

IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF BRAZILIAN WOMEN IN TORONTO, CANADA

Michel Mott Machado¹ , Eduardo Picanço Cruz^{2*} , Roberto Pessoa de Queiroz Falcão³ ¹Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie – São Paulo (SP), Brazil.²Universidade Federal Fluminense – Niterói (RJ), Brazil.³Universidade do Grande Rio – Duque de Caxias (RJ), Brazil.

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article history:

Received on August 25, 2022

Accepted on Janeiro 13, 2023

Available online on December 6, 2022

Double Blind Review System**Editor in Chief:**

Fernanda Cahen

Keywords:

Entrepreneurship

Brazilian immigrants

Toronto

Canada

ABSTRACT

Objective: This article aimed to analyze the sociodemographic and entrepreneurial profile of Brazilian immigrant women in Toronto, Canada, as well as characteristics of the businesses themselves. **Method:** Data were collected in Toronto through the application of questionnaires with 47 Brazilian women entrepreneurs and 22 semi-structured interviews, representing a multimethod approach. The analysis included descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis of trajectories and life histories. **Main Results:** Respondents are mostly from the Southeast region of Brazil, white, married, with children, aged between 30 and 59 years, high level of education and proficiency in English. Most of the businesses are small/individual, and related to the service sector. The target market is mainly the Brazilians residing in Canada, therefore, ethnic and co-ethnic. The importance of networking to entrepreneurial activities is widely recognized. Difficulties related to balancing work and family were also pointed out, which requires further investigation on the influence of family resources and gender roles on the entrepreneurship paths of Brazilian immigrant women in Canada. The study also highlights the intersectionality of the insertion of Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurs in the Canadian society. **Relevance/Originality:** The study focuses on a poorly researched audience, that of Brazilian entrepreneurs in Canada, highlighting important elements of their work in the country. **Theoretical/Methodological Contributions:** The article contributes to the literature on female entrepreneurship in Canada.

INTRODUCTION

The discussion on the consequences of migratory movements for host countries has been intensified over the years, although these population flows do not comprise a new phenomenon. Studies have been directed, for example, to the social and economic impacts of these large migratory flows (Trenz & Trian-

dafyllidou, 2017; Cruz et al., 2020), as well as to the influence of these demographic movements in the redesign of the countries in which they occur refers to aspects of the international division of labor (De Haas, 2010; Kerwin, 2020; Sassen, 1988).

Other studies have pointed to entrepreneurship as one of the forms of inclusion and economic ascension of immigrants in host societies (Akbar, 2019; Cruz

*Corresponding author: epicanco@id.uff.br<https://doi.org/10.18568/internext.v18i2.727>

et al., 2017a; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Machado et al., 2021c; Portes & Zhou, 1992; Rath, 2000).

Regarding the production of knowledge about the phenomenon, which is the focus of this paper, there is also evidence that academic interest in the subject of immigrant entrepreneurship has grown (Cruz & Falcão, 2016; Gomes & Bourlegat, 2020). In Brazil, particularly, the academic literature has produced papers on both the migratory and entrepreneurial trajectory of Brazilian immigrants in several countries (Cruz et al., 2017b; Cruz et al., 2018a; Falcão et al., 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b), as well as regarding the entrepreneurship of foreign immigrants in Brazil (Cruz et al., 2018b; Diniz et al., 2019).

When observing the recent scenario of economic and social instability of Brazil, there is an increasing intensification of the emigration of Brazilians to overseas destinations, with Canada being an important migratory destination (Falcão et al., 2021b, 2022; Machado et al., 2020, 2021a, 2021b; Segal, 2018, 2021; Silva, 2017). Despite the history between Brazil and Canada dating back to the colonial period of the two countries, which is evidenced in economic, political, and migratory terms, there is not a large amount of research focused on this relationship (Barbosa, 2017). However, previous studies sought to analyze the phenomenon of Brazilian immigration to North America (Goza, 1994; Margolis, 1994, 2013), as well as to Canada (Goza, 1999), in particular.

Assuming the thematic point of view of Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurship in the Canadian context, it is necessary to recognize that little is known about this phenomenon. Thus, when considering the consistent increase in the Brazilian immigrant population in Canada and some gaps in knowledge, especially regarding its entrepreneurial activities and characteristics (Falcão et al., 2021a, 2022; Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b), it is considered relevant to explore a topic that deserves attention: discussing aspects of entrepreneurship by Brazilian immigrants in Canada. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the sociodemographic and entrepreneurial profile of Brazilian immigrant women in Toronto and the characteristics of their businesses. From a theoretical point of view, the article aims to broaden the understanding of the inception of Brazilian immigrants' businesses over their related and conditioning factors, given that it

is a nationality that is still little studied in Canada. In practical terms, its objective is to contribute by pointing out ways for future/ current Brazilian immigrant female entrepreneurs, to act with greater precision in business management.

1. KNOWLEDGE EVOLUTION REGARDING ETHNIC AND IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In general terms, studies focused on ethnic entrepreneurship are presented in interdisciplinary interaction (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013; Cruz & Falcão, 2016). Among the areas of knowledge that formed this field, at least in its early days, there is the influence of sociology and geography (urban studies) in addition to the perspective of sociological and economic aspects. This is supported by the comparative analysis of the income generation of the various ethnic groups (Portes & Zhou, 1992) and in Bourdieu's theory of capitals (2018), some of whom were crucial authors in the creation and conformation of these streams of investigation (Alba & Logan, 1993; Alba & Nee, 2014; Portes & Zhou, 1992; Zhou, 2004).

It is also worth noting, according to the authors, that immigrant entrepreneurship occurs when migrants (or immigrants) identify and explore economic opportunities to start their own businesses in the host country. In turn, ethnic entrepreneurship is linked to a common cultural heritage and focuses on satisfying the needs and preferences of ethnic consumers in the host nation.

Among the seminal dimensions of the field of immigrant entrepreneurship, economic, political-institutional, and social environment approaches stand out, having as main directions the following streams of study:

- "ethnic minorities and enclaves" (Bonacich, 1973);
- "disadvantages in the labor market and self-employment" (Light, 1979; Portes & Zhou, 1992);
- "ethnic entrepreneurship" (Bonacich, 1993);
- "interactive model" or "integrative (economic/institutional) approach" (Waldinger et al., 1990);
- "political economy of immigrant businesses" (Sassen, 1991);
- "immigrant businesses and the role of government" or "political-institutional structure" (Bonacich, 1993).

Several authors have demonstrated the importance of the general characteristics of immigrant entrepreneurship, including their social environment (Cruz et al., 2017a; Portes & Zhou, 1992). From this perspective, an approach that stands out is one that emphasizes the sociological aspects of the phenomenon, which encompasses the impacts of growing support networks for immigrants at the beginning of their businesses (Elo & Volovelsky, 2017).

Thus, a key element pointed out by several authors regarding immigrant entrepreneurship is the formation of social networks, functioning both as a support mechanism and as a guide in the selection of destinations and business opportunities, with the occurrence of three types of networks that are observed: of origin (ethnic, national), of destination and of practice (industry) (Drori et al., 2009). Furthermore, it was found that the networks formed in ethnic enclaves, or immigrant communities established in host countries, reduce immigration barriers, expand economic opportunities, and can promote an ecosystem of companies that supply this market (Cruz et al., 2018a; Drori et al., 2009; Portes & Zhou, 1992).

In general, basically two types of immigrant entrepreneurs are considered: those who are socially identified with their ethnic communities; and those who are not identified with them. The former tend to be more likely to become entrepreneurs within the ethnic enclave, in addition to seeking to improve their community through altruistic actions, such as helping a future competitor to establish itself (Lee, 1999).

With this idea in mind, Cruz et al. (2020) developed a framework for the taxonomy of immigrant/ethnic businesses (ethnic niche market; exotic product market for local customers; specific interests' market; middlemen minority businesses; generic local market), having as reference the affiliation with the ethnic community (yes/no) and the target market (ethnic and co-ethnic; local consumer). Therefore, the referred taxonomy proposal of ethnic/immigrant business opportunities advances on the perspective proposed by Portes and Zhou (1992), by allowing the four types of business opportunities to be analyzed by their dynamics in the relationship networks, interactions with customers, adaptations to products and/or services, work relationships, among other aspects.

More recently, there have been proposals to advance the frontiers of studies focused on immigrant

entrepreneurship, by seeking to look at the interrelationship between this phenomenon and urban governance. In this stream of studies, five new research paths have been suggested:

- going beyond the city boundaries;
- going beyond the metropolis and exploring rural and peripheral areas;
- exploring the conditions for the survival of companies/small companies;
- going beyond the description — of well-known ethnic groups;
- going beyond unidirectional impact and therefore towards a multilevel context (Rath & Schutjens, 2019).

Another frontier of that field of study concerns the discussion of immigrant entrepreneurship in the light of administrative and organizational theories, with the aim of understanding its business dynamics, as well as proposing models that will increase the chance of survival of these organizations (Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b).

Several studies show that many immigrants start their businesses after a discouraging experience in the formal labor market, where they face language barriers, low wages, racial or ethnic discrimination, and sometimes exploitation (e.g., Collins & Low, 2010; Huang et al., 2014). Therefore, in many cases, for immigrant women, self-employment or small business entrepreneurship is a potential way to escape unemployment after having worked in formal jobs, or even in the face of non-inclusion in the labor market, as opposed to a second generation of immigrants, which is more skilled or educated (Hillman, 1999). Literature also explains the motivation that leads a woman to opt for entrepreneurship through two major themes: “disenchantment with employment” and “desire for independence” (Collins & Low, 2010).

According to Constant and Schultz-Nielsen (2004), self-employment is more of an advance than a starting point of emancipation or an adaptation process. Thus, it is a way for immigrant women to reach a respectable social status, although not necessarily corresponding to higher earnings. However, despite the evidence that skilled women migrate more than men, little attention has been paid to the extent to which immigration policies impact women and men differently, resulting in gender inequalities, and the valuation of skills is gender-based in its criteria and

outcomes (see Brücker et al., 2012; Cerna & Czaika, 2016; Czaika & Parsons, 2017; Chand & Tung, 2019; Kofman, 2014).

2. SOME APPROACHES TO BRAZILIAN IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

It is recognized that Canada is a country that has seen immigration as a means for its demographic and economic growth (Fraga, 2018; Machado et al., 2020, 2021a, 2021b), having adopted a selective immigration policy, based on qualifications, professional skills (Borjas, 2018; Knowles, 2016), and multiculturalism (Cameron, 2004; Machado & Teixeira, 2016). In 2002, Canada officially adopted three fundamental types of permanent residency:

- family reunification;
- economic;
- humanitarian (Fraga, 2018).

Although immigration is vital to Canadian society and economy, it cannot be said that this phenomenon is free of social and political tensions, among which are the barriers to entry into the labor market (Fraga, 2018), resulting from discrimination of immigrants (Taylor, 2019) — which, by the way, is not uncommon in multicultural societies (Nabavi & Lund, 2016).

In the case of Brazilian emigration, it is worth of note that, mainly since the 1980s, Brazilians have sought destinations in North America or Europe. In the 1990s and 2000s, the political-economic crisis and violence/ insecurity boosted growing Brazilian migration flows (Sega, 2018), with Toronto (in the Province of Ontario) being one of the main destinations for those who moved to Canada (Falcão et al., 2022; Fraga, 2018; Machado et al., 2021a; Sega, 2018). In general, Canada has been presented as an important destination for Brazilian migration, motivated not exclusively for economic reasons, but by a broader and widely accepted state of insecurity in Brazil (Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b; Schervier, 2005; Sega, 2018, 2021).

Thus, if on the one hand there are elements that tend to expel this Brazilian citizen from Brazil, on the other hand, it is also worth noting factors that tend to attract him/her to Canada (Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b), which can often fall in a positive, optimistic, and romanticized representation (Sega, 2021).

Regarding traits of their sociodemographic profile, it appears that these Brazilian immigrants are generally highly skilled and belong to the upper-middle class in their country of origin (Machado et al., 2021a; Sega, 2018). Despite that, it cannot be said that the labor status of Brazilians who have recently arrived in the country is favorable in Canada (Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b), and it is not uncommon for them to find work in the informal sector, often in enterprises of Portuguese people, in branches of activity such as construction, cleaning services, restaurants, among other types of lower-paid work (Margolis, 2013).

Empirical research carried out in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) also found that most Brazilian immigrant businesses were mostly hiring Brazilian labor for several reasons (Falcão et al., 2021b; Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b). As for the strategies adopted by adult Brazilian immigrants to enter Canada, the main one is through obtaining a student visa (Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b). From the beginning of their stay, they begin to build relationship networks (Machado et al., 2021a; Sega, 2018), as well as the so-called “Canadian experience”, a crucial issue to get a job and/or bank credit (Dam et al., 2018; Machado et al., 2021b; Sá & Sabzalieva, 2018; Trilokekar & El Masri, 2019). During the initial stage of immigration, many also develop local language skills and work experience in the country, which enables them to apply for a permanent resident status (Falcão et al., 2021b).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research employed a multi-method approach, consisting of a descriptive quantitative stage, which used questionnaires sent to 120 women and obtained responses from 47 women entrepreneurs established in the GTA; followed by a qualitative stage, in which 22 semi-structured interviews were carried out face-to-face, in addition to unsystematic observation at the firm sites (streets, neighborhoods, firm premises themselves). Therefore, the main data collection techniques used were unsystematic observation, the application of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews (Ghauri et al., 2020).

It is worth noting that the sample was selected by convenience, and, for selection purposes, the following criteria were defined:

- Brazilian nationality, acting as an entrepreneur, regardless of the activity branch, size or time of the business;
- varying length of stay in Canada;
- varying ages;
- varying educational/academic background.

The questionnaires were applied electronically, using Google Forms, with the instrument encompassing the following guiding items:

- sociodemographic profile;
- decision to leave Brazil and aspects related to immigration;
- business inception in Canada and aspects of the entrepreneurial experience;
- profile of the businesses;
- reports on current businesses;
- reports on repatriation.

A non-probabilistic and intentional sample was adopted for the survey (Ghauri et al., 2020), with 47 participants, out of a total of 120 questionnaires sent. Previously to the arrival of the researcher who was responsible for the field investigation in Toronto, a first interview was conducted with a Canadian consular representative (RCC) in the city of São Paulo (SP), using a specific semi-structured interview script. Noteworthy, such a strategy proved to be important, among other things, to facilitate access to the research field in Canada.

The following step was the collection of secondary data on businesses and locations that concentrate the most Brazilian immigrants in Toronto, as well as a bibliographical search on the subject. With a view to identifying businesses owned by Brazilian immigrants, an unsystematic observation was carried out, *in loco*, through walks in places with the highest concentration of Brazilian immigrants and conversations with local entrepreneurs, to confirm whether the businesses were in fact of Brazilian owners. Additionally, visible aspects of the business were reported (for example, the use of symbols that refer to the Brazilian nationality and culture, use of Portuguese language, etc.). At this stage of the investigation, field notes were helpful in recording impressions and insights from these observations.

Another strategy adopted for finding potential research participants was checking advertisements

in newspapers and/or magazines of the Portuguese-speaking ethnic community, especially media run by Brazilian immigrants. The investigation of social media (LinkedIn and Facebook) complemented the search for participants. Once the business/ entrepreneurs were identified, contact was established by email and/or telephone and/or social media, to make the invitation. In addition, the snowball sampling technique (Bailey, 2019) was used, with indications given by the respondents.

The interviews focused on aspects related to migratory experience, previous professional and/or entrepreneurial experiences, as well as attitudinal and/or behavioral issues related to entrepreneurship, among other points. At this stage of the investigation, 22 interviews were conducted using the convenience sampling criterion (Sampieri et al., 2013), with the selection of 47 respondents from the sample who would be willing to collaborate with the in-depth interview phase.

For the analysis of the data obtained through the survey, simple descriptive statistics were adopted. Regarding the interpretation of data from the interviews, the content analysis method was used (Bardin, 2011). The results obtained were later confronted with the recent extant literature on the subject, to achieve the research aims and to contribute to the progress of the field of study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study with 47 Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurs (BIE) in Canada are presented as follows — 22 of which, in addition to having answered the questionnaire, were also interviewed (see Chart 1). Additionally, two consular representatives were interviewed, namely one from Brazil (RCB) and the other from Canada (RCC).

Most of the sample stated that they had children (72.34%, n= 34), in addition to being from the Southeast region of Brazil, with emphasis on São Paulo (36.2%, n= 17), Minas Gerais (23.4%, n= 11) and Rio de Janeiro (12.8%, n= 6). These are states that have the highest gross domestic products in the country, which may call into question a possible traditional economic migration, driven exclusively by the lack of resources (Mayblin, 2019). Regarding the state of São Paulo, the city of São Paulo proved to be the place

Chart 1. Sociodemographic profile of the 47 participants.

Color of skin/race (%)		Marital status (%)		Age (years %)	
Yellow/Asian	8.51	Married	65.96	Between 25–29	6.38
White	61.70	Divorced	14.89	Between 30–34	17.02
Brown/Mestizo	23.40	Single	10.64	Between 35–39	14.89
Black/African	6.38	Separated	4.26	Between 40–44	14.89
		Widower	2.13	Between 45–49	10.64
		N/A	2.13	Between 50–54	8.51
				Between 55–59	12.77
				Between 60–64	8.51
				Between 65–69	2.13
				Between 70–74	2.13
				N/A	2.13

N/A: not available.

where most of the participants lived before migrating to Canada (18.33%, $n=11$).

Regarding their previous occupations in Brazil before migrating to Canada, 55.32% ($n=26$) answered that they were employed, 29.79% ($n=14$) stated they were business owners and 12.77% ($n=6$) that they did not work. Regarding their occupation when they left Brazil, there were similar findings to those of Cruz et al. (2018a), reinforcing that, among women immigrant business owners, the exclusive economic cause for migrating is not so strong.

As for the level of schooling, there was a high level of formal educational (40.4% of bachelor's degree holders; and 38.3% of postgraduate degree holders), which corroborates several studies that point out that Brazilian immigrants tend to have a high level of schooling. This positions Brazilians as highly skilled immigrants, for instance, when compared to other nationalities who migrate to Australia (Cruz et al., 2016). This profile corroborates the policy of attracting skilled labor to the country, even though these skilled individuals often have some difficulty entering the formal labor market (see Brückner et al., 2012; Cerna & Czaika, 2016; Chand & Tung, 2019; Czaika & Parsons, 2017; Kofman, 2014). However, it is known that policies for the inclusion of individuals framed as capable and their reception in the country do not always involve valuing skills based on gender aspects.

There was also a declared high level of English proficiency in reading (85.11%, $n=40$), speaking (78.72%,

$n=37$), writing (70.21%, $n=33$) and comprehension (91.49%, $n=43$). As for French, Canada's other official language, there was by contrast a significantly lower level of proficiency in reading (reads very well, 8.51%, $n=4$), speaking (speaks well, 2.13%, $n=1$), writing (writes well, 2.13%, $n=1$) and comprehension (understands well, 8.51%, $n=4$).

Regarding the linguistic gap of Brazilians, Finardi and França (2016) point out that training in the English language is incipient. Bozorgmehr and Ketcham (2021), in turn, stress the importance of speaking the language of the country of destination for the success of the immigrant entrepreneur. Therefore, the high rate of respondents who declared reading, speaking, writing, and understanding English very well suggests that this is linked more to the fact that most of them have had business experiences — as entrepreneurs or executives — in addition to a higher formal educational level, than precisely because they are Brazilian.

In the case of the French language, specifically, given that the city of Montreal placed Brazil in an area of qualified non-French-speaking immigration for the Government of Québec, aiming to meet the demand for skilled labor in the province (Silva, 2017), this brings interesting possibilities. However, the low level of proficiency declared by the respondents may suggest some resistance due to the linguistic difficulties regarding the French language proficiency, a fact corroborated by Silva (2017), which, therefore, tends to limit the use of possibilities glimpsed.

When thinking about the relationship between the native language and the immigrant business model, Bonder (2017) highlights that the native language affects the types of business and how they position themselves. This view, in a way, is in line with the immigrant business taxonomy framework proposed by Cruz et al. (2020), so that it is expected that women business owners with less ability to express themselves in the local language will seek the strategies of the higher quadrants of that model.

In this case, it appears that BIE in Toronto, especially when they do not speak the language of the destination country, tend to focus on business strategies aiming at the ethnic niche market, which is in line with the results found by Machado et al. (2021a, 2021b). Furthermore, a low command of the language can also have a negative effect on the work situation (getting a job), worsening the already unfavorable work condition upon arrival (Falcão et al., 2021b; Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b).

As for the length of stay in Canada, most participants stated that they had been in the country between ten and 19 years (31.9%, n= 15), three and four years (21.3%, n= 10), 20 and 29 years (17 %, n= 8) and 30 and 39 years (12.8%, n= 6).

4.1. Motivations for leaving Brazil and staying in Canada

One of the main alleged reasons for the decision to leave Brazil has to do with the issue of security, which in some cases refers to the “lack of security”, the “feeling of insecurity” or even “violence”, in the strict sense of it. The idea of instability for planning life in the long term, with a view to a better quality of living, also appears as a facet of the alleged “lack of security”, a view that converges with the findings of Cruz et al. (2017a), Machado et al. (2021a, 2021b) and Schervier (2005).

Another motivation for leaving Brazil and moving to Canada among the BIE has to do with the search for personal and professional development, as perceived in the following statement: “*When emigrating, they come with a professional perspective for a process that goes through the study, [...] which becomes an immigration process*” (RCB).

There is also the prospect of emigrating as an internationalization strategy, as well as participating

in a mature innovation ecosystem, a more common position among entrepreneurs involved with startups (Falcão et al., 2021a).

We also sought to find out whether the BIE considered returning to live in Brazil. In this topic, the result was a large majority of negative responses (74.5%). In a way, these results reinforce the understanding that the emigration of Brazilians who would become entrepreneurs abroad has a considerable relationship with feelings of “disappointment” and “frustration” with the country of origin, in this case, Brazil (Cruz et al., 2018a). In addition, these negative feelings regarding the country of origin can lead to two risks:

- generating a feeling of distrust among Brazilians, which can interfere with the formation of an entrepreneurial network;
- inhibit transnational business (Von Bloh et al., 2020), since entrepreneurs do not feel safe to invest earnings abroad, in businesses established in Brazil. The risk arising from this “distrust” in the Brazilian ethnic community itself is worrying, and it is possible to suggest that this phenomenon is based on the ambiguous relationship of Brazilians with themselves (Machado & Teixeira, 2019; Machado, 2021), among other reasons.

Another factor that cannot be ignored is that which has to do with what can be called the construction of the imaginary about Canada by Brazilian female immigrants, a romanticized and idealized online image (Sega, 2021).

4.2. Entrepreneurial behavior and Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurs’ business profile

Regarding the type of ownership of the investigated businesses, the majority pointed to “individual” (76.60%, n= 36), followed by “partnership” (14.39%, n= 7). When asked if the company was formally registered, 76.60% (n= 36) answered “yes” and 23.40% (n= 11) “no”. This result is in line with the idea that it is not necessarily uncommon for an immigrant entrepreneur to have an initial period of informality (Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b).

We sought to find out if the BIE were familiar with their business field of activity beforehand: 63.83% (n= 30) answered “yes” and 34.04% (n= 16) “no”. Concerning the size of the company, 95.74% (n= 45)

answered that it was a small business. As for the sectors in which they operate, 68.09% (n= 32) indicated “service provision”, 17.02% (n= 8) “commercial”, 6.38% (n= 3) “commerce and industry”, and 6.38% (n= 3) “trade and provision of services”. Regarding the branches of activity, there was considerable diversification, with emphasis on the segments of “health and well-being” (19.1%) and “food and beverages” (14.9%).

An attempt was made to investigate the target market of the businesses, with “Brazilians residing in Canada” being the main result (59.57%, n= 28), followed by “Canadians” (21.28%, n= 10), “other foreigners residing in Canada” (10.64%, n= 5) and “Brazilian tourists” (2.13%, n= 1), and 6.36% (n= 3) of BIE did not answer.

Some findings arising from unsystematic observation could be added to these results, through which it was possible to visualize, in several businesses visited as well as in others that did not participate in the study, various symbols in reference to Brazilian culture, Brazil and its people, for example: the presence of the Brazilian flag and/or that of the home state of the owner of the business — its colors and “features” — inside or outside the establishment (façade). In Brazilian food restaurants, the customer was welcomed in Portuguese, the menus were in Portuguese/ English, and, in some cases, the television was turned on to some Brazilian cable TV program — usually news — or Brazilian music was heard. Another visible artefact has to do with the decoration of their business premises, such as paintings, photos of places, people, and other themes in Brazil, in addition to regional objects (handicrafts). Also, it was observed that most of the clientele in the places visited were Brazilian (immigrants or tourists) and/or of Brazilian origin.

From the point of view of consumer behavior, Fernandes et al. (2019) point out that objects (products, services, and businesses) have undergone reformulations in shape, appearance, color, style and feeling, changing the way consumers experience them and the associations they evoke. That is, when bought and used for their meanings, they can ratify individual or collective status and identity. In this sense, through the quantitative results related to the target market, as well as the findings of on-site observation, it can be suggested, in the light of the

model proposed by Cruz et al. (2020), that several of these small businesses aimed at a target market called “ethnic and co-ethnic”, framing themselves, therefore, predominantly as an “ethnic niche market”. Furthermore, there was a strong presence of symbols of ethnic identification within business premises, which may suggest the adoption of “enclave strategies” (Portes & Zhou, 1992).

Another aspect addressed in this investigation relates to the elaboration of a business plan prior to the business inception. In this item, it was evidenced that 55.32% (n= 26) did not elaborate a business plan, and 42.55% (n= 20) did. As for the pay-back time of the capital initially invested in the business, the majority indicated that there was a return in up to one year (42.55%, n= 20), and 14.89% (n= 7) claimed the return on investment had not yet occurred.

As for having the intention (if they thought about...) of becoming an entrepreneur in Canada before leaving Brazil, it was found that 72.34% (n= 34) responded negatively and 27.66% (n= 13) affirmatively. In a certain way, this result contrasts with the entrepreneurial activity as a career option — either by opportunity or by necessity — linked to the economic and social insertion of Brazilian immigrant women in Canada (Falcão et al., 2022). This point can be evidenced by studies that point to self-employment or small business venturing as a way to confront the difficulties in obtaining a formal job, or even to be unemployed (Hillman, 1999). Moreover, according to extant literature, there are several motivations that lead women to choose entrepreneurship, either due to their “disenchantment with formal employment”, or to their “desire for independence” (Collins & Low, 2010). This emancipation of women who face difficulties in obtaining a well-paid occupation, even by means of self-employment, may not correspond to high incomes (Constant & Schultz-Nielsen, 2004).

The gender focus of this paper, thus, relates to the importance of enunciating immigration policies and how they impact women and men differently, which results in possible differences in societal insertion and professional activity. Therefore, it is relevant to highlight the aspects of intersectionality, which address the categories of race (mostly white women and Latinas), social class, and gender.

A point that is also worth mentioning is networking — regarding broad relationship networks, which

are not restricted to the professional scope — for the inception and management of businesses. Thus, it was sought to investigate whether the network facilitated the inception of firms, to which 74.47% (n= 35) answered “yes” and 23.40% (n= 11) “no”. Regarding the positive influence of relationship networks on business management, 85.11% (n= 40) responded affirmatively and 14.89% (n= 7) negatively.

The issue of relationship networks, among other aspects, may be relevant regarding environmental surveys to anticipate and interpret changes in the business environment (Santos et al., 2014). Building and maintaining networks is fundamentally related to seeking access to organizational resources and potential customers (Machado et al., 2021a, 2021b): “*I believe that you can’t get far alone. [...] When the immigrant arrives, he/she needs to build a strong network. That is something that I focus on a lot here*” (E10).

Networking is important, because basically it is key for us to have Brazilians working with us, so in personnel management, yes [...]. Small entrepreneurs suffer a lot, it is difficult to penetrate the environment that is not their ghetto. Did you understand?! Because you don’t have a network. [...] When you’re an immigrant, you don’t have any network. When you are born in a place, you have the network of your life, you know, you grew up in school, with your family, but when you arrive as an immigrant and you don’t have it, you must start from scratch (E5).

“Of course, it’s very important! I got many customers and made a lot of friends” (E6).

I think the lack of a network of contacts [pause], then [pause], I don’t know anyone here, I didn’t know until now, but, for example, I have [a network] in the women entrepreneurs’ association [pause], I can have it now with some channels [...]. I missed having meetings with other entrepreneurs here, Brazilians, and organized ones like you have, for example, in Brazil. [...] Now I feel more comfortable showing my face to the Brazilian community here (E25).

Too much too much...! Because of everyone like that, I already looked at myself as an entrepre-

neur. She was already well known. So, I said: this is the moment! And in the meantime, I studied the profile of each customer: this customer is a regular customer, a customer I can count on [...]. This network continues to help, but the biggest help is the word of mouth (E23).

Furthermore, the intersectionalities of race (mostly white and Latino women), social class, and gender mediate the construction of support networks, as shown by the results of this research.

Thus, in the case of Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurship in Canada, there seems to be no doubt over the relevance of creating and maintaining networks with a view to ensuring new contacts (potential clients), as well as access to information, etc. These are crucial factors that can play a key role in economic opportunities (Machado et al., 2021a), mainly from the perspective of using those resources to establish immigrant-related businesses (Cruz et al., 2018a). However, it is necessary to underline the risk of diminishing the positive potential of “social capital”, since a certain discourse of distrust was found in the Brazilian ethnic community itself (Machado et al., 2021b), which can be understood, at least in part, from the ambiguous relationship of Brazilians with themselves (Machado & Teixeira, 2019; Machado, 2021).

From a strictly qualitative point of view, something sensitive to EIB was also identified, which relates to, among other aspects, with difficulties related to the “work-family balance”. That presents different challenges: “*The difficulties relate to handling the business, and performing activities as an expatriate woman and mother, right? [...] Having the business by myself. If that was all I did in life, I probably wouldn’t have had so much trouble*” (E24).

When I arrived here in Canada, in Toronto, I felt lost, alone [...], I felt, like, cornered, lost. What was I going to do? I was very active, always working [in Brazil]. So, I went to the kitchen. Hmm... by the way?! Yeah, in my house. To cook. I invented a recipe for making coxinha, I invented kibbeh. I called Brazil, I asked my friend and she gave me some recipes for rissoles, cheese balls, pies. And she searched for recipes and such. And I started doing that for my social life, for my family’s birthdays (E23).

The gender issue, especially regarding to women, still seems to be a matter of concern to the Canadian society: *“What still exists, and it is shown in all Canadian newspapers, is the same discussion that is happening at the government level, which still struggles with gender issues. Yes, women have difficulties here in Canada, men face less difficulties, or none at all”* (RCB); *“There are a lot of issues... They [Canada, Canadians] are very engaged in the issue of women equality and such. I think this is a fight everywhere”* (RCC).

There are several barriers faced by women entrepreneurs (Abbasian & Yazdanfar, 2013; Chreim et al., 2018). In this direction, the Canadian government has sought to promote policies to encourage learning and employment (Billore, 2011; Lidola, 2014) with a focus on immigrant women. Still in the Canadian context, there are regional agencies that sponsor programs specifically targeted at women entrepreneurs (Orser, 2007).

In any case, there seems to be no doubt that the women are still, most of the time, underrepresented in various social spaces, which requires a closer look at the issue (Machado & Hanashiro, 2018).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of this article was to discuss aspects related to the sociodemographic and entrepreneurial profile of Brazilian female immigrant entrepreneurs in Toronto, Canada, as well as some characteristics of their businesses. This work aims to contribute to extant literature on Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurship in Canada, through an exploratory focus on the entrepreneurship of female Brazilian immigrants.

Regarding the sociodemographic characterization, it was evidenced that most of the sample declared themselves white, married, with children, aged between 30 and 59 years, coming mainly from São Paulo and Minas Gerais. In addition, previously to their migration to Canada, most responded that they had a job in Brazil, followed by those who declared themselves to be entrepreneurs in their country of origin, results that suggest that strictly economic causes of migration do not seem to be so strong. There was also a high level of formal education among the participants, which is in line with several studies that position Brazilians as skilled immigrants. In the case of

Canada, this is also due to certain selective criteria of the migration process.

Another aspect to be highlighted was the declared high level of English proficiency, which tends to be important for the success of the immigrant entrepreneur, especially in predominantly English-speaking areas. However, a declared low level of French proficiency was observed, which can limit seizing work and business opportunities by the subjects, especially in areas where French predominates. In the case of Brazilian female immigrant entrepreneurs in Toronto, especially when they did not speak the language of the host country, there was a certain inclination to focus on business strategies targeting the ethnic niche market.

Regarding the motivations for leaving Brazil, the “lack of security”, “a feeling of insecurity”, and the “instability” to plan life were alleged in the first place, corroborating other findings related to Brazilian immigrants. In addition, there was little interest in returning to Brazil. And there are also factors that attract BIE to Canada and exert some influence as to remaining in the country. They relate to, at least in part, the construction by Brazilian immigrants of a certain imaginary vision about the country, which has been called a romanticized and idealized online image (Sega, 2021). These results suggest and reinforce the understanding that the emigration of Brazilians who later become entrepreneurs abroad has a considerable relationship with feelings of “disappointment” and “frustration” regarding Brazil, which, among other things, can lead to mistrust by the ethnic community in the host country.

Most of the BIE businesses were clearly formalized, both in the case of self-employment and small businesses, operating in the service sector, with emphasis on the health and wellness segment. Most participants stated that they were acquainted to their business sectors before working in their field of activity. As for their target market, most business owners informed that they aimed at Brazilians residing in Canada. Furthermore, it was observed that most of the clientele in the business premises visited by the researchers were Brazilian people (immigrants or tourists) and/or of Brazilian origin, among other visible aspects. Therefore, it is suggested that the EIB’s target market was predominantly ethnic and co-ethnic, framing themselves as explorers of an ethnic niche market.

Networking proved to be a highlight among the BIE, and evidence suggests that there is a broad understanding of the networks' relevance to the entrepreneurial activity in Canada. However, risks associated with a certain discourse of mistrust within the ethnic community may act in the opposite direction to the potential benefits of networking among Brazilians.

Another point that cannot be left out is the one that has to do with difficulties related to work-family balance, an aspect also pointed out by some BIE.

The structuralist view undertaken in this study points to evidence that the systems are responsible for favoring or blocking entrepreneurship in the host countries (here, Canada), often overriding the agency capacity of the actors. This research also follows this perspective by focusing on the conditioning factors of migration and entrepreneurship. In this sense, intersectionality is present, by showing the different layers of gender, nationality, and level of education.

Furthermore, the sociodemographic profile of the participants, their motivations for leaving Brazil and remaining in Canada, the characteristics of their businesses and their entrepreneurial behavior are explained, in part, by their social identities, namely race (mostly white women and Latinas), social class, and gender.

As limitations, the work was restricted to collecting data from a sample of Brazilian female entrepreneurs in Canada, but this profile of entrepreneurs can change over the years and be affected by migration policies. Therefore, this paper does not intend to be exhaustive on the subject, but rather to open the debate. Finally, future studies are suggested — such as the one conducted by Akbar and Preston (2021), with Canadian Bangladeshi women — which aim at illustrating the influence of family resources and gender roles on the entrepreneurship paths of Brazilian immigrant women in Canada, as well as further investigating the possible influences on business arising from distrust in the ethnic community itself.

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EMPREENDEDORISMO IMIGRANTE DE MULHERES BRASILEIRAS EM TORONTO, CANADÁ

Michel Mott Machado¹ , Eduardo Picanço Cruz^{2*} , Roberto Pessoa de Queiroz Falcão³ 

¹Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie – São Paulo, (SP), Brasil.

²Universidade Federal Fluminense – Niterói (RJ), Brasil.

³Universidade do Grande Rio – Duque de Caxias (RJ), Brasil.

DETALHES DO ARTIGO

Histórico do artigo:

Recebido em 25 de agosto de 2022

Aceito em 13 de janeiro de 2023

Disponível online em 6 de dezembro de 2022

Sistema de revisão “Double blind review”

Editora Chefe:

Fernanda Cahen

Palavras-chave:

Empreendedorismo Imigrante

Brasileiras

Toronto

Canadá

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este artigo teve como objetivo analisar o perfil sociodemográfico e empreendedor de mulheres brasileiras imigrantes em Toronto, no Canadá, bem como características dos negócios em si. **Método:** Os dados foram coletados em Toronto por meio da aplicação de questionários com 47 mulheres empreendedoras brasileiras e 22 entrevistas semiestruturadas, representando uma abordagem multimétodos. A análise incluiu estatísticas descritivas e análise qualitativa das trajetórias e histórias de vida. **Principais Resultados:** As respondentes são majoritariamente da Região Sudeste brasileiras, brancas, casadas, com filhos e idades entre 30 e 59 anos, alto nível de escolaridade e de proficiência em inglês. A maioria dos negócios é de pequeno porte/individual, do setor de prestação de serviços. O mercado alvo, em sua maior parte, é de brasileiros/as residentes no Canadá, portanto, étnico e coétnico. A importância do *networking* para as atividades empreendedoras é amplamente reconhecida. Pontuou-se dificuldade relacionada ao balanceamento trabalho-família, o que requer aprofundamento em estudos futuros sobre a influência de recursos familiares e dos papéis de gênero nos caminhos do empreendedorismo de mulheres imigrantes brasileiras no Canadá. O trabalho ainda destaca a interseccionalidade da inserção de empreendedoras imigrantes brasileiras na sociedade canadense. **Relevância/Originalidade:** O trabalho enfoca um público pouco pesquisado, o de empreendedoras brasileiras no Canadá, evidenciando elementos importantes de sua atuação no país. **Contribuições Teóricas/ Metodológicas:** O artigo contribui para a literatura do empreendedorismo feminino no Canadá. para a literatura do empreendedorismo feminino no Canadá.

How to cite this article:

Machado, M. M., Cruz, E. P., & Falcão, R. P. Q. (2023). Immigrant entrepreneurship of Brazilian women in Toronto, Canada. *Internext*, 18(2), 113-129. <https://doi.org/10.18568/internext.v18i2.727>