



Voices of Influence

Perceptions of content creators on identity, market, and responsibility

About Redes Cordiais

Redes Cordiais is a Brazilian organization founded in 2018 with a commitment to strengthening the public sphere and promoting a more critical, plural, safe, and reliable informational culture. We work by supporting, raising awareness, and training communicators, journalists, educators, and communities, promoting the development of skills and abilities for a better life online.

Learn more at redescordiais.org.br



About Reglab

We are a private research center specializing in the media and technology sector, supporting companies, associations, and policymakers in making strategic decisions based on data and evidence.

Learn more at www.reglab.com.br.

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About Special Formats

Our special formats encompass customized content solutions for specific clients. This research report is an initiative developed in partnership between Reglab and Redes Cordiais. The study aims to collect empirical data from digital content creators and to produce evidence for institutional dialogue. Through qualitative in-depth interviews and focus groups with content creators, the research seeks to map perceptions, dilemmas, and ethical practices associated with digital content creation and identify empirical findings that contribute to professional recognition of content creators.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study investigates how Brazilian digital content creators perceive the ethical, economic, and institutional challenges associated with their professional activity. Based on in-depth interviews and focus groups with **24 content creators, Reglab** and **Redes Cordiais**, with the support of **YouTube Brazil**, sought to incorporate empirical evidence into the debate regarding the digital content creators.

The research analyzes how these professionals understand their identity within the digital ecosystem, their communicational responsibilities, their relationships with brands, agencies, and platforms, as well as the structural challenges and potential paths for the professionalization of the sector.

1. Key Findings

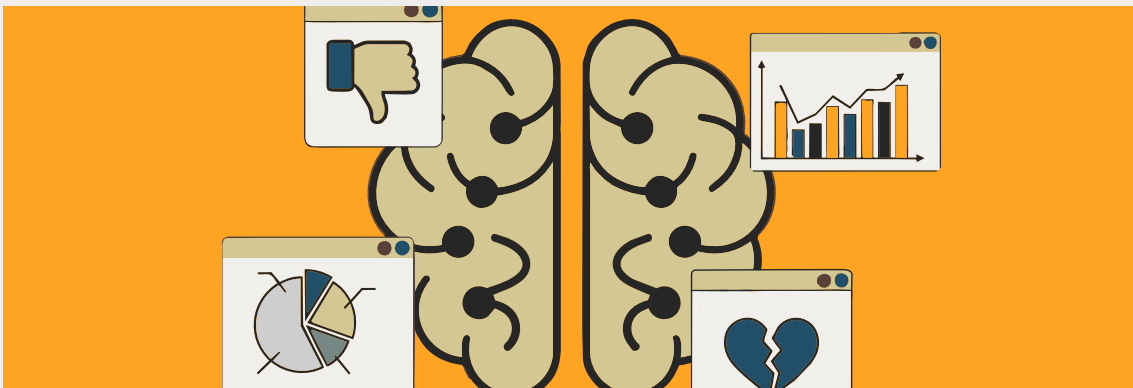


The identity crisis of the profession: digital content creation is perceived as a professional activity in consolidation, marked by disputes over legitimacy and social framing. Many reject the term “influencer,” associated with stereotypes of superficiality and indiscriminate advertising, preferring categories such as “content creator” or “communicator” to assert competence, responsibility, and public value. This terminological dispute is not merely symbolic: it affects credibility with the audience, positioning toward brands and agencies, and the ability to organize minimum parameters for professionalization and institutional recognition.



Influence market, ethical dilemmas, and the challenge of professionalization:

Advertising is a significant source of income for content creators in general and is often permeated by ethical dilemmas and asymmetries in relationships with brands and agencies, manifesting in negotiations that lack transparency and extended payment terms. This commercial vulnerability is further aggravated by the dependence on digital platforms, infrastructures considered essential, yet often lacking transparency and offering limited support. Consequently, creators advocate for greater institutional organization of the sector, including minimum contractual parameters, commercial transparency, digital security, and the legal formalization of the activity.



The cost of public exposure and the impact on mental health:

Managing public exposure imposes challenges that go beyond the professional sphere and directly affect the mental health of creators. Participants report constant performance pressure dictated by engagement metrics that demand an uninterrupted presence on social networks to avoid losing relevance. This scenario is further compounded by the toxicity of the digital environment, where creators face negative comments and hate speech, often without adequate moderation support. As a result, professionals must develop strategies for comment moderation, self-care, and community management to preserve their mental health and career longevity.

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INTRODUCTION

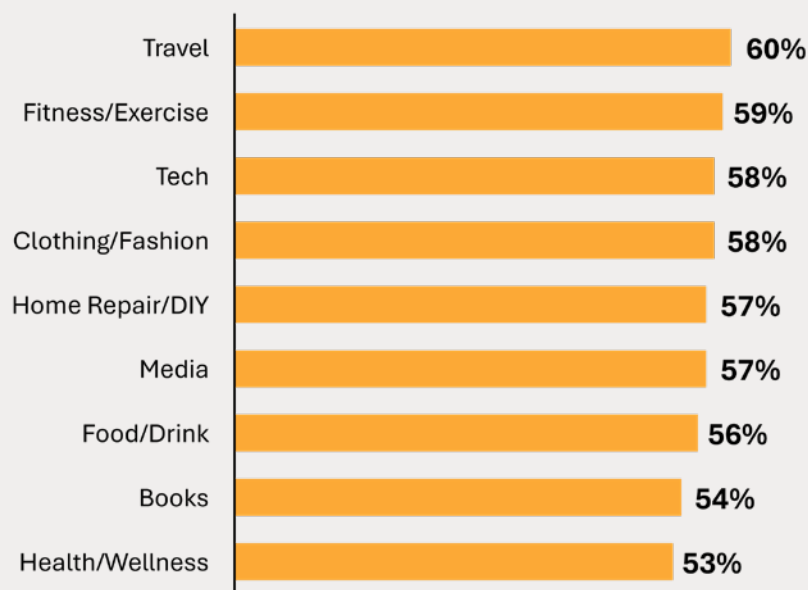
Contemporary media is undergoing one of its most profound transformations. The traditional broadcasting model, characterized by a few transmitters speaking to massive audiences, has given way to an ecosystem where authority and attention are fragmented ([Karhawi, 2023](#)). At the center of this new logic are digital influencers: internet celebrities who, by intentionally cultivating their public image, seek to sustain their careers in the digital environment by establishing a bond of trust with their audience, which in turn enables commercial and advertising partnerships ([Abidin, Karhawi, 2021](#)).

In Brazil, this phenomenon has reached large proportions. Recent estimates indicate that Brazil now has more influencers than lawyers and doctors combined ([HypeAuditor, ESPM, 2025](#)). We are one of the top nations for digital content consumption worldwide ([HypeAuditor, ESPM, 2025](#)), and the trust established between creators and followers possesses significant mobilizing force: the influence market generates more than R\$ 20 billion annually ([HypeAuditor, ESPM, 2025](#)). However, this growth has not been matched by the development of mechanisms or policies to promote better organization and security for these activities. On the contrary, recent legislative proposals have generated a cycle of uncertainty that further tensions the digital ecosystem ([Ramos, Bizutti, 2026](#)). For instance, between 2015 and 2025, 88 bills were introduced in the National Congress to regulate this activity, with an accelerated surge — driven by crisis triggers — starting in 2024. In general, these proposals reveal an ambiguous legislative view: while recognizing the content creator as a relevant digital actor, they often project archetypes of delegitimization onto the activity, frequently associating their practices with social risks, fraud, and exploitation ([Ramos et al., 2025](#)).

The relevance of digital content creators in the Brazilian and global scenarios is not just a matter of online visibility; it is a reality that impacts everything from individual financial decisions to the formation of public opinion. In this sense, the influencer acts as a mediator of trust. According to [Terra \(2017\)](#), an influencer is someone who publishes consistent content and gains credibility because their audience recognizes them as a reliable source. From this perspective, trust is not a static attribute but a process of building authority where the individual comes to be understood as “autonomous media, a brand” ([Karhawi, 2016](#), p. 42-43). This editorial and market autonomy allows the influencer to act as an uncertainty reducer

in the purchasing decision process, transforming social capital into economic capital. Data supports this discussion, since over 3/4 of consumers in Brazil have already purchased products based on influencer recommendations ([Statista, 2025](#)). Beyond the commercial sphere, this relevance extends to the social dimension: worldwide, influencers are perceived by audiences as useful sources of information across various topics:

SHARE OF CONSUMERS WHO BELIEVED INFLUENCERS WERE A USEFUL SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON SELECTED TOPICS WORLDWIDE AS OF MAY 2024



Source: [Statista, 2024](#)

We have previously analyzed the practical manifestations of this dynamic in the publications "[Teachtok and the New Learning Pathways](#)" and "[Booktok Brazil and New Literary Experiences](#)," where we explored how content creators promote reading and education on TikTok.



Thus, this research stems from the conviction that active listening to content creators in regulatory discussions is not circumstantial; it is a necessary condition for creating effective mechanisms that balance the interests of the various agents operating in the influence market. Through the series Feed: "[From the Feed to the Plenary](#)" and "[From the Feed to the Planalto](#)," Reglab sought to document how the Brazilian public power views digital influencers. Now, "Voices of Influence" adds

another perspective. If we previously analyzed how they are seen, we now seek to understand how they see themselves. Consequently, this work documents a collective effort of listening and analysis.

Check out “The Feed” series



[Read full research](#) →



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Through interviews and focus groups, we sought to understand the perceptions, dilemmas, and routines experienced by content creators. By combining Reglab’s academic rigor, Redes Cordiais’ experience, and the direct voice of these individuals, the objective of this study is, ultimately, to provide empirical evidence to qualify the national discussion and the dialogue with public authorities regarding self-regulation, regulation, and the professional recognition of content creators.

What is presented in the following pages is an autonomous and preliminary research report. It constitutes a diagnostic foundation to ensure that future proposals reflect the needs and dilemmas expressed by content creators themselves.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative, exploratory approach designed to capture the complexity of perceptions, ethical dilemmas, and daily practices of Brazilian content creators.

This was made possible through a partnership with Redes Cordiais, which, given its reach and history of engagement in the sector, was responsible for recruiting creators from its relationship network. Reglab led the methodological design of the research and the technical conduct of the in-depth interviews and focus groups.

The prioritization of narrative depth over statistical representativeness seeks to explore more thoroughly the themes that cut across different experiences in the influence market. Thus, the data can support the construction of standards based on the lived reality of these agents.

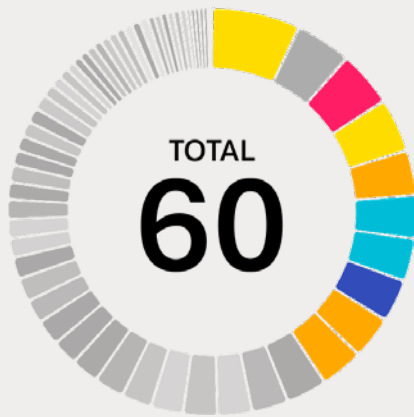
The following were conducted:

11 qualitative semi-structured interviews with content creators

2 focus groups with content creators, totaling **13 participants**.

To analyze the collected data, we utilized **thematic analysis**, a qualitative research method that identifies recurring patterns and themes in the participants' discourse. The process operates in three stages:

- 1.** We carefully read the transcriptions and highlighted the most relevant excerpts. When necessary, we assigned a **code** to each of them.
- 2.** Next, we grouped these codes by similarity, creating larger sets that function as **categories**.
- 3.** Finally, we organized these categories into **themes**, representing the most important patterns found, which structure the analysis as seen in the chart below.



This method ensures that our conclusions are grounded in what the interviewees actually said.

The full methodology can be consulted in the annex of this report.

The interviews and focus groups reveal that suggestions and perceptions are diverse, a hallmark of the inherent plurality of the content creator profession. Among the 60 themes identified in the speeches, the top 10 most cited are:

1. Defense strategies against hate and crisis management
2. Exposure and internet toxicity impact on mental health
3. Need for value alignment in advertising
4. Attempts at humanization and dialogue
5. Importance of admitting and correcting errors
6. Self-definition as creator, communicator, or artist
7. Stigmas associated with the term "influencer"
8. Lack of platform support for content creators
9. Need for rigor and fact-checking in content creation
10. The content creation process

RESULTS

1. From Influencer to Content Creator: A Matter of Identity

There is an evident tension in how digital professionals identify themselves. The debate reveals a conscious effort to avoid the term “influencer,” which frequently carries a pejorative weight. This concern over professional naming reflects a desire to signal the actual scope and technical value of their activities to both the market and the public. The term is often associated with notions such as superficiality, which leads professionals towards an adoption of labels that prioritize technical competence and intellectual repertoire.

1.1. Self-identification as “creator,” “communicator,” or other activities

To combat stigmas and professionalize their image, participants utilize different identity categories:

EMPHASIS ON CREATION AND ART

The preferred term is “**content creator.**” It shifts the focus from the act of influencing to the activity of making, and content is seen as an extension of professionalism and artistic talent, seeking recognition for the substance of the work.

I feel like the word ‘creator’ — because of the Americanization of ‘influencer’ — ‘content creator’ always warmed my heart more. I saw the ‘influencer’ as someone perhaps fighting more for attention, where anything goes. I see the ‘content creator’ more as someone truly creating; there is an almost artistic process of transforming something into a piece with your identity and traits, speaking directly to your audience. I don’t know if it’s just a distinction my subconscious made so I could deal with it in the best way, but it’s something that brings me a lot of relief to think about it that way.”

INFLUENCE AS A CONSEQUENCE

Participants seek to invert the logic of the term, asserting that influence is a consequence, not the primary objective of their work.

“

I like 'content creator' much better because, in the end, we are going to influence; we can't pretend that responsibility isn't on us. We do influence. But I think it's this: we are influencing as a consequence of producing structured content... something that actually adds value, rather than just influencing for the sake of it."

CONNECTION TO TRADITIONAL PROFESSIONS

Terms such as "communicator," "writer," "speaker," and "entrepreneur" are used to anchor digital activity in established market occupations, making it easier for the public to understand the nature of content creation.

“

I have the hardest time when someone asks me what I do. I say, 'Do you have a moment?' because it's hard to explain, right? So sometimes I say I'm a writer, sometimes I say I'm a communicator."

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ROLE

There is a perception that content creators are the new opinion leaders. They occupy spaces for rights advocacy and public debate, elevating their function beyond mere advertising delivery.

“

We are also communicators. When people understand that we communicate, that we can actually spark change by holding authorities, deputies, and senators accountable to realize changes within society... I see that it will be much better."

The rejection of the “influencer” label (and also that of “blogger”) signals a quest for professional legitimacy. By choosing new ways to name themselves, these professionals develop a way of communicating the ethical and intellectual value of their production to the market and society.

1.2. Primary vs. secondary career: the two faces of the profession

The practice of digital influence is divided into two main models: the primary career, involving exclusive dedication, and the secondary career, as a complementary activity. This choice directly shapes the professional’s relationship with risk, creativity, and time management, and opting for one or the other depends on factors such as the creator’s stage of maturity in the market.

INFLUENCE AS A PRIMARY CAREER

Exclusive dedication is motivated by high earning potential but is accompanied by insecurities, especially financial ones.

- Mentioned **advantages** and motivations factors include high earning potential, schedule flexibility, autonomy, and, in some cases, the identity of a digital entrepreneur.
- Cited **challenges** and risks include financial instability, as income is directly linked to social media performance and commercial partnerships. Furthermore, there is constant pressure for engagement results, as well as a perceived dependence on platforms and vulnerability regarding changes in engagement logic, bans, or glitches that can drastically affect the creator’s main source of income and visibility.

“*Living off a profession that didn't exist 15 years ago... when I stop to think about it, I feel it's a privilege. I am my own boss, I make my own schedule, I have my own ideas and I can apply them. I think that, analyzing the society and the capitalist system we live in, few people actually get to work with what they love, you know?*”

INFLUENCE AS A SECONDARY CAREER

Some professionals maintain a more traditional career and use influence as an income supplement or a “creative refuge.”

- Perceived **advantages** are lower pressure in content creation due to the greater financial security provided by another job, and an increased creative freedom, given the lack of urgency for immediate commercial results.
- In general, the accounts did not delve deeply into the **challenges and risks** of influence as a secondary activity, but they reveal that, especially at the beginning of their trajectories, the overlap of roles requires the sacrifice of leisure and rest hours, generating physical and mental overload to balance the two professional identities.

“ So, how did I create content? Back in the day, when I had no one, I would wake up at 4 a.m. to edit a video; it was just me, right? So, I'd edit, work, wake up at 5 a.m., take four buses, record with my Moto G, get home exhausted at 11 p.m. from work, and I was also in college.”

1.3. Negative perceptions of the term “Influencer”

The label “influencer” faces significant resistance among professionals themselves, as it is frequently associated with fragile ethical conduct and strictly commercial motivations. This stigma stems from the perception that an influencer’s activity is restricted solely to selling products, lacking technical depth in their content. However, this negative perception is not universal, as the term still possesses strong communicative power and is quickly understood by the general public. The primary perceptions identified were:

AVERSION TO ADVERTISING AND DOUBTFUL ETHICS

There is a stereotype that the influencer's role is limited to stimulating consumption without "actually producing content."

This exclusive association with sales and advertising generates aversion, as many professionals believe that selling should be a consequence of the content, not its sole purpose.

“

But then when they call you an influencer, we're like, no, wait a second, I'm not in that group, I'm doing something here, you know? I work hard, I write a quality script, I deliver, I add value, okay? Are you going to put me in the same box as the girl who was selling 'Tiger Game' [gambling] links?"

CONNOTATION OF DECEPTION AND LOW PROFESSIONAL LEGITIMACY

The term can still evoke the idea that the activity does not constitute "real work," being seen as a way to gain financial reward without significant productive effort.

“

I think it's a two-way street, because while many people dream of being an influencer, there are many people who majorly tarnish the profession, you know? Even more so nowadays, when people think of 'influencer,' they think of people who are deceiving others, who are making money without working, without trying hard."

LACK OF GENUINE CONTENT

The image of the influencer is often linked to superficial "lifestyle" content. This creates a disconnect for professionals who seek to deliver "content of substance" and intellectual value.

“

They don't effectively produce any content. They are just there all day influencing you to buy what they put on their lips, their hair, their skin, the clothes they wear, the places they go, the restaurant they frequent."

SENSE OF DEMERIT

Some professionals feel that the term “influencer” is used as a way to underestimate their technical, academic, or professional authority.

“

I much prefer to use the term ‘content creator’ than ‘influencer,’ because what I notice is that when someone questions it, it’s very much in the sense of belittling. Like, ‘Oh, are you a blogger?’, ‘Are you an influencer?’, not out of curiosity, but to actually diminish you.”

Counterpoint Found

One focus group interviewee observed that, although the term “content creator” is preferred by professionals, in environments outside major hubs like São Paulo, the word “influencer” seems to be more easily understood and viewed positively. This suggests that while the term carries a negative stigma among the professionals themselves, it possesses greater “tangibility” for the general public or in specific regional contexts, serving as an already consolidated label for the activity.

1.4. The dream of being an influencer: social mobility and career for youth

Content creators reported perceiving that this profession has reached the status of a coveted career for the new generation, equaling — and in some cases, surpassing — long-standing dreams of success across various social realities. Some participant accounts position content creation as the new symbol of success in Brazilian society:

REPLACEMENT OF THE OLD IDEAL

The most powerful metaphor that emerged in discussions points to a shift in the pantheon of dream careers.

“

People used to dream of being soccer players. Today, people want to be content creators, creating their content at home, monetizing, and doing advertising.”

VISIBILITY AND RECOGNITION

In the interviewees' perception, young people see an influencer career as a path to notoriety and instant fame, something that can be far more attractive than traditional professions with longer, less visible paths.

“

Man, being an influencer is in a place that belongs to the dream of life change. Like, 'I'm hungry, I'm going to make a video, I'm going to make money, I'm going to help my mother, you know?' In an environment of desperation, it's the same as looking to the side and saying, 'Those guys are over there selling drugs with guns in their hands, but they look cool, I'm going to deal too because I'm hungry, right?' So, there's the glamour. (...) It's a new fuel for desperation, like, 'influence changes lives.'"

These accounts show that, in different contexts, the influencer profession can be seen as a symbol of success and social mobility, representing the hope for a better life.

2. The content creation process reveals best practices and tension points

Discussions regarding the content creation process among professionals reveal a deep concern for the quality, veracity, and social responsibility of the material being broadcast. Far from the image of improvisation and spontaneity, creators demonstrate a conscious effort to adopt best practices aimed at transparency and positive impact on their audience, especially regarding topics of significant public relevance.

For many professionals, digital content production is a structured process guided by responsibility and information accuracy. This movement is driven by the creators' desire to consolidate their credibility with a diverse audience by adopting fact-checking and transparency practices. However, this quest for precision faces the constant challenge of platform speed, where the urgency for the "trending topic" can compromise the quality of the information provided.

“

It's not that only degree-holding people should give opinions, but I think you have to research very well and bring your sources, where you got that information from."

2.1. Credibility and the democratization of language

Creators demonstrate a conscious effort to balance technical knowledge with accessibility. The strategies identified include:

ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE

The simplification of complex topics is seen as a tool for the democratization of knowledge. The goal is to remove barriers to understanding and avoid jargon that might alienate a lay audience.

“

[My audience] has become something much larger: people from very different places, with very different careers, repertoires, and backgrounds. So, there are even some pieces of content where I say: 'Wow, I messed up, I was too technical.' There are people following me who don't have that repertoire. So, I use terms that I need to explain; if I used words in English, I have to provide the translation immediately after. I have to keep monitoring myself like, 'Man, there are many different people following me,' so my content is well-received and I am understood the way I intend to be."

CRITIQUE OF STRICTLY TECHNICAL "STANDPOINTS"

A minority of participants cautioned that requiring formal education to create content on platforms could be elitist. Nevertheless, the concern for the credibility of information remains high, especially regarding sensitive topics.

“

Part of me looks at it and says: 'Wait a minute, so only a degreed specialist can talk about things on the internet?' Hmm, that sounds a bit elitist to me, you know? It sounds good when I think of a doctor, but it sounds [bad] when I think of perhaps other types of professionals. Do you understand? I don't think it's a simple thing."

AUTHORITY AND CURATORSHIP

Although there is a fear that requiring academic background may be elitist, technical qualification is still valued as a "seal of trust" for content.

“

The majority of content creators who truly create content are qualified: the person talking about biology is actually a biologist. The person talking about business has a business or a degree in administration."

RIGOR, FACT-CHECKING, AND TRANSPARENCY

To compensate for a lack of formal expertise in specific areas, many professionals resort to hiring technical consultants to review scripts and validate data at different stages of content creation. Participants revealed several self-regulation practices aimed at aligning their content with a responsible standard. This concern for rigor and the checking of sources reinforces a quest for transparency toward the audience.

“

We always like to have a specialist, including having them give their name and credentials at the beginning of the video so that people feel at ease regarding the information. Since I am a presenter, I want people to feel reassured and we want a name there so that if someone wants to contest any information, we can say: 'Look, we have a professional here, with the credentials, a person with a reputation and great knowledge who will stand by this.'"

2.2. Admitting errors as a best practice

Admitting errors and correcting information has consolidated as a best practice for maintaining trust with the audience. Rather than hiding mistakes, content creators use public correction to reinforce honesty and as a pillar of credibility.

STRENGTHENING TRUST

The act of admitting and correcting an error publicly is perceived by creators not as a failure, but as a reinforcement of honesty and the relationship with the community. It demonstrates a commitment to the truth and respect for the audience over the maintenance of a "perfect" image. On the other hand, creators indicate that the reach of corrected content is often significantly lower than that of the original post.

“

Eventually, you will make a mistake. I'm not afraid of making mistakes; I'm afraid of being blind to that mistake. You need a lot of maturity to understand what is a mistake and what is just someone else's distorted view. (...) Mistakes happen and will continue to happen. When possible, if it's a very grotesque error that harms the information, we replace the video; we swap it. But nowadays, we have a very thorough specialist verification stage. It's very difficult for something to leak through."

STRATEGIC RECTIFICATION

There were reports of creators who choose to keep a post with an error online for a specific period, using the comment section to flag the mistake before definitive deletion. This strategy reflects a reputational concern regarding errors, avoiding sudden deletions that might create information vacuums or unfounded rumors.

“

When I post something incorrect, I usually leave it up for a bit and reply to the comments, because I think it's important for people to see that it's wrong. Then I go back, delete it, and say something in the stories, because I think it's also important to have that period of 'oh, this is wrong,' rather than just deleting it and pretending nothing happened.”

2.3. Engagement with public interest themes

Influence extends beyond consumption and entertainment subjects. The concern for public interest themes highlights the responsibility many creators assume as communicators.

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC UTILITY

The educational role is emphasized in sensitive areas, such as public health. Creators claim to use their reach to promote validated and fact-checked information, stressing the importance of sharing scientific data and consulting specialists to ensure information quality and safety. Regarding health content creators, narratives centered on content published during the COVID-19 pandemic. By focusing on social and public interest topics, creators reinforce the association between influence, education, and public debate.

“

We protected ourselves by siding with the scientific evidence available at that moment, right? And years of work also ensured we had a portfolio of consultants we trust and whose qualifications we know. So, we safeguarded ourselves there, saying: 'Look, we are here, it came out in this study, such-and-all person said it, they hold this position,' right? That's how we defended ourselves.”

SPEED VS. MISINFORMATION

A significant point of tension is the conflict between the rush to participate in current debates and the risk of spreading misinformation. Participant accounts indicate that attempting to “help” with social reports or “call-outs” without proper verification can cause irreparable or difficult-to-resolve damage. Experiences like these have led to a shift in stance: one creator reported opting to change their content direction, moving away from “trending” topics to avoid sharing incorrect information:

“

At the beginning of my career as a creator, I had a phase where I thought sharing reports/denouncements was positive. But in that race to share them, you sometimes pass on wrong information. (...) Then you take the video down, make a story apologizing, right? But you have no control over the algorithm, so sometimes the denouncement reaches a place but the correction doesn't, you know? So I stopped reporting because I said: 'Yeah, leave it to the journalists to check the information and do their jobs; sometimes we are in a hurry to help and end up getting in the way.'”

3. Interaction Dynamics: community management and mental health

The relationship between content creators and their audience is a fundamental pillar of the profession. However, it also represents a significant point of vulnerability, as professionals must balance openness to dialogue with exposure that is frequently toxic. To maintain their online presence, creators seek to establish strategies and barriers that protect their integrity without breaking the bond of proximity and trust with their community.

3.1. Between dialogue and exposure

Continuous interaction in the digital environment carries a significant psychological cost that affects everything from the career's direction to its sustainability:

EXPOSURE AND TOXICITY

The existence of harassment, hate, and destructive comments is constant. This exposure requires the professional to develop resilience mechanisms.

“*You realize there is constant hatred in people. They are always waiting for you to slip on a banana peel to say: ‘See, you did this.’ People seem always prepared to show the bad things you do. And then there comes a time in life when you no longer have the emotional structure for that, right?”*

SELF-CENSORSHIP ON CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

The practice of self-censorship emerges as a strategy for emotional survival and career preservation in the face of digital toxicity. The fear of attacks and the negative impact on mental health lead many creators to avoid taking positions on sensitive issues. This strategy ultimately limits the creator’s authenticity, as they begin to filter their content not only by editorial criteria but by the fear of retaliation and negative career impacts, including financial ones.

“*Has there ever been a situation where I thought it was better not to talk about a topic? It happens every day, basically. (...) I ended up having to do a lot of work filtering which situations I will speak about, topics I am truly willing to face.”*

“*The people who follow me know my political position, they know what I believe in, what I talk about, and so on. In the times I avoid speaking, it is because I know the other side will come at me with full force, and I am not a person who can handle that right now. I am not a person who can handle a scheme of, I don’t know, ‘bots and everything else that takes down my profile,’ which is my source of income.”*

PRESSURE FOR ENGAGEMENT

Using metrics such as likes, shares, and views to evaluate work performance generates pressure for uninterrupted productivity. The value of work is measured by numbers considered volatile, which contributes to mental exhaustion.

“

For me, this deeply harms our communication, because it prevents people from receiving what they clicked to receive, you know? It's an illusion. So, the algorithm deeply harms my content creation, totally takes away my desire to create, and I wish people could receive what they clicked to receive. When I create content today, I don't just think about the message; I have to think about how I will package that message to stand out in a sea of pollution, of AI slop, you know? Of brain rot..."

SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Seeking professional psychological support and forming support communities, whether fans or people close in their personal lives, are mentioned as mitigation strategies. Exchanging experiences with other professionals serves as a refuge and validation, though it occurs less frequently than many content creators would like.

“

When people send me very affectionate messages, I take a screenshot and keep it in a folder on Drive of happy comments like, 'Oh, I got a scholarship you shared,' 'Oh, I found myself in my career because of something you shared,' anyway, positive things like that make me say: man, this is why I create content."

“ I am a person who really likes to talk, speak, and exchange with people, but I will say that a creator’s career is sometimes very lonely because it’s hard to find [connection]. I have friends I made on the internet who work with similar subjects as I do, others on completely different things, and I try to bring that a bit closer because sometimes we have doubts, we don’t know if it’s just us, if it’s our content. Anyway, I think exchanging is always good, always very important.”

THERAPY

Several reports point to therapy as a habit that helped creators deal with hate speech on networks, ranging from comments on posts to DMs (direct messages).

“ I started therapy in 2020 because of this as well, because I didn’t know how to deal with everyone commenting that they love you, and also people saying they hate you for no reason, because the hate comes whether you are doing a good job or not, but largely because you are standing out in some way. So, for me, it was something very difficult to deal with, because I thought: ‘What do you mean you think I’m horrible? You don’t even know who I am, you don’t know me, you don’t know my family.’”

3.2. Protection and moderation mechanisms

Faced with high exposure to criticism and hate speech, creators develop protection tactics for themselves and their communities.

FILTERING AND SILENCING

The use of native platform tools, such as keyword filtering and muting users, is the most mentioned way of confronting hate. These resources aim to protect the interaction space between users and prevent the content creator and their community from being surrounded by negativity.



One thing to recommend to any content creator you interview is: 'Never block the hater, mute them.' So, what do I do? When a hater comes to insult or offend me, I don't delete the comment. On Instagram, we delete depending on the offense, but mostly what I do is mute the person. There is a very interesting tool on Instagram where the person is replying or commenting on your post, but they don't know it's not reaching people. It's as if they were truly talking to themselves."

BLOCKING AND EXCLUSION

Especially in serious cases, such as racism or threats, blocking users and deleting comments are used as security measures.



At the same time that it is not my responsibility to educate the other person, sometimes what I choose is not to allow it. Crime is not an opinion, so some things I delete saying: 'Sorry, not you.' And sometimes I respond and say: 'You are not going to say that here.' I say: 'you are in my space, this profile is mine, I don't want this kind of thing!'"

REACTION AND POSITIONING

Although silencing is the general rule, public positioning against attacks also happens, even if less frequently, especially in moments of tension or stress.

“

Sometimes I get more outspoken; sometimes I go there and write a long response or say something silly, or I go to the person's profile and write outrages on their photos too, exactly like they did on mine. I love doing this when I'm out of patience. This gives me a 'here, take your embarrassment,' you know? (...) But generally, I just block or delete, block the person and that's it; I don't really spend much time reading everyone's comments.”

3.3. Attempts at humanization and dialogue

While toxicity requires building barriers, the essence of content creation work lies in the ability to build an authentic relationship and dialogue with the audience.

CONNECTION WITH THE AUDIENCE

Humanization attempts seek to bring creators and followers closer in cases where the audience is suffering negative comments from third parties.

“

It has happened that a follower defended me. And there were people there insulting, offending... I have already sent messages, especially to these people, because I am already used to the volume of people liking and commenting. That person, sometimes, has two followers, is following me, and suddenly has 50 people talking at the same time there. So I already send them a message in the DMs. But, in my opinion, it is also very much the platform's fault. The platform must have a responsibility for the things people post.”

SELECTIVE DIALOGUE

Content creators prioritize interactions that generate value, such as healthy debates, constructive feedback, and clarifying doubts, strengthening authority and proximity with the follower.

“*If the person said: ‘wait a minute, you said this here, but actually it’s this and that’ and gives an argument, then I have a reason that will sometimes make me interact with that comment. But just expressions of hate and repulsion on the networks, no. You learn that you really don’t need to, and it’s part of the game, you know? You can’t get worked up over it.”*

“*I don’t comment always on issues, but I take a stand when I have to take a stand. Those who don’t take a stand on anything, who stay neutral, I’m not like that. To me, neutral is only for soap, guys. Neutrality doesn’t exist, especially when we talk about certain subjects.”*

CONTENT CREATION FROM HATE MESSAGES

Some content creators adopt the tactic of converting negative messages into new content as an opportunity to share new information and interact with the audience.

“*I do this curation of the messages I’m going to screenshot, post in stories, and that we will follow in a fruitful debate. And what I’m going to leave alone, that I won’t screenshot, won’t share, and no one will know existed except the person who sent it. So, I manage to have this control.”*

FROM HATE TO DIALOGUE IN DMS

In specific cases of messages in comments or DMS, dialogue is used to disarm conflicts and create a possibility for exchange even with the hater themselves.

“ Sometimes the person thinks I won't see the message and sends a super 'angry dog' thing. Then I reply, I say: 'Hi, I didn't quite understand what you meant, can you explain it to me?' And the person completely changes their tone, says: 'No, sorry, that wasn't what I meant, I just wanted to say such and such.' And I say: 'Ah, I didn't understand. But do you understand this point?' And we have a great conversation; we find common ground.”

SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN DMS

Some creators reported that there are cases of followers in vulnerable situations who seek support from the content creator through private messages. In these cases, content creators indicated that the general conduct has been to redirect the follower to authorities or agencies that can provide specialized care.

“ It was heavier there; I received both very negative messages and messages from people who needed support. I think there are two sides to it because you also have to deal with supporting other people you don't know, situations that you end up going through as well and that person also ends up going through.”

“ People started using my inbox to vent and ask for help: 'I'm going through what you've already been through, help me.' And it's about having this awareness; I always replied: 'I am not the one who will help you.' (...) In general, I ask the person to seek care at a basic health unit, I ask the person to contact the Cras [Social Assistance Reference Center], things like that.”

4. Perceptions of advertising and relationship with agencies

The relationship with brands and advertising is often the core of monetization for professionals working in creation full-time, but it can also be a source of ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interest. Perceptions regarding sponsored content (“publi”) reveal that the professional acts as a curator of proposals, applying integrity criteria to protect their credibility and the relationship with the audience.

4.1. The need for value alignment in advertising

An effective advertising partnership is understood as an organic extension of existing content rather than an interruption. Therefore, it must align with the creator’s brand identity and the values of their community.

“*This content needs to be as close as possible to any of our other content, if not identical.*”

To ensure this integration, creators adopt the following criteria:

AUTHENTICITY FILTER

There is a consensus that a promoted product or service must align with the professional’s values. Refusing proposals that diverge from the creator’s principles or the lifestyle shared with the community is seen as a necessary practice for brand preservation, as the focus is ensuring the commercial message does not compromise the creator’s personal narrative.

“*The first thing is for me to believe in the product. If I don’t believe in it, I don’t have the face to speak or recommend something to my audience that I don’t believe in.*”

“*I can produce the content, but it has to look like me... I cannot lie to my public at all.*”

PRODUCT TESTING BY THE CONTENT CREATOR

Prior testing of advertised products or services is seen as the ideal standard of conduct. When direct testing is unfeasible due to logistical issues, the professional resorts to analyzing the brand's reputation and market consolidation to mitigate risks.

“*It's even better if it's something I use, but sometimes, I don't know... a computer brand arrives that isn't exactly the one I use. But I know it's a very good computer, so I think: 'Okay, but how can I insert it into my routine?'. People might say: 'Ah, but she doesn't use it', but then I say: 'Okay, but I'm giving other possibilities'. Sometimes what I use also doesn't fit people's budgets, so this why this one is good and maybe it fits...'”*

“*There are products I've never consumed, but when the brand reaches out to me, I say: 'Ah, I'll try the product and see if I like it, right?' So, for me, it's not a problem if a product arrives that I've never tried, because I can try it and tell my public what I thought, right? So, that's not a problem for me, but I try to create something honest, something that will please the brand, something that will please the public, right?'”*

DIFFICULTIES IN TESTING PRODUCTS

Short deadlines and the shipping of products only after the contract is signed are identified by content creators as obstacles to the ideal of product testing, pressuring the creator to make decisions even without the possibility of in-depth product knowledge.

“*I think maybe larger creators can say: 'Fine, you want to work with me, I'm going to spend a month, or a week at least, testing this product first.' Then the brand sometimes ends up allowing it. But the deadlines, normally, are extremely absurd things. So, I think not once have I managed to test calmly before signing the contract, before accepting. It's like 'we'll only send it to your house when everything is already settled,' so you end up accepting risks.'”*

REFUSAL OF UNETHICAL ADVERTISING

Content creators stated they are totally opposed to promoting products they consider harmful or whose disclosure is seen as unethical given the professional context. The main example cited was betting houses ("bets"), but also alcohol and, in the case of health and beauty, medications and aesthetic treatments.

“ I’ve never done advertisements for a ‘Bet’ in my life. I’ve been offered over a million to do it, something that would change my reality, solve a million of my problems. But I won’t do it, because I don’t think it’s right, you see? Everyone does what they think is right. Everyone takes care of their image, their management, their things. I have my principles and I believe that the moment I violate these principles, I lose credibility with my audience.”

“ Alcoholic beverages — I can’t do it; I talk about health, you know?”

“ Do you do advertisements for ‘bets’? Man, I don’t do it. ‘There’s a beer commercial.’ Man, cool, but I don’t drink beer, I’m not going to do beer. So, I don’t do anything I don’t consume. I don’t do anything that destroys people’s lives.”

“ We don’t advertise treatments. We will never say... in fact, we strongly avoid using commercial names of medications.”

4.2. Other concerns in advertising

An important point of discomfort addressed by content creators is the perception that certain brands attempt to use the professional’s credibility and respectful image with their audience as an opportunity to mask questionable internal practices and bypass reputation crises.

REPUTATION AND LEGITIMACY

Creators are sensitive to the idea of being used as a tool for a brand’s crisis management. Promoting a brand whose history does not reflect the values of transparency, diversity, or sustainability of the creator’s community is seen as a high risk to their own reputation. This concern requires the creator to research the history and culture of the partner company before signing contracts.

“

There were brands that approached me with an advertising proposal. And then, when my agency went to research it, they discovered it was crisis management; they wanted to associate themselves with my image to clean up some 'cancellation' the brand went through. And then we say: 'God forbid,' right? So, personal values, I think that's something very important, right? Brands that are aligned with my values, not brands that [had some reputational crisis] and are wanting to suck up my values to clean their image."

CONCERNS ABOUT TRANSPARENCY AND LEGAL ISSUES

Although value alignment and reputational concerns are the main aspects mentioned as essential to advertising, content creators also reported an effort to conduct transparent advertising in an attempt to mitigate the legal risks of the activity.

“

Sometimes, I see people who do something veiled, [where the #ad] is only at the very end, and then the reach is much larger, but I don't think that's right in the end. So, mine stays right there, very large. I think a lot of people skip it because it's an ad, but at least I have a clear conscience."

4.3. Relationships and conflicts in the influencer's network

The relationship between creators, agencies, and brands reveals an interdependent structure that professionalizes the sector while generating friction and a lack of transparency. Influencer agencies act as positive filters for the legal and commercial organization of influence. However, process fragmentation often results in communication failures and abusive deadlines.

PROFESSIONALIZATION AND CURATION

For many creators, the agency is an arm that guarantees legal security, support in pricing, and mediation of contracts. This proximity allows the professional to focus on creation, while the agency works on prospecting brands aligned with the content creator's profile.

“ We have a very good experience [with the agency], with a team that knows you, that already knows... All the legal, contractual work and even looking for things, is done based on this relationship. So, we have our groups with the people, we talk every day, we know the team, we know what's happening, we have access to the emails, for example, we know everything that's going on. So, it's a very positive experience and we are very comfortable in this agreement.”

“ I stayed in an agency, I already stayed 4 years with an agency when I started. It was very important for me to understand the market. There's no way to complain about that. I learned a lot about how to price my work correctly so as not to be exploited. But there are many other agencies that arrive and start manipulating the creator thinking that they will never be able to do things alone.”

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

On the other hand, the lack of clarity in negotiations is a critical point. Reports of a lack of access to important emails, contracts, and negotiation flows generate insecurity and financial instability, preventing the creator from having real control over their career.

“ And about the agency, I didn't have one, but the advisory service already caused a very big conflict. It was the biggest conflict in 5 years, which was the issue of lack of clarity. So, I didn't have access to email, I didn't have access to how the negotiations were, I didn't have access to the contract, this made me very insecure. And I would close deals, there were cool things closed, but one month it would close a cool amount, another month it would close nothing, then nothing after that, but 'we are going after it, we are going after it'... and I wasn't seeing those emails. So, this process was very difficult for me.”

“Look, I think all the work ends up being a bit turbulent, because I feel that, in the vast majority of cases, there are four sides acting, right? So, me, my agency helping me, the agency helping the company, and the company. So, sometimes I receive feedback, and I’m like: ‘Okay, but is it someone from the agency or was it someone from the brand?’ And then the deadlines are crazy, sometimes the briefings are not very complete, the deadlines are always super crazy too. So, I think it often becomes a game of broken telephone.”

CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN RELATIONSHIPS AND CONTENT

A common challenge is the imposition by brands or agencies of rigid briefings that do not connect with the audience. The creator resists being treated as a “face” for the delivery of ready-made messages defined by third parties.

“I’ve never done anything like that, of handing it over to an agency to produce. And I would be very afraid, to tell the truth, not for any reason, but because I think the interests are different and the work is different.”

“Sometimes, they are companies that I think are cool, I say: “Man, very cool”. But then when I start putting in 1,000 rules, like, I want to have the right to speak, I will choose what the content is like... ‘Oh, no, but we are going to create the content’. Okay, but I want to approve it first, so... and all that. Then, it ends up not happening anymore.”

“I think they have a very restricted view of the audience, so they look for me for the numbers and then want to teach me how to talk to my audience. And several times they arrive with a briefing that I say: Dears, this here is not going to connect with anyone who follows me like this. This here has nothing to do with it, but ‘No, it’s just that we thought like this...’. But aren’t you paying for my voice? Then let me speak. That’s why I do so little sponsored content, actually, because I push back and say: No, I won’t. You’re not just going to use my pretty face. That’s it. That’s not how it works!”

SENSE OF OBJECTIFICATION

Some content creators criticized the logic of agencies that focus on selling “character options” in catalogs, instead of developing individual careers, reducing the bargaining power of content creators..



I was also assisted by an agency, it wasn't a good experience. (...) It's not always a nice thing, especially when you have exclusivity. It's not cool, because the agency will never be interested in selling you. It's interested in selling any of the people they have there in the agency."

ABUSIVE PAYMENT TERMS

Abusive payment practices, especially by large companies that impose terms of 60, 90, 120 days or more on smaller suppliers, constitute a structural problem that stifles the cash flow of various content creators.



Another thing that I've also experienced when I closed agency advertising is this thing of 60 to 90 days to pay. You do the work and you wait 3 months to get paid. And like, I have people I know who work in agencies, people I know, who say: 'No, the money is in the agency's account'. You see? And like, why 90 days to pay the influencer, you know? So, I think people use and abuse influencers, use and abuse the platform, right, those who work with this and they don't value it."

EXCESSIVELY SHORT CREATION DEADLINES

According to reports, the imposition of excessively short deadlines by brands and agencies compromises important stages of the content creation process. This market urgency ends up forcing the professional to choose between the financial viability of the partnership and technical rigor, damaging the delivery.

“ Things normally reach us very rushed, very much without a timeline. The guy says 'I want to do this campaign next year'. Then it takes 10 months to decide whether to do something or not, they send it to us, it reaches us late and it's our fault for not delivering the thing by the day he asked. (...) So, I think they lack a bit of respect for us, as if only we needed them and not the other way around, you know?”

POWER ASYMMETRY

Creators who have influence as their exclusive career feel more pressured to accept abusive conditions or controversial conduct to guarantee their monthly income. This risk seems to be lower for professionals who maintain other sources of revenue, which gives them greater freedom to refuse partnerships.

“ But I feel that sometimes creators who are alone, man, you clashing with the client is very complicated with the brand, right? Sometimes they are very incisive, you're like, 'man, but I don't want to lose this job' or 'I don't want to have a disagreement with the brand'... so you end up accepting things that initially you wouldn't accept.”

“ So, having my bills paid by my other job gives me the security to produce content the way I want, at the pace I want. And that is a privilege that makes all the difference. If I were being forced to produce content for any brand that reached out to me, even if there were an ethical conflict and I were super uncomfortable... I refuse brands all the time, because I'm not comfortable doing it that way, no.”

5. In general, the relationship with platforms is turbulent

Platforms are an essential infrastructure for digital work. At the same time, participants frequently perceive them as a source of operational insecurity. The management of these ecosystems is considered to lack transparency, especially regarding content moderation criteria and the limited direct channels for dialogue with the responsible companies.

“

Well, I find the platforms very insecure. I think accounts should be linked to a tax ID (CPF). We need to have a way to have traceability. I find them super, super unstable, insecure. I am super insecure. Anyone, any person, a hacker, can enter an account, hack an account, take down an account. Thiago Chavoso, the “Chavoso da USP”, is without an account for the third time because they go in and take his account down because he speaks against the system. So, I feel very insecure with social networks because they don’t give me any type of security support. Even when I report it, their analysis is that nothing happened.”

5.1. Moderation of harmful content

The main criticism from content creators is directed at the ineffectiveness or selectivity of platform moderation systems. Generally, participants state that companies apply their own guidelines inconsistently.

MODERATION INCONSISTENCY

Creators point to a significant disparity between what is quickly removed and what is permitted. In their perception, relatively harmless content may be removed rapidly, while harmful content, hate speech, racism, or misinformation remains available for long periods.

“ I've made a million reports of absurd things I've seen, not about me, but in general, and no one took them down, right? They say: 'No, no, it doesn't violate our guidelines.' Then there's a woman breastfeeding, and it violates the guidelines. But anyway.”

“ I see some content, for example, that to me is racist, you know? And then I report it, man, but that content won't come down, I know that. I report it because I need to report it, but I know that content won't come down; there will be an excuse that, 'oh, this content doesn't violate any rights,' only I'm seeing that it does violate them and several other people are seeing it too.”

OPAQUE ENGAGEMENT LOGIC

Another recurring concern involves the perceived 'randomness' of platform engagement logic. Creators report being unaware of the criteria that determine the reach and distribution of their content, which makes strategic planning difficult. This opacity is perceived as a damaging force that further deteriorates the relationship between platforms and creators.

“ A person enters this field of content creation without knowing what to do. They throw content onto the platform, it's Russian roulette, see what blows up; we stay totally lost, there is no guidance, we don't know how the algorithm works, the algorithm changes every week, all the time someone arrives saying: 'The algorithm changed, before it was 15 seconds, now they want longer videos, before it was without editing, now we want content that looks authentic, right? And it has to have retention, now it's not needed anymore.' So, it creates instability in us.”

5.2. Debate on civil liability

In line with discussions regarding [Article 19 of the Brazilian Civil Rights Framework for the Internet](#), creators present distinct views on the burden of responsibility. In general, the statements call for greater accountability of creators for the content they publish; however, when the subject is third-party comments on posts, there is significant divergence:

OWN CONTENT

Among those interviewed, there is a consensus on the need for content creators to be responsible for their publications. By identifying as authors and curators, they agree there is a duty to publish truthful posts, condemning the pursuit of engagement through harmful content.

“ I think people have to be held accountable for what they say on the internet. We are living through an epidemic of misinformation on all social networks because of this: once it makes money, we create a very worrying dynamic, because if money is directly linked to the number of views, what happens when a person realizes that being sensationalist and misinforming generates many more views?”

THIRD-PARTY INTERACTIONS

Divergences arise when the topic is the management of comments. Some content creators argue that responsibility lies exclusively with the author of the message:

“ I think that, in the first place, the responsibility belongs to the individual. If you have a size... not even that big, like I have. I am far from being big, but I am big enough that it is, humanly, very difficult for me to be there watching all the comments happening on the post. So, I really don't feel responsible for them.”

“ I have nothing to do with that, no. [The responsibility] is either the platform's or theirs [those who commented], understand? Not me, I already have too much on my plate to worry about that, no. You guys are the ones fighting among yourselves there, I have nothing to do with that at all.”

On the other hand, some participants believe the platform should take a more active role in filtering illegal or offensive content:

“Wow, the finger for banning people is very fast here. I don't see the slightest problem in blocking people because, depending on what is said, I say: 'I don't want this kind of thing inside my profile'. So, it's complicated because I think, the person writes it, and I say: 'How did the platform let this be written?'”

“I think that many times, yes, the platform has a responsibility for what people post. There is no such thing as creating a social network and not wanting to be responsible for what people post inside your house. It makes no sense to leave everyone to their own devices. (...) When someone insults you, offends you, commits acts where a person might kill themselves, how can you not provide access to who that person is to the judge? How can you not be responsible for what people are posting inside your house?”

There are also intermediate positions that point toward shared responsibility between creators and platforms in addressing abusive behavior:

“First, there is indeed a responsibility on the part of the creator, because there are creators who operate only on hate. So, if you look at the followers of people who grew only by insulting others, who don't create anything, who only make videos insulting others, the followers of that person, if you look, are going to be people who are in that energy, even more so with the creator encouraging it.”

“I think we have a responsibility that is joint. I am not responsible for what this person says. And the platform isn't either, but we have a responsibility for how we are going to deal with what this person says and how they are acting. So, on my network, if I notice this, this person will be blocked. They are not going to keep offending another person on my network. Only, I can only block them on my network. I cannot stop them from going to Direct Messages. I cannot stop them from creating a character, a new fake profile to speak, I don't have that power. And that's where the network comes in. So, it is a path that needs to be taken hand-in-hand by many of us.”

5.3. Lack of technical support and disparity in service

Another central criticism is the lack of an effective communication channel to resolve problems that directly affect the creators' work.

NON-EXISTENT OR LOW-QUALITY SUPPORT

Service is described as non-existent, excessively automated, or unpredictable. In critical cases, such as undue bans or account takeovers, the professional feels helpless due to the absence of human resolution channels.

“Support is not the appropriate word, because the relationship is very unilateral. When they need something, then there are little get-togethers, coffee, meetings at headquarters. It's wonderful. When we need something, they disappear.”

“I know other influencers who have had their networks taken down for no apparent reason; months went by and the person stopped monetizing, stopped. Sometimes, it's their only job, right? And there is no support either. So, I think at certain moments the creator feels lonely like that, dealing almost with another machine, right? Instead of a platform that could provide some type of support.”

“People are hacked, suffer SIM swap scams, lose their Instagram, and can't recover it. And this anxiety, this worry of 'I could lose my account at any moment' and if I lose it, the business is stuck there and you're done for, you're in trouble, and, being our source of income, this is very serious! This is, like, ripping a company out of our hands!”

HUMAN SERVICE IS ESSENTIAL

There is a perception that real support from platforms depends on close contacts with company employees; content creators who had account managers or internal contacts reported more ease in resolving problems.

“Look, I already start from the assumption that the platform itself isn't going to help me much with a lot of things. So, I think those who have had help in this sense is because they knew a person who worked at the company and then managed to speed things up in some way.”

“Having these contacts is extremely important indeed. Whenever we need something, we try to internally contact someone to resolve the issues. But, it is very important indeed, I think. To have a healthy job you have to have this other end helping you internally like that, you know?”

DISPARITY IN SERVICE BETWEEN PLATFORMS

Participants' reports suggest that some companies have more mature account management models, while others are perceived as negligent in serving creators. While some platforms offer dedicated account managers, in others creators feel completely abandoned and receive automatic responses instead of human service. The reports expose how much a close relationship with the companies facilitates the resolution of serious problems, such as inability to access an account, and this inconsistency in service between different platforms creates a scenario where creators must deal with very distinct levels of support, making the daily activity even more difficult.

DISPARITY IN SERVICE BY CONTENT CREATOR SIZE

There is a perception that the level of support is unequal among content creators. While influencers with millions of followers tend to receive better service, the vast majority of creators receive little support or are ignored.

“ I think if it were Casimiro, in all these cases, in one day the platform would manifest itself. So, that’s why I say, it depends on performance, right? This gatekeeper exists, right? The person who is there can allow you to achieve something or not.”

“ It’s very easy to have support when you are already big. For those who are small, it’s very difficult. When I was small, I didn’t have much support from these platforms. They only notice those who are among the big ones. And I think everyone starts with little. I think it’s cool to focus on the small ones.”

“ Fine, a tiny account, the person wanting to have the best support... it becomes somewhat unfeasible, perhaps, logistically. But those of us who have accounts with many thousands of followers, hundreds of thousands, needed to have more support in case we go through a situation like this.”

“ I went four days without using my network. Someone tried to invade my account, the platform blocked it, but I also couldn’t prove that I was me. I only managed to resolve it because a person inside the company helped me resolve it, but it wasn’t because there was a channel I entered... no, none of that! It was someone who worked there and who already followed me, who loves my work, who said: ‘Wait a minute, let’s, let’s try to resolve this here, let me see how we resolve it’. And even this person had difficulty in there discovering who she should talk to.”

5.4. Platform logic as harmful

Finally, content creators criticize the functioning of platforms, arguing that the online environment not only favors harmful content but also creates a dynamic that is detrimental to the creators’ self-esteem:

“

I feel that it is a mechanism, a gigantic psychological manipulative engineering that I have an enormous resistance to. I feel that it is a social network that has negative effects on our self-esteem, especially when your profile acts as a representation of ourselves, and the exchange between the public and the influencer is based on this affective currency that is the 'like'. It seems that your value, your self-esteem, is equivalent to the performance of your latest content. So, I feel that this ends up bringing us... you know, that 'hazard pay' that companies have to pay, because I had to do a lot of therapy to deal with the effects of these social networks."

6. Regulatory horizons

The future of the content creator profession is intrinsically tied to its regulation. Discussions revealed that content creators are not disconnected from this debate, but approach it with a mix of fear that the law might limit internet freedom, and hope that it will bring the professional recognition and security the activity so badly needs.

PERCEPTION OF ABSENT OR INEFFECTIVE REGULATION

“

We have rules in the world of art, of sports, that allow children to work, but on the internet it's complete chaos. Kids are out there doing sponsored posts with outrageous content, taking part in advertising for, I don't know, cigarettes, alcohol, gambling, and there are kids in the middle of all this and nobody regulates it. So if the rules that apply in the real world were applied to the internet, we'd already have made real progress, because they're not being applied right now."

6.1. Concerns about regulation

The creators' main fear about regulation is losing autonomy and the freedom that defines the internet.

CENSORSHIP AND SILENCING

Fear of censorship is the most sensitive point. The experience with inconsistent platform moderation, discussed earlier, leads creators to fear that state regulation will replicate or worsen that problem. They fear that new laws will be used to silence critical voices or to impose excessive control over content that, by nature, is experimental and dynamic.

“

People can say [whatever they] want, spread disinformation, be intellectually dishonest and nothing happens. But, also if it goes too far the other way, who's going to regulate that? Who's going to decide? What kind of diploma do you need to be allowed to speak? What area? I think that's a conversation we need to have as a society. We urgently need to have that conversation, but I don't think it's going to be an easy conversation.”

TAX CONCERNS AND IMPACT ON CREATORS' FINANCES

Several creators fear that regulation will negatively impact the finances of their businesses, through the creation of taxes on their activities. It is worth noting that it is not just taxation itself that is a concern, but also the risk of taxation that violates the principle of ability to pay.

“

I think they need to look out for the small ones, because it's very easy to tax people who are actually making 10 million a month from advertising. But whoever isn't making that much, are they going to pay the same thing as the big players? It's just about looking at the small creators from a tax perspective and understanding, within the law, the tax situation of people who create content, because if you put everyone in the same basket, you're being unfair.”

6.2. Opportunities for constructive regulation

Despite the concerns, creators see regulation as a chance to address structural problems in the profession, with the opportunity to promote greater professionalism, security, and transparency. The main ideas and demands raised by interviewees include:

CREATION OF A PROFESSIONAL CHARTER

The demand for a unified set of rights and duties for content creators, like a professional charter, reflects a search for greater career security and basic labor rights. This would help mitigate the current instability of the career and normalize the activity as legitimate work.



There should be, I don't know, I can't exactly explain it, like a SEBRAE for influencers. There should be a school, a place where we know what our responsibilities are, what our rights are, so that everything works properly. Because it's no use one person having the information and another not having it, it needs to be unified. So I think that even though we're losing today what employment contracts used to give us, when everyone was under a formal employment contract, we all knew what our rights were. You knew you were hired, that you signed a contract, that you had set working hours, that you had a thirteenth salary, vacation, everyone knew how work functioned. And now nobody knows how things work, because everyone is in a different situation. So there needs to be a way for this to be the same for everyone."

MINIMUM STANDARDS AND GOOD PRACTICE GUIDES

Creators support the creation of minimum standards and good practice guides for the profession that act not as punitive laws, but as reference points for professionalizing the market. This includes:

- **Better defining expectations and guarantees:** defining in law what constitutes a fair contract, payment terms (avoiding "90 business days"), and what is the creator's responsibility versus the brand's/agency's.

“*If there were a law that said: ‘Payment to any content creator, the brand must pay within 50 days. Beyond that, there are penalties and interest.’ Even if they don’t comply, some won’t, but it’s in the law. We can have that legal protection. I think that’s something that bothers me a lot.”*

- **Standardizing advertising:** establishing clear and uniform rules on the identification of paid content, combating undisclosed advertising, and protecting both the consumer and the creator.

“*[If we had minimum rules] I think that first and foremost, transparency for followers would be important. CONAR (Brazilian Advertising Self-Regulation Council) already states that everyone has to mention and include the hashtag #advertising, but many don’t follow that, they just post a tiny ad on the side, right?”*

6.3. Key points for formalization and legal security

For the profession to develop sustainably, regulation needs to address crucial questions of formalization and legal framing:

OWN CNAE AND TAX ISSUES

Formalizing the activity requires creating a specific CNAE (National Classification of Economic Activities) that accurately reflects the work of content creators. Currently, the absence of a specific code leads to inadequate classifications, such as audiovisual activity classifications, that generate complex tax issues and legal uncertainty, especially regarding tax rates and access to credit lines.

“*We don’t have a profession within Simples Nacional that says ‘content creator.’ So we pay a tax rate that can be more or less, depending. We put it under digital production as if it were cinema, right? Like we work in cinema, but we don’t. So we might actually be paying a higher tax burden right now simply because we’re in the wrong category.”*

IDENTIFICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY METHODS

Regulation is seen as an opportunity to clearly define the creator's legal responsibility for the content they endorse versus the platform's responsibility to moderate third-party toxicity and illegality. This would bring greater clarity to the ethical and legal boundaries of the work.



I think it needs to be made clearer to people who use [the platforms] that this is not a lawless land, that behind every computer, every profile, there's a CPF [taxpayer ID]. And if you do something stupid, say something dumb, you're going to answer for it. I think people still very much have this idea that 'here I can do anything, here I'm protected, nobody's going to know, nobody's going to reach me, I can say whatever I want.'

7. From evidence to best practices

The results presented throughout this report demonstrate that digital content creation is a complex professional activity, marked by structural tensions, ethical dilemmas, and institutional asymmetries. Study participants reject the reduction of their work to the stigmatized figure of the “influencer,” when associated with superficiality, indiscriminate advertising, and the absence of communicative responsibility.

This symbolic dispute over professional identity is not merely terminological: it reveals a search for legitimacy, responsibility, and adequate institutional framing.

The qualitative analysis identified a recurring set of tensions:

- Monetization ↔ ethics and compliance;
- Informational speed ↔ rigor and fact-checking;
- Creative autonomy ↔ engagement logic;
- Freedom of expression ↔ civil liability;
- Professionalization ↔ structural informality;
- Public visibility ↔ mental health.

Given this landscape, we present here a set of reflections and possibilities, grounded in the empirical evidence collected. This is not a recommendation piece with a definitive, prescriptive character. The central goal of this chapter is to offer a qualified analysis of the research findings and, from there, explore paths, indications, and ideas that can serve as a starting point for a broader dialogue with the influence market community.

7.1. Communicative responsibility

Guiding principle	The greater a content creator's reach and the trust they've built, the greater their responsibility for what they communicate.
Empirical basis	Participants reported practices of fact-checking, consulting experts, and publicly correcting errors above all in content involving health, finance, and sensitive social topics.
Structural tension	Engagement logic can prioritize speed and emotional intensity, which can compromise informational rigor.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

- Clarifying when something is a personal opinion versus a fact;
- Citing verifiable sources in public-interest content;
- Providing for correction and public retraction mechanisms when necessary;
- Valuing informational responsibility as a criterion of professionalism.

7.2. Transparency and integrity in advertising

Guiding principle	Transparency is a central foundation of trust between creator and audience.
Empirical basis	Those interviewed clearly rejected undisclosed advertising, mentioned refusing to advertise certain products that conflicted with their values, and demonstrated a concern with maintaining their credibility.
Structural tension	Financial dependence on commercial partnerships and the power asymmetry between creators and brands can pressure ethical decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

- Clear identification of when content is sponsored;
- Establishing guidelines on situations involving conflict of interest;
- Recognizing the right to refuse partnerships;
- Valuing creative autonomy in the execution of campaigns;
- Establishing stricter rules for products that are harmful to society.

7.3. Community management and responsible moderation

Guiding principle	Content creation happens in an interactive space, requiring moderation guidelines that preserve dignity and public debate.
Empirical basis	Participants disagree on the degree of responsibility for third-party comments, but agree on the need to address hate speech and harassment.
Structural tension	Digital environments can reproduce symbolic violence or encourage harmful behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

- Accountability: the person who wrote the offensive message bears primary responsibility for it;
- Defining what is expected of the content creator when it comes to moderating comments;
- Encouraging the use of tools to filter and block inappropriate messages;
- Understanding that responsibility is shared among creators, platforms, and users.

7.4. Working conditions, mental health, and digital security

Guiding principle	For this profession to function fairly and sustainably, the working conditions and mental health impact on creators must be recognized.
Empirical basis	Recurring accounts of anxiety, pressure around metrics, exposure to coordinated attacks, and insecurity about hacking and account blocking indicate structural vulnerability.
Structural tension	Economic dependence on platforms coexists with technical support channels that don't always work, and structures that lack transparency.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

- Recognizing mental health as a relevant dimension of the activity;
- Creating channels or communities aimed at experience-sharing among content creators;
- Establishing minimum guidelines on account security and recovery protocols;
- Creating and ensuring adequate support channels for professional accounts;
- Including in contracts mechanisms to mitigate problems caused by platform instability or failure.

7.5. Contracts and asymmetries in the influence market

Guiding principle	Professionalizing the activity requires reducing asymmetries in contractual relationships with brands and agencies.
Empirical basis	Abusive payment terms, excessive exclusivity clauses, and a lack of transparency in negotiations were reported.
Structural tension	Power imbalance between creators, especially those who are financially dependent on this activity and large brands or agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

- Establishing minimum standards for payment terms;
- Guaranteeing full access to contracts;
- Recognizing creative autonomy as a legitimate contractual element;
- Encouraging transparency in relationships between creators, agencies, and brands.

7.6. Legal formalization and professional recognition

Guiding principle	Ethical recognition of the profession requires adequate legal framing.
Empirical basis	Participants reported uncertainty about tax classification and the absence of a specific CNAE for the activity.
Structural tension	The inadequate framing of the activity within existing economic categories can generate legal uncertainty and disproportionate taxation.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

- Creating a specific CNAE for digital content creators;
- Making clearer what the legal responsibilities of each creator are, taking into account the size of their audience and the potential impact of their content;
- Evaluating models for professional charters or bills of rights;
- Aligning the tax burden with ability to pay.

CONCLUSION

What did we set out to answer with this study?

We investigated how Brazilian digital content creators perceive the challenges, responsibilities, and dynamics that structure their professional activity on digital platforms. Through interviews with content creators working across different segments and audience scales, we sought to understand how these professionals interpret their responsibilities toward their audience, brands, platforms, and society, as well as their perceptions of regulation, sector professionalization, and ethical practices in content production.

The study was guided by the goal of collecting empirical evidence that would allow creators' perspectives to be incorporated into the discussion about good practice standards and institutional dialogue on the role of creators in the digital ecosystem.

And what did we find?

The interviews and focus groups show that digital content creation is seen as a profession in consolidation, with opportunities for visibility and autonomy, but also structural challenges tied to informality, the absence of clear standards, and dependence on actors within the digital ecosystem.

One key finding relates to creators' sense of responsibility. Many recognize the impact of their posts, highlighting the importance of fact-checking, commercial transparency, and public trust.

Another axis addresses professional relationships in the influence market, especially with brands and agencies. Accounts point to power asymmetries and unfavorable patterns, such as long payment terms, rigid briefs, and broad image rights. These

factors reinforce that the sector needs standardization and transparency.

Creators also highlight the centrality of digital platforms as work infrastructure, along with the challenges of that dependence. Inconsistent moderation, lack of effective support, and frequent code changes are sources of instability, especially for those who are financially dependent on their online presence. Finally, a perception emerges that the activity needs greater institutional recognition and professionalization.

Many mention the need for standards in commercial relationships, advertising transparency, better tax framing, and good practice initiatives. Taken together, these findings indicate that while the digital influence market has established itself as an important segment of the creative economy, it still presents institutional and regulatory gaps that impact creators' professional experience.

And why does this matter?

By listening directly to digital content creators, this study enriches the public debate on the role of content creators in the contemporary information ecosystem. Since creators perform increasingly relevant functions in the circulation of information, cultural mediation, and the formation of public opinion, understanding their perceptions and experiences is fundamental to formulating informed and realistic policies, guidelines, and self-regulatory instruments.

Furthermore, the study points to the importance of expanding dialogue between creators, digital platforms, brands, researchers, and public policymakers. Building an empirical base on the practices and perceptions of these professionals can contribute to the development of more balanced regulatory and institutional strategies, capable of promoting innovation, responsibility, and sustainability in the digital ecosystem.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This qualitative exploratory study brought together 24 digital content creators to understand their perceptions of ethics, professional responsibilities, and institutional challenges associated with the activity of influence on platforms. The central goal was in a context of growing social and economic relevance of digital content creation to create a space for qualified listening and reflection on pathways toward professionalizing the sector.

While the interviews and focus groups identified relevant trends, areas of consensus, and tensions, the results do not exhaust the debate. There is room for future studies to deepen understanding of the digital influence ecosystem, its economic, social, and informational dynamics.

Among the possible directions for future research, the following stand out:

Audience perspectives on creators and digital content

The present study focused on the creators' own perceptions, without including the perspective of their followers or the general public. Future research could investigate how different audiences perceive the credibility, responsibility, and social role of content creators, exploring expectations regarding advertising transparency, the reliability of shared information, and the impact of this content on behaviors and opinions.

Analysis of self-perception and vocabulary associated with the activity

The accounts revealed significant disagreement regarding the terminology that defines influencer and content creator activity. These terminological disputes may not be explained solely by ethical values or professionalization strategies, but may also be associated with territorial markers, as some creators suggest. Future studies could test this hypothesis through comparative investigations across regions and audiences, checking whether there are differences in perceptions and legitimacy expectations for each label, in each place.

Impacts of digital work on creators' mental health

Future studies could investigate working conditions in digital content creation, including the "digital occupational hazard" mentioned by participants. This field could analyze how performance metrics, public judgment, platform instability, and pressure for continuous production affect creators' mental health and constitute occupational risks in digital work.

Contractual relationships and power asymmetries in the influence market

Future studies could analyze contractual relationships between creators, brands, and intermediaries, investigating power asymmetries and harmful practices such as long payment terms, broad image rights, and lack of transparency in negotiations.

Tax regimes and classification of content creator activity

Future studies could analyze the tax regimes applicable to content creators in Brazil, investigating difficulties in fitting within existing economic classifications and the impacts of the absence of a clear professional category on tax collection, fiscal compliance, and legal security.

Professional training and educational gaps in the influence market

Future research could broadly examine professional training in digital content creation. Creators face diverse challenges, from managing digital businesses, legal aspects, and contractual relationships, to deeper digital literacy issues regarding how the internet's tools and mechanisms work. Studies could investigate the need for educational programs aimed at the influence market, covering digital entrepreneurship, applied law, career management, and technical and critical competencies related to digital infrastructure, allowing creators to better understand the environments in which they operate and make more informed decisions about their content strategies.

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METHODOLOGY APPENDIX

Title

Voices of Influence: Digital creators' perceptions of identity, market, and responsibility

Research question

How do digital content creators interpret the ethical dilemmas, professional responsibilities, and institutional relationships that structure their activity?

Methodology summary

This study adopted a qualitative approach to map perceptions, dilemmas, and ethical practices associated with digital content creation. The research investigated the production of educational content, platform engagement, and visibility. Data collection was structured in two stages: (1) semi-structured in-depth interviews with 11 digital influencers; (2) 2 focus groups with a total of 13 influencers. Data analysis was carried out through content analysis with thematic categorization of interviews and focus groups from their transcripts.

Data collection

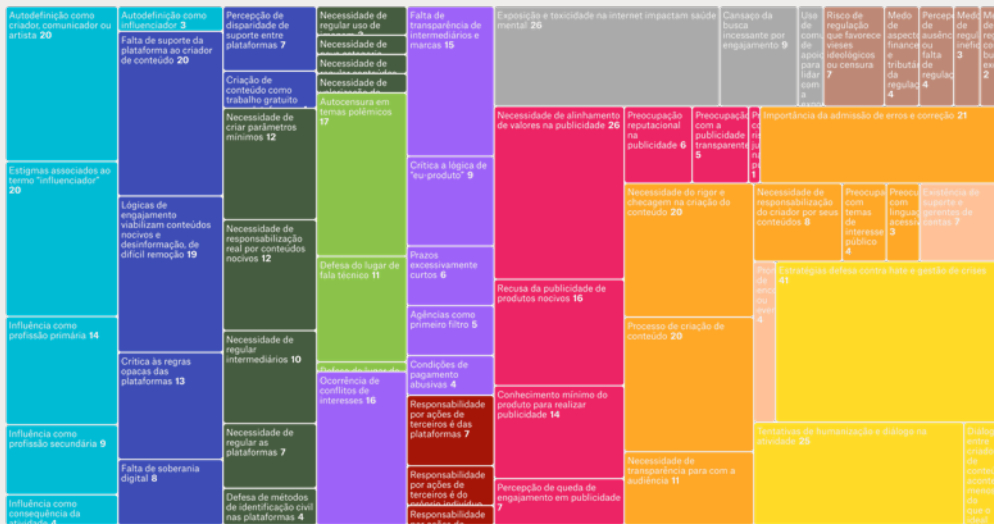
As part of the project's scope under the partnership, the mapping, initial outreach, and selection of content creators for interviews and focus groups was carried out exclusively by Redes Cordiais from its existing network of contacts with content creators (convenience sample). Following participant confirmation, Reglab conducted the activities between January 27 and March 2, 2026, in an online format, with an average duration of 1 hour for interviews and 3 hours for focus groups.

Both types of dynamics were conducted using semi-structured scripts covering topics related to professional context and practice, good content creation practices, advertising and transparency, sociability, self-regulation, and professional ethical issues. The sessions were led by Reglab's research team and recorded with participants' express authorization through a free and informed consent form. The recordings were fully transcribed and stored.

Data Analysis

In this study, we adopted content analysis with thematic categorization of interviews and focus groups, a qualitative research method that helps identify patterns and themes that appear frequently in participants' statements. The process works as follows:

1. We carefully read the transcripts and flagged the most important passages, assigning each a descriptive label—short words or phrases that summarized what was being said. We called these codes.
2. We then grouped these codes by similarity, creating larger clusters that function as categories. This method ensures that our conclusions are always grounded in what interviewees actually said, not in assumptions. The full transcripts of the interviews were coded in Atlas.ti software, and the codes were reviewed by both researchers responsible for the study, a process that ensured interpretive consistency and reliability, and adherence to the original empirical corpus. The analysis stage was conducted between February 9 and March 5, 2026. The codes used in each category are presented below, according to their frequency:



Category 1: Activity definitions

- Self-definition as a creator, communicator, or artist
- Self-definition as an influencer
- Influence as a consequence
- Influence as a primary career
- Influence as a secondary career
- Stigmas associated with the term “influencer”

Category 2: Best practices for content creators

- Content creation process
- Need for rigor and fact-checking in content creation
- Need for creator accountability for their content

- A place of responsibility and transparency toward the audience
- Importance of admitting errors and making corrections
- Concern with themes of public interest
- Concern with accessible language

Category 3: Basic aspects of advertising

- Refusal to advertise harmful products
- Need for value alignment in advertising
- Concern with transparent advertising
- Reputational concern in advertising
- Concern with legal risks in advertising
- Minimum product knowledge for advertising
- Perception of engagement drop in advertising

Category 4: Perceptions of intermediaries and market practices

- Agencies as the first filter
- Occurrence of conflicts of interest
- Lack of transparency from intermediaries and brands
- Abusive payment terms
- Excessively short deadlines
- Criticism of the "me-as-a-product" logic

Category 5: Accountability for third-party content

- Responsibility for third-party actions lies with platforms
- Responsibility for third-party actions lies with the content creator
- Responsibility for third-party actions lies with the individual users

Category 6: Freedom of expression and limits

- Defense of the technical standpoint
- Defense of the non-technical standpoint
- Self-censorship on controversial topics

Category 7: Interactions between creators and platform users

- Defense strategies against hate and crisis management
- Attempts at humanization and dialogue in the activity
- Dialogue among content creators happens less than ideal

Category 8: Mental health impacts

- Exposure and toxicity on the internet impact mental health
- Exhaustion from the relentless pursuit of engagement
- Use of support communities to deal with online exposure

Category 9: Best practices by platforms

- Promotion of meetings or events
- Existence of support and account managers

Category 10: Criticisms of platforms

- Engagement logics enable harmful content and misinformation, which are difficult to remove
- Criticism of opaque platform rules
- Lack of platform support for the content creator
- Perception of support disparity between platforms
- Content creation as free labor for platforms
- Lack of digital sovereignty

Category 11: Regulatory fears

- Perception of absence or lack of regulation
- Fear of inefficient regulation
- Fear of regulation with excessive bureaucracy
- Fear of financial and tax aspects of regulation
- Risk of regulation that favors ideological biases or censorship

Category 12: Essential points of regulation

- Need to regulate intermediaries
- Need to regulate platforms
- Need for real accountability for harmful content
- Defense of civil identification methods on platforms
- Need to regulate AI content
- Need to regulate image use
- Need to create minimum parameters
- Need for a new tax category
- Need to value small content creators

Bias reduction procedures

Established theoretical-methodological references: the data collection and analysis techniques adopted in this study followed recognized practices from the academic literature. The methodological approach was discussed internally before and after the interviews, allowing for the incorporation of critiques and suggestions into the final research design, prior to the start of the analysis process.

Methodological triangulation: in the analysis and commentary section, empirical findings were contrasted with documentary analysis of secondary sources, with the aim of comparing, validating, and reinforcing the consistency of the interpretations built from the interviews. These references, when used, were expressly cited throughout the text.

Independent dual analysis: two researchers reviewed the set of codes and themes in a cross-referenced manner, reducing individual biases. The final definition of themes was approved by two other researchers from the Reglab team, **ensuring multiple perspectives and control of individual biases in data interpretation.**

Record-keeping and methodological transparency: all stages of the analytical process were documented, including successive versions of the drafting files. This practice allows the methodological path to be traced, in line with Reglab's guidelines for transparency and replicability.

Other methodological limitations

Preliminary nature of the research: this research was not intended to be a final and definitive report on the regulation and professional recognition of digital content creators, but rather a report with empirical findings for the development of future initiatives on the topic.

Dependence on external tools: part of the analytical process depended on the use and performance of proprietary software, which may limit replicability in different contexts.

Qualitative scope and exploratory nature: the findings of this study derive from the perceptions of 24 Brazilian content creators. The narratives offer analytical depth and interpretive richness, but do not claim statistical representativeness.

Small and convenience sample: the small sample size may have introduced biases, since content creators who declined to participate in the research, as well as those who had no contact with the Redes Cordiais organization, may have different perspectives, experiences, and motivations from those who were available for interviews.

Absence of primary data triangulation: the study relied exclusively on interviews and focus groups, without complementary analysis of the digital influencers' content, direct observation of content creation practices, or consultation of other primary data sources that could have enriched or validated the accounts collected.

Reliance on self-reporting: data were obtained through creators' own narratives about their practices, perceptions, and experiences, without direct observation of their work or analysis of the actual engagement of followers with the content produced. This reliance may have introduced social desirability or memory biases.

Temporal scope: **data were collected between January and March 2026, in a specific context of the digital influence market. Given the rapid transformation of digital platform dynamics and technology-mediated content creation practices, the findings reflect the landscape in effect at that time, which may limit their temporal validity in future analyses.

Software used

The software used in developing this study were:

Adobe Creative Suite for layout and finalization of graphics and illustrations;

Atlas.ti for organizing, coding, and analyzing qualitative data;

Gemini for audio transcription of interview and focus group sessions, brainstorming, information synthesis, grammar review (spelling, grammar, and synonym suggestions), language adaptation, and alignment with the Reglab Style Manual, image and illustration generation;

Notion AI for text editing, research organization, and schedule structuring.

Ethical guidelines

Research partnership and funding: this research is an initiative developed in partnership between Reglab and Redes Cordiais, funded by YouTube Brazil. Although it is a commissioned study, Reglab maintained full editorial and methodological control over the project, with autonomous definition of methodology, analysis of results, and drafting of this findings report. The authors preserved full professional independence and take full responsibility for the content and conclusions presented.

Personal data processing: the research involved the processing of personal data only during the collection and analysis stages, in a limited and proportionate manner relative to the study's objectives, in compliance with Law 13,709/2018 (LGPD).

Legal basis: all participants formally authorized their participation by signing a consent form, with full knowledge of the study's objectives and the use of the data.

Purpose and adequacy: the data were used exclusively for the purposes of this research, in accordance with the consent obtained, and were not used for any other purpose.

Minimization and anonymization: personally identifiable information that was not relevant to the study's objectives was anonymized in the transcripts and removed from the active database.

Confidentiality and data security: in the presentation of results, data were kept confidential and quotes were adjusted where necessary to preserve source confidentiality. Only a restricted number of Reglab and Redes Cordiais researchers directly involved in the project had access to personal data and original documents.

Record-keeping and information security: files were stored with password-based access control and in compliance with Reglab's internal information security policies.

Retention and disposal: data will be stored for up to 12 months, exclusively for methodological audit purposes and potential replication, and will subsequently be deleted.

Responsible use of public data: although some of the data analyzed are publicly available, their use was carried out in a responsible and ethical manner, with the exclusive purpose of independent research.

Methodological transparency: the research methodology was described in detail to ensure transparency and replicability, contributing to scientific integrity and enabling independent validation of results.

Non-discrimination and respect for diversity: the research was conducted in a way that respects diversity and avoids any form of discrimination.

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