

Passion Economy: a brief dissertation about the aspects of this new economic model.

Digital Influencers and the new way of making money

In Ancient Greece, Aristotle affirmed that the man has three forms of “free life”: Life guided by the pleasure, life guided by the politics and contemplative life. For the philosopher Hanna Arendt¹, these forms are situated on the “beauty” scope, where the productions from it are not necessarily palpable or useful to something determined in society.

In my opinion, in the past couple years of the 21st century, a new way of free life was born, in which productions show practically no use for the social sphere: This one would be the Digital Influencer’s life. These figures, for many times, produce a diffuse content, without a real focus or finality (as the famous youtuber Lucas Neto, who got into the spot spotlight after making a video – quite a bit disturbing for the cleaning lovers– where he dives into a bathtub full of hazelnut cream). Also, you have the ones who got into the social media journey as a way to divulge their passions (like painting, embroidery, photography, etc.) and you have the ones who use it as an advertising resource to their dreams covered as small companies (after all, how much a Tiktok trend can leverage a little t-shirt business?).

These influencers found freedom against the bondages from working for corporations that pretend to care about human rights (where the bosses cause burnout and the environment exhale toxicity), and against the fear of unemployment. They migrated to a virtual place where they are sovereigns of their work and themselves, with singular deadlines and weekly schedule. Then you ask yourself: “It’s something like being an Uber Driver, isn’t it? Or maybe like an lfood delivery man?” The answer is no, because there is one big intrinsic difference: Happiness. No App Driver is going to say that the reason of choosing his job was love; many times it was out of necessity (be it financial or time management).

The virtual celebrities make Money producing barely nothing on the social sphere-except entertainment and this yields not just financial return, but as well satisfaction as well. The idea revolves around “doing what you love for a living” or “love what you do for a living because is simple and makes you pay the bills without much sweat or headache”.

All in all, a new income source that can not necessarily be called a job has grown and caught people eyes: Area known currently as “passion economy”, where the creative sector to social medias are booming with videos, photos, reacts, tutorials and a lot more,

creating a brand new market niche that does not requires any kind of graduation to be part of.

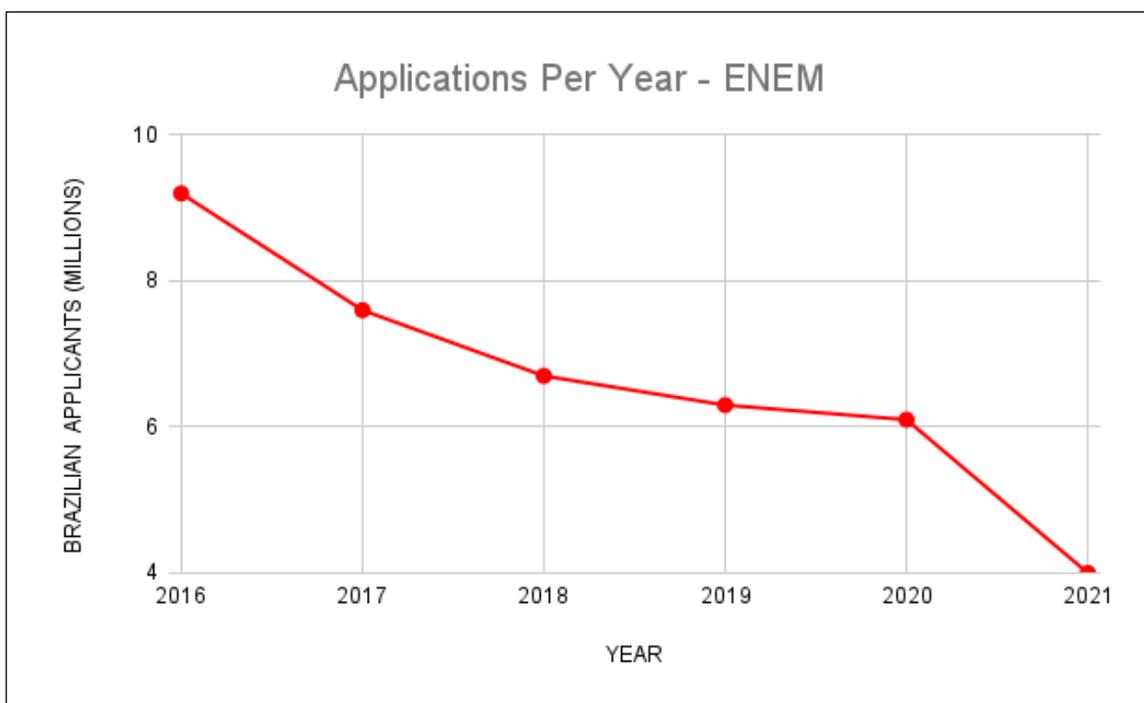
Negative consequences from this new economic model

With the rise of a new life style, evidently, changes happen on society behavior. The biggest modification was the unconcern increase by the youths, mainly generation Z (people born from 2000 to 2010), about higher education.

You can always hear a teenager saying things like “Why do I need to study? I can be a Youtuber and make a lot more money”, “College is so overrated, I have a friend who dropped out of law school and nowadays works using Instagram, she finds herself a lot happier”.

Truth be told, unfortunately, the influencers get paid a lot better than most professionals trained here in Brazil. A lot of them speak out about how quitting their jobs just to focus on being a media figure, was beneficial to both their pockets and mental health.

As a consequence of the dream to reach high number of views, which generate income, there’s a slow emptying in the Universities. Here in Brazil, this situation is noticeable by ENEM (acronym, that in Portuguese, stands for “Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio”), a test which the results are used to get into public colleges or even get discounts on private ones, and every year it has less and less applicants: In 2016 it was 9,4 million of students, while in 2021 it was just 4 million².



Changes there are needed in the education model

This virtual area has been ascending and appears that, for a long period of time, will not lag, suffering at most little changes and evolutions (like the rise of new Big Techs, Trends and marketing for social media, besides new ways to connect the world promoting an even bigger globalization process). Because of that and noticing the decline in the willingness to study, the higher level education institutions need to adapt and innovate themselves.

One path for this innovation would be the promotion of shorter teaching courses with very specific goals. Bringing my dear friend Bauman³ for this essay, in this Liquid Modernity - where we have all the information that we want in our hands in about a few seconds - long-term productions are considerably boring. Thus, further (promote?) a learning which has focus only in the activities that the individual searches for knowledge and experience. The creation of degrees with singular subjects like e-commerce, photo and video edition, etc., can fill the colleges again.

Also, there is the possibility of the pedagogical model sharing the education's stage with the heutagogic approach: The higher education institutions should provide these courses both as presencial and as distancing learning, with taped classes. Because, if the passion economy lovers make their own work schedule, it's only reasonable that they want to have this same pleasure with their studies

How about a positive side now?

Moving away from the catastrophic loss of interest for studying, we have, on the other hand, a new niche of income generation which demands almost no knowledge or investment. These conditions emerge with positive value for countries that aren't on the fourth stage in the Frank Notestein's demographic transition theory – where there is a low birth rate and a low death rate, leading to population stabilization⁴. In nations like mine, there are too many people for few jobs: The unemployment haunts every zone, every capital and every city; causing precarious quality of life and citizens accepting always *“fazer um bico”* (Portuguese slang for referencing a job that can have short period of time and nothing to do with your official work, just for little money. In Brazil, a lot of people who lose their jobs spends months doing this practice until they are hired again).

In a place like this, where the search for an income resource is absurd, the rise of a new area which you can financially grow without needing third parties – like corporations ran by imperative bosses – allowing to make creative content and use it to not starve is, in a certain way, praiseworthy.

Other day, on a boring Sunday afternoon, I saw this video by an influencer couple telling their story: Both had become unemployed during the pandemic and then started shooting videos to try pay the bills. Now, they are making much more cash than they used to do with signed labor. Also, the boy and girl are happier and even healthier doing homemade food and exercises (Who would have the thought that, in the end, you are capable of being a lot more productive when you do not have to spend two endless hours per day on public transportation or traffic!).

To sum up, a country broken by the pandemic added to an ineffective and corrupt government, being a social media influencer represent an alternative for the ones without jobs. It also can reduce unemployment and, consequently, helps the economy on baby steps.

Big Tech gatekeepers and the capital accumulation

With the rise of influencers and online sellers, there are, on the backstage, colossal virtual market sharks' who have been benefiting themselves a thousand times more: These are Big Techs' owners and CEOs.

These huge technology companies, that control the current market, daily make tremendous amounts of money. What can be illustrated with three words: Seven Billion Dollars. Although the majority of the world population would have to work at least a million years to get it, this is the quantity Meta can lose in just three hours⁵: It happened when Zuckerberg's First- born, Facebook and his two adopted children, Instagram and WhatsApp, were down for that long, letting him lose some ranks on the world's richest people list – poor guy!

At this point, seems that this author is in a contradictory situation: How could, at the same time, something be good for generating a new job area but at the same time be responsible for creating billionaires and making them richer, thereby monopolizing the current capital more and more?

In the end, it's not a contradiction: Even with a famous virtual store or a digital influencer getting a better paycheck than any PHD in my country, this value is still extremely low when compared with these companies' profit (insane, no?).

The new economic model already mentioned on this text, aim at the liberty from all the bondages: the ones from the study, office hours, the boring jobs and also the ones of neoliberalism. However, the tie that binds Start-up and social media owners get even stronger, consolidating these men as postmodernism bosses where they have more influence and power than any politic leader.

Big Tech gatekeepers will not be responsible for democratizing the economy (Sadly it wasn't this time yet), and only focus on building up patrimony, not transferring a fair amount for their employees, and giving alms in philanthropy's name while they send rockets to space (After all, there is no place on the earth their money has not already reach).

So, being able to see all that economic transformation and watching the capital course, the companies in the financial sector would be nothing but smart of innovating by using the technology at their favor and allying with the Big Techs. This integration gets the financial market closer every day to being 100% digital.

What would Peter Drucker think about all of this?

First of all, Peter Drucker⁶, who once said that employees are one of the biggest resources of a company and by valuing them you can have more satisfaction and productivity, probably would feel a little disgusted about how some Big Techs treat their staff - Immediately the name Jeff Bezos (Amazon CEO) comes to mind controlling even the times an employee goes to the restroom.

Also, Drucker wrote in his theory about how the profit should not be the most important thing in a business: The corporation should have a social role, being fundamental that it thinks about how it can impact the environment, the community and the life of the ones who have direct contact with the company (staff and their families) in a positive way. Unfortunately, at this point the father of modern management would be extremely disappointed too - We are in 2022 and the only and exclusive worry of the Big Techs still is making piles of money ignoring every other topic.

On the other hand, Drucker would probably see the passion economy as a great thing, once you have a person or a group working in something they love and feel complete by

doing it, thereby showing more productivity and providing better experiences for the client.

These people are, contradictory, the big techs users (being influencers or small local business) who, different from the huge companies, have goals beyond profit. - Zuckerberg probably does not care about the environment, but on Instagram has a little store that sells only green products and an influencer divulging a green lifestyle; Amazon only thinks about filling the pockets, but in its website there are a lot of new writers publishing cheap e-books and helping to increase culture.

In the end, concerning the current changes in the world and how it could impact the economy and financial sector, there is only one thing to say: *“Trying to predict the future is like trying to drive down a country road at night with no lights while looking out the back window”* (P. Drucker).

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