all products and materials produced by the company are made for educational and informal purposes'. This confirms that skill makers mix neoliberalism from below and informality at work.

The ebook promises that Instagram will be a 'gold mine' for workers and that they will be able to sell their first social media accounts within hours. The material teaches how to put prices on accounts and how to publicise sales in WhatsApp groups. These tips include creating a professional Instagram profile, simulating being a PR agency and having at least 10,000 followers, to 'gain authority'. The ebook recommends that the worker positions himself as a company that specialises in selling followers and services for social media. The material also guides the worker to look for target audiences such as influencers, gamers, musicians and health workers: 'You need to understand potential customers in a smart and organised way'. There is a proliferation of phraseology in line with Silicon Valley discourse (Marwick, 2018), such as 'think outside the box', 'innovation', 'disruption' and 'see you at the top'. The ebook ends with an invitation for workers to join the WhatsApp group to 'learn strategies to further increase their income'.

All these strategies taught by skill makers are related to the sale of social media accounts. This is one of the parallel markets in the context of click farm platforms, as many workers use fake accounts to work (Grohmann et al., 2022). Then, there are several sellers and resellers of social media accounts in WhatsApp groups, boosted by skill makers. Informal commerce through resale is another element of informality renewed through click farm work.

## **Resale and informal work**

Latin America has a history of reselling products, which is an informal working-class practice. This ranges from toys – many from Paraguay (Pinheiro-Machado, 2017) – to cosmetics and beauty products (Abílio, 2011). According to Ludmila Abílio (2011), the resale of cosmetics in Brazil reveals the intense relationships between a female workforce, labour exploitation and capital accumulation. Furthermore, there are connections between brand/consumption and labour: 'they are resellers whilst also consumers of the products, taking on the sales risk without any guarantees' (Abílio, 2011: 99). Thus, the circulation of goods in informal and popular markets in Latin America has historically occurred through the resale of products.



Click farm platforms update resale on the platform labour through the sale and resale of fake accounts, photo packs and bots, transforming all workers into potential resellers, operating in the parallel markets that are on the edges of the click farms. The activities of skill makers and the circulation of messages in WhatsApp groups work to spread the messages of resellers and their 'visibility as labour' (Abidin, 2016). Therefore, click farm workers do not only work by clicking and liking the platforms, but also strengthen the entire parallel and informal circuit related to click farms. There are no click farms that do not involve reselling social media accounts in parallel markets.

WhatsApp plays a central role as an infrastructure (Van Dijck, 2021; Pereira, Camargo & Parks, 2021) in updating the informality of work. The vocabulary of 'resale' is updated through the sum of language/cultural brands, skill makers, neoliberal ideology and infrastructures. Some of the discourses are: 'come profit, come resell', 'you can now resell followers to all social media and offer your own value', 'extra income opportunity! Access our platform and become a great reseller', 'Make money promoting ads and earn up to R\$10,000 per month selling followers'. Resellers also promise gifts in case of a referral to new friends. In addition, they promise to 'reset' social media accounts that don't work ('bought it, tried it! If you get blocked, I'll reset it right away!').

The main resale objects are related to social media accounts, especially on Instagram. Resellers can sell accounts, photo packs and followers. The price is higher if the followers are from Brazilian accounts/names. If the followers come from accounts considered 'foreign', they cost less. Resellers also sell social media accounts, mostly of women, but also meme pages. Accounts are more expensive if they have many followers and lots of photos. Reseller-workers sell photo packs, mostly of women, and promise that they are neither celebrities nor bloggers. This means that the resale of accounts, photos and followers works in an articulated way to boost multiple social media accounts. Thus, the resale around click farm work is related to the economy and infrastructure of the platforms (Van Dijck, 2021; Poell, Nieborg & Duffy, 2021).

Being a reseller in the click farm platform circuit means being inside a work and commerce process, and, from the workers' point of view, an opportunity to earn money. This circuit is peripheral, informal and outside the platform labour, although it is part of the same context, as these work activities only exist because of the social media platforms. The circuit tends towards infinity as workers are always called upon to also be resellers. One of the ads states: 'make money from Instagram, TikTok, Youtube and other social media. Make money posting ads and earn up to R\$10,000 per month selling followers.' Other ads stated, 'Work with us and make a profit! You can use it for your own use or for resale'. 'Come resell with us, we have the best prices in Brazil'. Thus, all workers are potential resellers. This explains the high circulation of advertisements in all groups, as people can only earn money through reselling activities. As an ad for a woman worker-reseller said: 'No experience needed. Even a nine-year-old with no experience could do this job.' Some discourses appeal to emotions to boost workers' resales: 'Hello, are you sad? Are your resales weak? Do you feel unhappy? This is complicated, isn't it? But wait, I have a new solution. With our disclosures, you can boost your sales 100%'.

Credibility, authority and trust are central arguments for reselling social media accounts. One of the ads said that, with more followers on Instagram, people can have

more credibility and authority: 'Be more credible on Instagram! Increase your followers! Packages from 3 reais'. In addition, building solidarity and competition among workers (Soriano & Cabanes, 2020) is related to trust, also through informal circuits. Some ads state: 'Follow the list of trusted Instagram account resellers with experience in the business', 'We do not recommend buying from anyone not on the list as we do not know if they are trustworthy or honest'. This shows that workers try to protect each other against potential fraud or scams (Grohmann et al., 2022).

Thus, the resale of social media accounts is an expression of the updating of the informality of work in Latin America in the context of the platformisation of labour. These worker-resellers, therefore, support, in informal and low-tech ways, major themes related to the creator economy (Cunningham & Craig, 2021) and disinformation-for-hire (Ong & Cabanes, 2019). One of the ads stated: 'I have Instagram for resale with themes related to reality shows, celebrities, K-pop'.

In addition, working in the circuits around click farm platforms is the gateway to a series of informal work activities with 'low-tech' characteristics. This is present in ads like: 'Come check out the best prices for followers and high quality! We work with Instagram, TikTok, Twitch and Facebook. And we also sell likes, comments, views on IGTV, Reels and lives. We also resell Netflix accounts and unlimited internet!'. This produces a mix of platform labour and a legacy of work in Latin America related to '*viração*' (Franco, 2021), which means a 'lateral mobility between a series of contingent activities marked by instability and inconstancy, as well as between legal and illegal expedients. It is a type of work fully dependent on 'making do' on a daily basis' (Silva, 2011: 59). This illustrates the blurred boundaries around illegality in click farm work.

### **Boundaries around illegality**

On one of the YouTube channels, one of the followers asks a skill maker: 'Is selling and buying followers a legal practice?'. The answer is: 'it's not illegal, but Instagram doesn't like it'. This is an example of the undefined borders between legality and illegality around click farm platforms, something that was already typical of popular economies in the global peripheries (Pinheiro-Machado, 2017), and which is intensified in the context of platform labour.

On the one hand, click farm platforms, such as GanharNoInsta and SEOsprint, discursively play with questions of the honesty/dishonesty of workers as a form of coercion so that they do not create fake profiles. They claim that they have fake account detection measures and that they do not allow such practices within the platforms. On the other hand, platforms like Instagram view such practices as breaking the rules and block suspicious accounts. Thus, workers who are blocked do not receive money from click farm platforms (Grohmann et al., 2022).

This scenario only exists because of the parallel and informal markets of resale of fake accounts, which supply the multiple profiles used by workers on the click farm platforms. The informal markets that exist in WhatsApp groups open perspectives beyond click farm work, which involves a kind of '*4.0 viração*', as workers resell and buy a little bit of everything, as an updated brand of informal work in the global peripheries. This ranges from selling unlimited internet and streaming service accounts to selling fake money. Therefore, click farm work can be the beginning of

illegal practices and markets (Pinheiro-Machado, 2017) and ways of survival through piracy and illegality.

Some of the ads in the groups are: 'I teach people how to take data from other people. It could be by phone number, email, name, or licence plate', 'selling credit cards on behalf of other people. It's not a cloned card, it's not a lost card. You pay \$120 and get a \$1300 card', 'I resell unlimited Netflix', 'Come and see my scams and scammers', 'Come and see my resellers at Bet365, Lacoste, unlimited internet and fake bank screens', 'Fake money promotion. Take advantage of the fact that the material is very good, with a low price'. Thus, there is an emergence of scams, fakes and fraud, as a deep layer of click farm work and platform labour.

In general, there are no major questions on the part of workers regarding the ethics around the creation and resale of fake accounts for social media platforms. They understand that this is a part of a quest for economic survival in the context of extreme unemployment. However, some workers question the legality and honesty of advertisements related to crimes and frauds.

## Conclusions

The central argument of this article is that the informality of work that is traditional in Latin America is being updated through work on click farm platforms and in their parallel markets. This is a continuation of historical practices in popular and informal markets on the global peripheries, which involves reselling and undefined borders around illegality and piracy. However, platform labour and its mechanisms – especially concerning social media platforms – add new and deep dimensions to the experience of workers in the Global South. All labour tasks have the ultimate purpose of boosting social media accounts. In this way, 'low tech' Latin American workers support activities, economies and infrastructure related to the platformisation of cultural production (Poell, Nieborg & Duffy, 2021). In Latin America, the creative economy depends on these informal, parallel and sometimes illegal markets with poorly paid workers who need to create many fake accounts to survive (Tubaro et al., 2022; Altenried, 2020).

This means that, on the one hand, click farm work is possible in Latin America due to the history of workers in informal work before the emergence of digital platforms. And, on the other hand, click farm work adds new contours to informality due to the very mechanisms of platformisation. This is evident in the role of Youtubers, in the infrastructure of click farms and social media platforms, and in the very existence of the market for selling and buying followers. The resale of fake accounts is a new version of other forms of resale/reseller in Latin America, and, at the same time, the synthesis of platform work.

Language is a central element of this updating and renewal of informal work through click farms, mixing coaching, entrepreneurial, aspirational and neoliberal rhetoric with forms (such as emojis) and slang typical of informal popular markets – such as street markets – in Latin America. The intense use of WhatsApp with emojis, stickers, audios and pictures relates to the consumption of digital culture in the region and creates a space that works as a hub for the production and circulation of neoliberal ideology. There are also Brazilian and Colombian specificities in the use of groups and platforms, such as the importance of cryptocurrencies in Colombia.

Youtubers are an important link in sustaining this ideology, as skill makers, and responsible for training, mentoring and initiation into the universe of click farm platforms and parallel markets. They also sell courses to teach people 'social media entrepreneurship' and how to earn extra income the easy way. Thus, Youtubers teach people to work in line with neoliberal ideology. Workers identify with these Youtubers. There are feelings of belonging and recognition; they treat them as friends and people who help them. Most Youtubers are male and white, and most consumers of videos are women and teenagers.

Resale is a central element, as it is at the root of Latin American informal markets, and takes on new contours in the context of platform labour. The word is used many times by workers, in a clear connection between the past and present of work. All workers are potentially transformed into resellers of fake accounts, followers, photos and bots, with advertisements spread across all groups. Resellers point to a type of '4.0 *viração*' on the part of click farm work, which begins with activities directly related to click farm platforms and paves the way for illegal and piracy practices.

The article contributes to studies on platform labour beyond the most studied sectors – such as ride-hailing and delivery – and shows what is old and new in work practices in Latin America, including in relation to the entire circuit around platforms and social media. Click farms are a synthesis of the deepening of labour platformisation towards more heteromation, fragmentation and taskification of work, in addition to the already well-studied micro-work platforms.

This is an exploratory and qualitative research. It did not attempt to quantify the scale of click farm workers in the region and it is not necessarily generalisable to other national contexts. In particular, there are specificities regarding click farm platforms in Brazil as they relate to an entire domestic market of consumers and workers, different from other click farms around the globe. There is, therefore, scope for future research which can examine click farm work in other parts of Latin America and deepen our understanding of what is distinctive about click farm work in Brazil compared with the global scenario in this industry.

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