



COMMUNICATION, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY ABOUT THE FOOD CULTURE OF BRAZILIANS ABROAD MEDIATED BY ICTS

**COMUNICAÇÃO, MIGRAÇÃO E DESENVOLVIMENTO:
UM ESTUDO SOBRE A CULTURA ALIMENTAR DOS
BRASILEIROS NO EXTERIOR MEDIADA PELAS TICS**

*COMUNICACIÓN, MIGRACIÓN Y DESARROLLO: UN ESTUDIO SOBRE
LA CULTURA ALIMENTARIA DE LOS BRASILEÑOS EN EL EXTRANJERO
MEDIADO POR LAS TIC*

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*COMMUNICATION, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY ABOUT THE FOOD CULTURE
OF BRAZILIANS ABROAD MEDIATED BY ICTS*

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about the relationship between communication, migration, and sustainable development, focusing on the commercialization of Brazilian food in virtual groups of migrants on Facebook. The objective was to analyze how these businesses articulate identity construction, belonging, and entrepreneurial strategies, in dialogue with the creative economy. In theoretical and methodological terms, a qualitative and exploratory approach was adopted, with systematic observation of six virtual groups formed by Brazilians residing abroad, selected based on their destination city and origin in Brazil. Content related to Brazilian food culture was examined, considering the frequency of posts, motivations, narrative and visual elements, interaction patterns, and comments. The results indicate that the commercialization of food goes beyond income generation, configuring itself as a communicational and cultural practice that strengthens identities, produces belonging, and sustains transnational ethnic microeconomies anchored in the 'immigrant ethos'.

Key words: Communication and migration; Food culture; Creative economy; Sustainable development; Brazilians abroad.

RESUMO

Este trabalho aborda a relação entre comunicação, migração e desenvolvimento sustentável, tendo como foco a comercialização de comida brasileira em grupos virtuais de migrantes no Facebook. O objetivo foi analisar como esses negócios articulam construção identitária, pertencimento e estratégias de empreendedorismo, em diálogo com a economia criativa. Em termos teórico-metodológicos, adotou-se uma abordagem qualitativa e exploratória, com observação sistemática de seis grupos virtuais formados por brasileiros residentes no exterior, selecionados a partir da cidade de destino e da origem no Brasil. Foram examinados conteúdos relacionados à cultura alimentar brasileira, considerando frequência das postagens, motivações, elementos narrativos e visuais, padrões de interação e recorrências. Os resultados indicam que a comercialização de comida vai além da geração de renda, configurando-se como prática comunicacional e cultural que fortalece identidades, produz pertencimento e sustenta microeconomias étnicas transnacionais ancoradas no 'ethos imigrante'.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação e migração; Cultura alimentar; Economia criativa; Desenvolvimento sustentável; Brasileiros no exterior.

RESUMÉN

Este trabajo aborda la relación entre comunicación, migración y desarrollo sostenible, centrándose en la venta de comida brasileña en grupos virtuales de migrantes en Facebook. El objetivo es analizar cómo estos negocios articulan la construcción de identidad, el sentido de pertenencia y las estrategias empresariales, en diálogo con la economía creativa. En términos teóricos y metodológicos, se adoptó un enfoque cualitativo y exploratorio, con observación sistemática de seis grupos virtuales formados por brasileños residentes en el extranjero, seleccionados en función de su ciudad de destino y su origen en Brasil. Se examinó el contenido relacionado con la cultura gastronómica brasileña, considerando la frecuencia de las publicaciones, las motivaciones, los elementos narrativos y visuales, los patrones de interacción y las recurrencias. Los resultados indican que la venta de comida va más allá de la generación de ingresos financieros, configurándose como una práctica comunicacional y cultural que fortalece identidades, produce sentido de pertenencia y sustenta microeconomías étnicas transnacionales ancladas en el 'ethos inmigrante'.

Palabras-clave: Comunicación y migración; Cultura gastronómica; Economía creativa; Desarrollo sostenible; Brasileños en el extranjero.

INTRODUCTION

The intensification of international migratory flows in recent decades has been accompanied by transformations in modes of communication, economic dynamics and forms of identity construction. Brazil is part of this scenario due to its history as a receiving country for migrants (immigration) and, since 1980, due to significant flows of Brazilians leaving to live abroad (emigration). In contemporary contexts, particularly through the mediation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), we observe the consolidation of transnational networks that articulate affection, economic, cultural and symbolic ties between territories of origin and destination.

It is in this scenario that the present article is situated¹. Our proposal is to analyze the intersections between communication, migration and sustainable development, taking as an empirical object the commercialization of Brazilian food in virtual groups of Brazilians abroad. The main objective is to analyze how businesses involving Brazilian food in Facebook groups composed of Brazilians residing in other countries articulate processes of identity construction, practices of belonging and entrepreneurial strategies, engaging with the logic of the creative economy. The aim is to understand how these practices operate at the interface between the symbolic and the material, contributing to the maintenance of transnational ties and income generation in migratory contexts with potential impacts on sustainable development.

¹ An extended abstract of this study was accepted for oral presentation at the V CIMDAB – International Congress on Migration and Brazilian Academic Diaspora, to be held in July 2026 at the University of Minho, Portugal. In this paper, we used artificial intelligence (AI) tools for help to text revision and to translate.



The hypothesis guiding this study is that the commercialization of Brazilian food in virtual migrant groups is not only an economic strategy for subsistence or income generation, but, within the framework of the creative economy, a driver of communicational and cultural practices related to sustainable development. These practices reinforce identity ties, foster senses of belonging and consolidate transnational social networks. It starts from the premise that, by mobilizing national symbols (colors, linguistic expressions, traditions and historical references) around food, entrepreneurs construct narratives that make their products unique and connect them to an “immigrant ethos”, transforming longing and memory into economic and symbolic assets.

The justification for the work lies, first and foremost, in the social and academic relevance of the topic. Despite the extensive research on migration and communication, studies that articulate, in an integrated way, digital communication, creative economy and immigrant entrepreneurship from the perspective of food practices are still incipient.

By focusing on food as both an element of identity and a marketing strategy, this article contributes to broadening the debate on the multiple dimensions of sustainable development associated with migration, shifting the focus beyond exclusively economic aspects to include cultural and symbolic dimensions. Furthermore, the research is justified by the current relevance of the phenomenon. The intensive use of digital social networks by migrant communities constitutes a fertile ground for observing contemporary dynamics of sociability and market dynamics.

From a theoretical-methodological point of view, this study adopts a qualitative approach which an exploratory nature. The theoretical framework used is interdisciplinary, privileging works in Communication and Migration, from a perspective of Cultural Studies and sustainable development, concepts of creative economy and immigrant entrepreneurship, as well as food from an anthropological perspective of food culture.

The primary data collection technique was systematic observation (Danna and Matos, 1999), adapted to the field of Communication and to the virtual environment. Based on criteria such as visibility, activity level, number of members and longevity, five public Facebook groups bringing together Brazilians in different cities abroad were selected: Dublin (Ireland), Montreal (Canada), Braga (Portugal), Brisbane (Australia) and Orlando (United States).



Systematic observation was conducted over a one-year period, from January 15, 2025, to January 15, 2026, with weekly manual monitoring. The focus was exclusively on content related to the marketing of food and/or food products associated with Brazil, regardless of format (text, photographs, illustrative cards, or short videos). Posts and their respective interactions were recorded in a protocol that included the date, format, full content, interactions and key points of attention. The analysis considered aspects such as frequency of publications, motivations, narrative and visual elements, as well as forms of interaction and recurring patterns.

1. COMMUNICATION, TECHNOLOGIES AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIGRATION CONTEXT

According to El-Hajji and Escudero (2017), communication theories, as an analytical approach, offer a powerful epistemological tool for exploring the symbolic, subjective, narrative, discursive and relational dimensions of migratory reality. Research developed within the field of Social Communication on international migratory processes is therefore already well established. Among these, the studies compiled by Cogo, El-Hajji and Huertas (2012; 2020) stand out. In general, and from a Cultural Studies perspective, these works examine migrant populations in relation to the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the social uses of media, focusing on: (1) the possibilities for constant and immediate communication with countries of origin; (2) the set of social relations created and maintained in host countries; (3) aspects of artistic, cultural and media production; (4) different media (alternative or traditional) as spaces for the construction and management of cultural identities; (5) processes of representation and discourse production; and (6) the various spaces and strategies through which practices of public belonging (in countries of origin and/or destination) are enacted, as well as their connections to citizenship processes and impacts on sustainable development.

These perspectives on migratory processes, examined through the lens of communication, ICTs, the production of meanings and cultural practices and symbolic resistance, have given rise to terms such as “digital migration”, “e-diaspora”, “digital diaspora”, “web diaspora” and “mediated transnationalism”, among others. In this context, the works of Diminescu (2020), Brinkerhoff (2009)



and, more recently, the editors of *The SAGE Handbook of Media and Migration* (Smets et al., 2019) are particularly relevant. In general, these scholars are about: (1) the transformations and innovative potential of diasporas, moving beyond binary perspectives such as cause and effect or mobility and settlement, particularly in relation to digital platforms and resources; (2) the connections between contemporary migration patterns and the use of mediated processes; (3) the relationships between media, migration and affect across political, cultural, social and imaginary domains; and (4) the implications of cross-border mobilities for the development of forms of global and developmental citizenship.

Regarding international migration involving Brazil, the country has historically been recognized as a destination for immigrants. The so-called “great migratory wave” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – during which approximately 4.5 million people entered the country, mainly from Europe, Japan and Arab countries – represents a significant milestone in this process. From the 1980s onward, however, Brazil began to be characterized as a country of emigration, with its citizens increasingly moving to the United States, European countries and Japan.

This is not to suggest that Brazilians did not emigrate previously, on the contrary. Population displacement is widely recognized as a constant form of social organization and an intrinsic characteristic of humanity across time and space. However, it was from the 1980s onward that more systematic flows of people from Brazil to other countries began to be recorded. Notably, as early as the 1970s, there was a movement of Brazilians toward Paraguay in search of land, driven by incentives from the local government, in what became known as the “brasiguaios” (Sprandel, 2010). In addition, political exiles began leaving the country from 1964 onward due to persecution under the Military Regime.

Currently, estimates from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty, 2024) indicate that approximately 4,9 million Brazilians live abroad. This figure is about three times higher than the number of international migrants who entered Brazil between 2010 and 2024, totaling about 1,7 million (OBMigra; MJSP, 2024). In 2015, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) ranked Brazil fifth among Latin American countries with the highest number of international emigrants, behind only Mexico, the Northern Triangle of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador),



Colombia and Puerto Rico (CEM; UPM, 2018).

This process of international emigration has significant impacts not only on forms of social organization and the living conditions of the groups involved, but, also, on sustainable development. In this study, we adopt the classic definition of sustainable development, as outlined in the Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, produced by the World Commission on Environment and Development and chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland. Published in 1987, the report defines sustainable development as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

In essence, sustainable development refers to a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional transformations are aligned and reinforce both present and future capacities to meet human needs and aspirations (Brundtland, 1987, n.p. – Our translation).

In fact, displacement is currently both a strategy for and an outcome of sustainable development (IOM, 2022). Data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (McAuliffe; Oucho, 2024) indicate that safe, orderly and regular migration is a driver of human transformation, generating significant benefits for migrants, their families and social networks, as well as for their territories of origin, destination and transit. Migration narratives have historically emphasized opportunities for positive change, particularly of an economic nature – the well-known “search for a better life” – while also highlighting resilience and coping strategies in the face of various challenges. In contemporary contexts, increasing attention has been given to the economic impacts of migration, alongside its social, cultural, political and environmental dimensions.

Migration has supported the development of international trade, diplomacy and peace, as well as helping to forge cultural ties and create sources of income abroad. In some countries, international migration has been an important policy tool in the process of ‘nation-building’, during a period of intensified international competition among states (McAuliffe; Oucho, 2024, p. 120 – our translation).

It is no coincidence that migration is considered a cross-cutting element in the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda. Sustainable Development Goal 10 – Reduced Inequalities – has in its target 10.7 “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”.



A concrete example of a direct transnational² impact on sustainable development is financial remittances, cash transfers that migrants send directly to their families or support networks in their countries of origin. In the case of Brazil, the country is the second-largest recipient of personal remittances in Latin America, behind only Mexico (IOM, 2010). Data from the Central Bank indicate that, in 2022, Brazil reached a record level of remittance inflows, totaling US\$ 4.7 billion. In recent years, these figures have tended to stabilize. In 2025, US\$ 4.22 billion were received and US\$ 1.69 billion were sent (Brasileiros..., 2026).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the growing importance of remittances sent by Brazilians living abroad contributed to raising state awareness of emigrants' demands and to the development of the first public policies aimed at this population (Ushijima, 2012). One notable initiative is the "Remittances Project" developed by Sebrae, which, among other actions, established a financial education program for emigrants and their families to support investment decision-making in Brazil (Castro, 2015). In addition, in developing economies such as Brazil, the World Bank considers remittances to function as a "lifeline", often exceeding the volume of official development assistance (Pirlea et al., 2020). This issue is also addressed in Sustainable Development Goal 10, target 10.c, which aims to reduce the transaction costs of migrant remittances to less than 3% and eliminate remittance corridors with costs exceeding 5% by 2030.

Another emblematic example in migration studies is the concept of "brain circulation". It initially emerged as a critique of the term "brain drain", widely used until the late twentieth century to describe the departure of academics and skilled professionals from developing countries to developed nations. This earlier concept framed migration (particularly of highly qualified individuals) as unidirectional, permanent and definitive, benefiting destination countries while disadvantaging countries of origin, as it implied a loss of human capital essential to national development (Brum, 2024).

Thus, the notion of "brain circulation" understands the knowledge generated through such migratory flows as mutually beneficial for countries of origin, destination and beyond, with the potential to generate value within a framework of sustainable development. This perspective is grounded in the context of the knowledge and information society, characterized by economic and cultural globalization, advances

2 This proposal understands the concept of transnationalism as a condition in which, despite great physical distances and the presence of international borders, certain types of relationships have been globally intensified, building, in the case of migration, a social field that unites countries of origin, destination and others that mark the trajectory of displacement (Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992).

in ICTs and developments in transportation that reshape traditional geopolitical dynamics (Castells, 1999). In this context, it is no longer necessary for such migrants to return permanently to their countries of origin; rather, maintaining active and continuous ties is sufficient to foster technical cooperation, the transfer of financial and technological resources and the implementation of scientific and technological development projects (Santos, 2021).

2. CREATIVE ECONOMY AND MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP: CORRELATIONS

From a chronological and didactic perspective, the term “creative economy” can be traced back to the 1990s, within a post-industrial context marked by globalization, the advancement and widespread adoption of ICTs and the shift in production processes from goods to the service sector. It is a broad and fluid concept that, in general terms, is grounded in the use of creativity, intellectual capital, knowledge and cultural expressions to generate value, stimulate economic activity and contribute to sustainable development.

The creative economy initially emerges yet another metaphor to describe the transformations of contemporary capitalism, which, in turn, is reorganized through the inclusion of productive factors of a symbolic nature, a set of ideas and values that qualify the economy (Silva, Vieira and Franco, 2019, p. 19 – Our translation).

This approach represents an alternative way of valuing and qualifying activities that were previously viewed solely from the perspective of artistic and cultural expression, recognizing their broader importance and impact on key social dimensions such as cultural diversity, economic sustainability, innovation and social inclusion (as discussed in the previous section, all of which are closely linked to migration and sustainable development). Its practical application involves the creation and development of products, services, or experiences by individuals or groups inspired by their cultures and territories of origin, with significant potential for generating income and employment, as well as improving quality of life and well-being.

The creative economy and entrepreneurship maintain a dynamic and complementary relationship. Broadly speaking, it is through entrepreneurial activity – and its core elements, such as innovation, strategy, investment and training – that a “creative idea” is transformed into a concrete business with market value and income-generating potential. In the context of international migration, this relationship becomes more complex and is often conceptualized through terms



such as “international ethnic enclave entrepreneurship”, “ethnic entrepreneurship” or “immigrant entrepreneurship” (Cruz and Falcão, 2016a; 2016b). It is also associated with business models referred to as “ethnic businesses” (Noronha, 2013), as well as the notions of “ethnic markets” and “nostalgic markets”³ (Vieira, 2014).

In general, these concepts refer to a phenomenon centered on the creation and management of businesses by individuals, families or groups organized through various forms of enterprise that settle permanently in other countries. This encompasses a wide range of activities, from transnational entrepreneurship and international companies (initiatives led by individuals who migrate from one country to another while maintaining economic activities in both origin and destination contexts) to self-employed entrepreneurs operating within micro, small and medium-sized business frameworks (Cruz and Falcão, 2016b).

The latter can be understood in relation to situations of necessity faced by displaced individuals in host countries, which lead them to “create new forms of subsistence based on their knowledge and skills acquired throughout their lives, developing new forms of independent work” (Gomes; Le Bourlegat, 2020, p. 322). It is precisely this model of immigrant entrepreneurship that is of particular interest in this study. In contexts of necessity or as a means of labor market insertion in the host country,

the migrant is encouraged to transform their social and economic condition by themselves (...) Thus, for the migrant, the alternative of entrepreneurship aligns with reworking personal and cultural attributes of their country of origin, in which their personal narrative becomes unique to their ‘product’ (Zanforlim; Amaral, 2019, p. 3 – Our translation).

Not all forms of immigrant entrepreneurship, whether based on self-employment, autonomy, or control over the production process, necessarily constitute businesses within the creative economy. Beyond elements such as intellectual capital, knowledge and cultural expression, several additional dimensions are essential: (1) a connection to the territory of origin (including identity and memory); (2) integration into the host society and intercultural dynamics; (3) processes of resistance, recognition, visibility and belonging; and (4) contributions to economic development through creativity. Similarly, classifications such as “ethnic market” or “ethnic economy” should be

3 T.N.: In Portuguese, the correct term is “mercado da saudade”. However, due to the specific meanings of the word “saudade”, we consider “nostalgic market” to be an appropriate expression in English.

approached with caution, as explain Machado (2011, p. 128), due to a “complex universe that is, to some extent, obscured by the uncritical use of the concept”.

Moreover, as argued in previous research, such initiatives also face challenges common to more traditional businesses, including long production cycles, difficulties in measuring revenue and uncertainty regarding financial returns.

In a creative economic context, such businesses reinforce the characteristics of uncertainty regarding the behavior of demand and the sales and supply cycle (or production, in the case of handcrafted products), revealing aspects much more related to skilled labor than to the intensity of goods and capital (...). Furthermore, it requires experience and negotiation skills from those involved, as well as access not only to digital media, but also to dissemination and distribution channels whose network structure proves fundamental (Escudero, p. 161, 2022 – Our translation).

3. FOOD AS AN ELEMENT OF TERRITORIAL IDENTITY

Anderson’s (1993) concept of the “imagined community” emerges from an analysis of how nationalism spread from Europe to other parts of the world, shaping modern nation-states and replacing religious or dynastic ties with forms of shared identity, often grounded in common historical references and characteristics. In essence, the nation is defined as a socially constructed community (limited, albeit by flexible boundaries and sovereign) imagined by individuals who perceive themselves as part of a collective, even without knowing most of its members. In this context, food, understood within a broad framework of food culture, emerges as a relevant element of identity, alongside others such as language, traditions, music, dance, folklore and religion, all of which contribute to a sense of belonging and distinction in relation to other groups.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify that food culture is understood here as “the set of representations, beliefs, knowledge and practices (whether inherited or learned) associated with food and shared by individuals within a given culture or social group” (Contreras, 2011, p. 129). In this sense, the term *food* is used in this study as an umbrella concept encompassing cuisine and gastronomy.

It is known that an element of identity (as well as cultural identities), in general, is not something fixed, innate, or biological; marked by difference, it is constructed, formed and transformed by a system of sociocultural representations and by the social context (Hall, 2005). In the case of contemporary international migrations, embedded in a postmodern logic, it becomes fragmented,



decentralized and hybrid, being constituted by interaction with the other and by the territory. In the complex web of distinct realities and experiences that constitutes the migratory process, since we can consider migration as displacement in objective and subjective space and time, it ends up becoming a reference, an anchor, providing sensations of recognition, memory stimuli, location and comfort in a transnational interface between countries and their social support networks, in the territories of origin, destination and transit.

This means that, in the case of migrants, reproducing and consuming typical dishes from their country of origin, in addition to reflecting “resistance to abandoning certain food practices, consists of the possibility of their re-signification in that other context (Rocha; Rial; Hellebrandt, 2013, p. 188 – Our translation)”. Besides, in the case of ventures or businesses based on food production, such as the approach of this work, when related to an “immigrant ethos”, it involves, in a certain way, feelings of “national pride” (Casado, Cruz, Falcão, 2020) and celebrations of origins.

In studying the role of Brazilian food among Brazilian immigrants in Greater Boston (USA), Kraieski (2015) recalls that many anthropological studies have already been dedicated to understanding the food practices of migrants in the countries to which they migrated, pointing to food as an expression of both identities and cultural differences.

Some of them consider food as an indicator of the degree of integration or the stage of adaptation of migrants to the new context, as protection against acculturation and the loss of cultural identity in the face of contact with other groups, or even as an expression of migrants learning a new way of life and acquiring new values (Karieski, 2015, p. 41-42 – Our translation).

And, like any element of identity, food is not unique or homogeneous. It reflects the cultural heterogeneity present throughout the Brazilian territory. “‘Brazilian food’, therefore, can include both rice and beans, consumed by many Brazilians, as well as pasta, roasted and stewed meats and even dishes marked by their regionality, such as feijão tropeiro (a type of bean stew) and chicken with okra” (Karieski, 2015, p. 42 – Our translation).

In the culinary market of Porto [in Portugal], just as there was room for Chinese food, there was a place dedicated to Brazilian food, namely to churrascarias (Brazilian steakhouses). What in Brazil is related to the culinary culture of a region (the south), becomes Brazilian as a whole in Portugal, Brazilian par excellence (Machado, 2011, p. 125 – Our translation).



The same applies when food is approached, as in this study, as a dimension of entrepreneurial activity or as a form of ethnic business, although it is essential to consider the diversity embedded in the concept of ethnicity. As Machado (2011, p. 121 – Our translation) notes, “under the label of ‘ethnicity’ are placed several processes of constructing differences, many of which are markedly distinct from one another [...]. The differences are different and using the same label to frame them can lead to confusion, misunderstandings and oversights”.

4. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

Adopting a qualitative and exploratory approach, this study develops an empirical research design based on systematic observation as the primary data collection technique. The procedures were guided by Danna and Matos (1999) and adapted to the specificities of the field (namely, the shift from psychology to communication) and to the research environment, transitioning from physical to virtual contexts, while maintaining the objectivity and planning recommended by the authors. The first step consisted of defining the objectives of the observation, regarding the following aspects:

1. Definition of observation periods and contexts: determining the duration, conditions and settings in which the observation would take place.
2. Mapping of target behaviors/actions: identifying which actions and behaviors would be observed and recorded.
3. Recording procedures: establishing the tools and criteria for documenting the data.
4. Monitoring of behaviors/actions: tracking analytical categories (or variables), such as frequency, content, format, narrative characteristics, and types of interaction generated.
5. Operationalization of the recorded data: analyzing the collected material based on the defined parameters.

Thus, we defined that systematic observation would be applied to Facebook groups that bring together Brazilians living abroad. Commonly referred to as “virtual communities” these spaces are formed around shared interests and identities. In the case of the groups analyzed, they are created and maintained by Brazilians residing abroad, with moderators responsible for overseeing the spaces, establishing rules of interaction and determining whether the groups are public or private, among



other functions. Participation is voluntary and open to users with access to the platform; members are not exclusively migrants but may also include individuals interested in migrating to or visiting the destination involved. Although their purposes are broad, these groups generally emerge from the need to exchange information related to everyday aspects of the migratory experience, such as documentation, travel arrangements, housing, education, employment and leisure activities.

The groups were selected based on the following criteria: (1) being public (ensuring visibility of information); (2) demonstrating consistent activity, with regular and updated posts (indicating frequency and interaction); (3) having more than 10.000 members (indicating significant participation); and (4) having been created at least five years prior (suggesting stability). It is important to note that the selected groups are organized around specific cities in the destination countries, as the buying and selling of food typically requires a degree of physical proximity for the delivery or acquisition of products. The observation period was established as one year, from January 15, 2025, to January 15, 2026. Accordingly, the study focused on the following groups:

Group	Foundation's year	Number of members	Link
Brasileiros em Dublin (Irlanda)	2011	102.700	www.facebook.com/groups/brasileirosemdublin
Brasileiros em Montreal (Canadá)	2008	57.100	www.facebook.com/groups/brasileirosemmontreal
Brasileiros em Braga (Portugal)	2019	36.300	www.facebook.com/groups/1297732263699576
Brasileiros em Brisbane (Austrália)	2016	32.900	www.facebook.com/groups/BrasileirosEmBrisbane
Brasileiros em Orlando (EUA)	2019	23.000	www.facebook.com/groups/872224970201310

Another methodological decision involved defining which actions and behaviors would be identified and recorded, as well as the procedures for data recording. Systematic observation was therefore conducted exclusively on posts related to the sale of food and/or food products associated with Brazil, regardless of format, including text, photographs, illustrative cards and Reels (short videos of up to one minute, recorded vertically). In addition to the content of the posts, interactions generated through comments were also analyzed. As a recording procedure, all content was manually transcribed into an analytical protocol (in Excel spreadsheet format), which included the following fields:

Posts' date	Shape	Content		Interaction	
		Full	Attention points	Full	Attention points

Regarding monitoring, all groups were observed on a weekly basis. During each observation cycle, all posts were reviewed and those relevant to the research objectives were selected and classified according to the established protocol. Systematic observation revealed that:

- Posts related to the sale of food and/or products associated with Brazil are present in all groups analyzed, constituting a recurring feature. In general, these posts involve the offering of made-to-order dishes and the promotion of restaurants, snack bars, mini-markets and stores specializing in Brazilian products. Posts requesting traditional Brazilian recipes or suggesting substitutions for ingredients unavailable in the destination country were also identified, as well as posts from individuals traveling from Brazil offering to bring specific items upon request.
- The frequency and motivation of posts are primarily influenced by three factors: (1) the need for producers (i.e., individuals who prepare, sell, or manage food-related businesses) to promote their products or services; (2) commemorative dates (e.g., Easter posts advertising chocolate eggs; Christmas posts promoting dishes such as roast pork with *farofa*, *panetone* and *rabanadas*); and (3) responses to specific demands (e.g., users asking who sells *coxinha* or where to find particular cuts of meat in the destination city, such as *picanha* or *panceta*).
- The connection to Brazil in the construction of post narratives is explicit. Visual elements such as the colors green and yellow, the Brazilian flag, Carnival symbols and representations of *Cristo Redentor* frequently appear, particularly in promotional cards. Similarly, expressions such as “our food”, “authentic Brazilian *feijoada*”, “*brigadeiros* just like at a children’s party”, “traditional Brazilian barbecue”, “genuine *tapioca* flour”, “to satisfy the longing for the taste of Brazil” or “*Balas de coco*: from Brazilian weddings to your home” are commonly used.
- The posts are primarily directed at Brazilians living in the respective cities; interaction with local populations or other nationalities through food-related exchanges is minimal. Exceptions occur in the context of local cultural festivals that include gastronomic offerings, in which Brazilian vendors may participate. Even in these cases, however, the focus remains on inviting

fellow Brazilians (e.g., “come visit our stall and try our products”). Another exception includes local holiday occasions, when Brazilian dishes may be offered as alternatives, for instance, a post suggesting *feijoada* instead of roast turkey for Thanksgiving.

- Finally, some interactions extend beyond basic commercial exchange. Although these activities are primarily organized in virtual environments, they often lead to in-person experiences, such as themed events hosted by Brazilian establishments (e.g., “*feijoada* with *pagode*”, “*Festas juninas* with traditional foods and music” or “*pastel* night”). Additionally, user comments frequently include testimonials about food quality and service, recommending products and reinforcing trust within the community (e.g., “very generous portions, I highly recommend”, “friendly and attentive service, just like Brazilians” or “homemade food with the taste of Brazil”).

5. WHAT THE DATA SHOW

The analysis of empirical findings derived from systematic observation of Facebook groups of Brazilians living abroad, with a focus on food and interpreted in light of the concepts presented in this study, reveals the existence of a transnational communicational, economic and cultural ecosystem that articulates identities, migration and sustainable development.

From the perspective of Communication and ICTs, the results confirm the centrality of digital platforms as spaces of articulation and interaction, functioning as socio-technical networks that enable communicational, economic and affective practices, as well as connections among geographically dispersed individuals linked by a shared and recognized national identity. About the social dynamics involved, the findings point to complex and multifaceted practices and behaviors, including:

- The formation of interest groups and social support networks.
- The development of intercultural competences related to adaptation to new social and cultural codes, norms and values.
- Coping and survival strategies in the face of challenges.



- Contributions to transnational sustainable development.
- New forms of learning, whether through food production or the use of ICTs, as well as the circulation of knowledge.
- The construction of new identities and forms of resistance, involving belonging, participation, visibility and processes of re-signification.

Although these virtual spaces operate as environments for information exchange and market infrastructures, as observed in the food-related posts, they also enable the formation of networks that facilitate the circulation of knowledge and the acquisition of goods and services connected to the production and re-signification of cultural identities in contexts of displacement, drawing on cultures, memories and territories of origin. Similarly, even when considering issues such as access, use and control, as well as the limitations of digital platforms, the emergence of a mediated transnational space becomes evident, in which the economy not only connects migrants to their countries of origin but also shapes actions and behaviors in the destination context, reinforcing identity ties and networks of trust.

We understand that by taking on and leading the demands of immigrants, these virtual social networks formed by people in situations of displacement are able to break away from the communicational scene of serving only as an instrumental tool for disseminating, transmitting and/or representing the message, simultaneously building bonds and forms of identification, participation and, above all, visibility of the public legitimacy of the group involved (Escudero, 2022, p. 153 – Our translation).

The frequency of posts, driven by dissemination needs, commemorative dates and the specific demands of group members, reveals a market dynamic based on responsiveness and continuous monitoring of the surrounding environment. This aligns with the notion that ICTs expand the possibilities for innovation within diasporas, not through a linear cause-and-effect logic, but through complex processes of adaptation and creation.

Regarding social, economic, cultural and environmental dimensions, the findings indicate the existence of informal economic microcircuits that, although not necessarily institutionalized, contribute to income generation as well as to the circulation of capital and knowledge. Although this study did not measure financial remittances directly, it is plausible to suggest that part of the income generated by these ventures may be integrated into transnational financial flows. Furthermore, by



creating opportunities for self-employment and labor market insertion, these activities function as strategies of survival and social mobility in host societies for populations that are often marginalized, including in terms of citizenship. From the perspective of knowledge circulation, the exchange of information around food culture fosters learning, reinforces habits and customs, strengthens social connections, and diversifies productive practices, potentially contributing to more resilient food and environmental systems. Both dimensions are consistent with the idea of migration as a driver of sustainable development.

From the theoretical perspective of the creative economy and migrant entrepreneurship, the results provide clear evidence of a business model aligned with necessity-driven immigrant entrepreneurship and the mobilization of cultural capital. Many of the observed producers appear to transform culinary knowledge, affective memories and cultural repertoires into marketable goods. Food thus becomes part of a broader circuit of symbolic and economic production.

The strong presence of visual elements such as the colors green and yellow and the Brazilian flag reveals the deliberate construction of an identity-based brand. Similarly, the advertising narratives reinforce the uniqueness of the product by drawing on the entrepreneur's cultural trajectory, as discussed by Zanforlim and Amaral (2019). In this sense, the product is not merely food; it is also experience, memory and belonging. These ventures also align with the logic of so-called "ethnic entrepreneurship". The primary target audience consists of Brazilians residing in the cities under study. As noted by Zanforlim and Amaral (2019, p. 1), "in the economy of culture, migrants need, in addition to being businesses, to be media for themselves".

The absence of interaction with the local population indicates that these businesses operate primarily within the ethnic group. This reinforces the notion of "ethnic enclave entrepreneurship" (or related terms such as "ethnic or immigrant entrepreneurship", "ethnic businesses" or "ethnic markets"), in which clients, suppliers and dissemination networks are largely confined to the migrant community itself. However, this delimitation should not be interpreted merely as a market constraint, but also as an identity and economic strategy. By explicitly directing communication to Brazilians, entrepreneurs strengthen trust-based relationships, mobilize shared symbolic repertoires and reduce cultural barriers. The exception observed (participation in local cultural festivals),



suggests a potential intercultural expansion, even secondary.

The findings also confirm challenges commonly associated with the creative economy, as identified in previous research (Escudero, 2022): demand uncertainty, the need for continuous promotion and dependence on digital networks and relational capital. The frequency of posts linked to promotional needs indicates that business sustainability relies heavily on constant visibility on digital platforms. Thus, Facebook functions simultaneously as a showcase, a customer service channel and a space for reputation building, particularly when users leave positive comments regarding product quality and service.

About point of view addresses food as an element of identity, it is perhaps the most evident in the interpretation of the data. Considering the concept of the “imagined community” (Anderson, 1993), the groups observed can be understood as digital extensions of Brazil abroad. Even though members do not necessarily know one another personally, they share symbols, references and practices that reinforce a sense of belonging to a national collectivity.

Food, thus, operates as an identity anchor, offering recognition, comfort and symbolic positioning in a foreign context. The expressions used in the posts evoke affective memory, habits and traditions, although they tend to hide the diversity of Brazil’s regional cultural practices. For instance, no references were found to dishes such as *moqueca capixaba*, *tacacá*, or *sarapatel*, among other regionally specific culinary traditions from different parts of the country.

In addition, food is associated with sociability and cultural performance, often combined with other identity markers such as commemorative dates and national symbols like the Brazilian flag. From this perspective, food is intertwined with music, decoration and social interaction, producing collective experiences that reinforce hybrid and transnational identities. These are moments in which the diaspora not only consumes culture but also recreates and re-signifies it in the host country.

Participants’ comments frequently reveal an association between national identity and service quality, contributing to the symbolic construction of an “immigrant ethos” in which origin and affect are incorporated as competitive differentiators. This affective dimension reinforces the role of food as a mediator of social bonds and as an instrument of positive visibility for the migratory experience.



Finally, the notable absence of interaction with the local population can be interpreted from two complementary perspectives. On the one hand, it suggests processes of identity maintenance and the internal strengthening of an imagined community. On the other, it highlights limits to intercultural integration and economic expansion beyond the group, an aspect frequently observed among Brazilian migrant communities abroad. Nevertheless, even when circumscribed to the condition of displacement, these initiatives play a relevant role in consolidating networks, generating income and producing meaning.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, we set out to analyze the intersections between communication, migration and sustainable development, taking as our empirical object the commercialization of Brazilian food in virtual groups of Brazilians living abroad. The objective was to examine how this kind of business on Facebook articulates processes of identity construction, practices of belonging and entrepreneurial strategies in dialogue with the principles of the creative economy.

To this end, we conducted qualitative and exploratory research, applying systematic observation to a set of six Facebook groups of Brazilians abroad, identified according to their destination cities and Brazilian origin. The analysis focused exclusively on content related to Brazilian food culture, considering dimensions such as frequency of posts, motivations, narrative and visual elements, as well as forms of interaction and recurring patterns.

In summary, the empirical results indicate that activities involving Brazilian food in the studied groups constitute a phenomenon that articulates digital communication, entrepreneurship and cultural identity. Operating as mediated transnational platforms, these spaces support ethnic microeconomies (among other possible conceptualizations) anchored in memory, nostalgic and belonging, in line with the logic of the creative economy. Food, simultaneously a commodity and a symbol, emerges as a central device in the construction of “imagined communities” abroad, revealing the capacity of the Brazilian diaspora to mobilize ICTs and reinvent its cultural and economic practices on a global scale in ways that also relate to sustainable development.



Thus, the hypothesis that the commercialization of Brazilian food in virtual migrant groups is not merely an economic strategy for subsistence or income generation, but, within the framework of the creative economy, also produces communicational and cultural practices related to sustainable development (reinforcing identity ties, fostering senses of belonging, and consolidating transnational social networks) was confirmed. Around food, systems of references connected to an “immigrant ethos” are constructed, transforming affective dimensions such as longing and memory into economic and symbolic assets, thereby recognizing the social participation of this group in the preservation and re-signification of its meanings.

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