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## **FRAMING A BRAZILIAN SINGER AND ACTIVIST: ASYMMETRIES BETWEEN PORTUGUESE CULTURAL COVERAGE AND TIKTOK**

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### **Introduction**

Brazil and Portugal have been connected since the 16th century, when European colonial occupation started. Their shared history is marked by significant events such as the genocide of Indigenous peoples, the transatlantic slave trade, the relocation of the Portuguese court to Brazil in 1808, and multiple migration waves. By 2022, Brazilians had become the largest immigrant group in Portugal (Lopes & Sousa, 2023). The common language (Portuguese) allows a flux of cultural products between the two countries, although there is a gap in studies that analyze them considering the colonial context.

Previous studies (Baptista, 2017; Müller, 2023) identified the Portuguese cultural coverage as aligned with the country's cultural industries and elites. In a study focused on Brazilian culture in Portugal, Müller (2023) indicates little space for decolonial perspectives and issues such as racism, sexism, and transphobia. Additionally, the majority of the people featured were male. The Brazilian singer and activist Linn da Quebrada is an exception: the only trans person highlighted two times in the Portuguese newspaper *Público* (Müller, 2021). Linn has been associated with the idea of a 'revolutionary Brazil' and presented as a leading force in the feminist and queer movements.

Based on this scenario, this paper aims to identify, seven years later, the main themes and narratives circulating the Brazilian Linn da Quebrada in Portugal in a newspaper (*Público*) and a social platform (TikTok).

### **Theoretical framework**

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We understand that coloniality is expressed in three distinct dimensions: power, being, and knowledge (Quijano, 2005; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). For instance, racism and sexism have grounded the notion of coloniality of being. Moreover, decolonial praxis acts within the dominant order's cracks, margins, and borders (Walsh, 2018).

When we analyze these narratives on the internet, netnography (Kozinets et al., 2014; 2024) offers valuable insights into understanding the public discourses and narratives surrounding public and cultural figures. The analysis of these interactions has illuminated how discourses of identity and authenticity are mobilized within the digital culture (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Herbst & Mynett, 2022). Characterized by its algorithm-driven content distribution and participatory culture, TikTok is a fertile ground for cultural expression, where users negotiate authenticity and self-presentation through remix culture, duets, and hashtags (Zeng & Abidin, 2021).

## Methods

This paper focuses on the Brazilian singer Linn da Quebrada and aims to identify themes and narratives about her in the Portuguese newspaper *Público* and on TikTok. Using a decolonial approach, we focus on Linn because she was an exception in the Portuguese cultural coverage of Brazil (Müller, 2021; 2023).

The research design is structured in two axes: 1) thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of digital news pieces about Linn published in *Público* newspaper (2019-2024); 2) netnography (Kozinets et al., 2024) on TikTok (top videos and comments).

Our thematic analysis sample was selected using keywords from *Público*'s digital archive between January 2019 and December 2024. We identified 24 pieces (N=24) mentioning Linn and four thematic axes: Queer/Feminist Figure (10), Cultural Event (8), Partnership (5), and Reality Show (1).

In the second stage, our netnography approach simulates the TikTok user experience of someone interested in learning more about Linn da Quebrada. We searched for her name on the platform and analyzed the results. We examined what TikTok's algorithm prioritizes in the Top section and explored the comment sections of the featured videos to identify narratives about Linn within TikTok's online public sphere. We performed these keyword searches from Portugal to simulate a Portuguese user experience. The same searches were applied to the desktop-browser version of TikTok. No data was stored, and all examples referenced in this study were anonymized. During five days (February 24-28, 2025), we analyzed the top-ranked videos (N=16) and performed at least three 'refreshes' on the searches to assess potential variations in TikTok's results. In sequence, we explored the 2043 comments associated with these videos.

## Findings

The majority of news pieces (12) were published in 2019, followed by 2021 (4), 2020 (3), 2023 (1), and 2024 (1). Although Linn is not singly featured in the pieces, she is mentioned in them. Thematic analysis revealed four axes: Queer/Feminist Figure (10),

Cultural Event (8), Partnership (5), and Reality Show (1). Aligned with pieces published in 2018, the most prominent axis cites Linn as an icon of queer/feminist artistic movement. Associations were made by distinct actors, such as Brazilian funk singers, Portuguese singers, and art curators. An idea of Linn as a revolutionary icon of 'new Brazilian music' appears in these pieces. The second axis, Cultural Event, gathers mentions related to events that had or would have Linn's participation as a singer or keynote speaker. The third axis, Partnership, concerns partnerships with other artists, Brazilian or Portuguese. The minority axis involves a mention of Linn's participation in a reality show, Big Brother Brasil (BBB), in an opinion text.

Our netnography findings show that the TikTok algorithm favors a limited set of videos, the majority of which date from 2022 or later, with the top results repeated despite multiple searches and refresh attempts. This suggests a feedback loop in which engagement metrics such as likes and comments heavily dictate visibility. The dominant types of content associated with Linn are 1) performances and 2) participation in podcasts or interviews, followed by 3) her music videos, 4) her statements surrounding gender identity, and 5) violence against transgender people. The prominence of live performances and media appearances suggests a strong audience engagement with Linn's artistic output and public persona. Simultaneously, the recurrence of gender identity discourse and transphobia-related topics reveals that ongoing societal debates also shape her presence on TikTok.

We analyzed 2043 comments on these videos. The most common theme (49%) is the appreciation of her music and lyrics, emphasizing the impact of her artistic contributions. The second (24%) is the appreciation of Linn's persona, followed by references to her participation in the reality show BBB (12%). Her appearance transformation (6%) is also identified, especially before BBB. The comments have two negative themes: misgendering (7%) and reductive remarks about her music (2%). Both streams of comments indicate persistent transphobia and a refusal by certain users to acknowledge Linn's gender identity.

## **Discussion**

Findings reveal asymmetries between themes and narratives circulating Linn da Quebrada in Portugal. A thematic analysis of the news pieces revealed that Linn is frequently portrayed as a trans/feminist icon, highlighted by her presence at several events and establishing partnerships with other musicians. The most prominent content on TikTok is performances, interviews, and music videos. Gender identity and violence against transgender people are less prominent on the social platform. Users' comments focused primarily on her music and persona, and her participation in a reality show is the third axis. It was also possible to identify hate speech, namely, transphobia, against her.

Newspaper coverage indicates that Linn is recognized in Portugal as an artist and activist who influences others and brings to light decolonial issues such as transphobia. On the other hand, TikTok's findings reveal less space for identity issues, with decolonial perspectives being less prominent in algorithmic curation. Users' comments follow this line, but include transphobia against her. The idea that Linn is a revolutionary

icon of 'new Brazilian music' does not echo on TikTok.

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