

Becoming a (Migrant) Entrepreneur in One Day: How Social Media Transforms Migrant Entrepreneurship

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Abstract. This case tells the story of Carolina Souza, a Brazilian hairdresser who began earning income within 24 hours of arriving in Paris by posting a single message in a diaspora Facebook group. Through the eyes of Maria Gómez, a Mexican business student, the case explores how digital platforms enable ‘instant entrepreneurship’, a concept that challenges traditional theories of international business entry. Maria’s curiosity about finding out how becoming an entrepreneur so fast was possible leads her to investigate multiple migrant entrepreneurs. She observes that every entrepreneur leverages social media to bypass conventional barriers such as limited networks, credential recognition requirements, and formal business registration, while simultaneously navigating tensions between informality and formalization. The case is designed for undergraduate students in their second or third year. It can also be used as an introductory or ice-breaker case in graduate classes.

Keywords: diaspora networks; liability of foreignness; social capital; informality; digital platforms; effectuation; mixed embeddedness.

1. The 24-Hour Entrepreneur

The notification chimed on Mexican exchange student Maria Gomez’s phone at 3:47 p.m. on a sweltering July afternoon in Paris. She was desperate to tame her curly hair. A Brazilian lissage would be the solution, but where to find the best place in a city she was still quite new to? Well connected to the Latin-American student community but new to Paris’s broader community, she spontaneously posted in the “Brazilians Living in Paris” Facebook group¹: “Does anyone know where I can get a Brazilian hair treatment done at home? I’m desperate!” Within minutes, the post exploded with responses. Ten different women offered their

1. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/427850130596965/>

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services, each claiming expertise with authentic Brazilian techniques and products. Maria watched this digital marketplace unfold in real time, fascinated by how quickly supply met demand in ways that would have been impossible just a decade earlier. She chose Carolina Souza, whose confident reply promised "*original Brazilian products straight from São Paulo*".

Two hours later, Carolina knocked on Maria's apartment door, professional kit in hand, ready to transform Maria's hair with techniques learned in Brazil's most prestigious salons (Appendix 1). As Carolina expertly applied the keratin treatment, their conversation turned to her experience adapting to life in Paris. "*How long have you been working here?*" Maria asked, expecting to hear about months of networking and reputation building. Instead, Carolina casually dropped a bombshell: "*Actually, I arrived yesterday.*" Maria remained speechless. Yesterday. Not yesterday after years of preparation, not yesterday after months of planning! Literally yesterday – she had stepped off the plane from São Paulo less than 24 hours earlier and was already earning money as an entrepreneur in a foreign country where she knew virtually no one. Amused by the shock, Carolina continued: "My cousin lent me a room for a few weeks. I joined the Facebook group this morning and already had three bookings by the afternoon."

For Maria, an international business student who had studied models of international entrepreneurship, this moment shattered everything she thought she knew. Her textbooks had taught her that starting a business abroad required time: market research, network building, trust formation, and official registration. Yet here was Carolina, turning a Facebook post into paid work within a single day.

2. Maria's Curiosity Turns into Research

That night, Maria couldn't stop replaying the encounter. How could someone with no French language skills, no formal setup, and no local contacts start working instantly? Was this just Carolina's luck or evidence of a deeper transformation in how people became entrepreneurs? As she reflected, Maria recalled her professors' warnings about the obstacles migrants face in unfamiliar markets, such as language barriers, credential recognition, and a lack of trust. Traditionally, overcoming such disadvantages took years. Carolina's story seemed to defy that timeline completely. Determined to understand what she had witnessed, Maria began observing the Facebook networks connecting migrants across Paris. If social media could make a newcomer productive in twenty-four hours, perhaps it was rewriting the very logic of entrepreneurship.

2.1. Mapping Digital Communities

Maria started with what she knew best: the Mexican diaspora. She joined the massive "*Mexicanos en París*" Facebook group² with over 60,000 members and began scrolling. The variety of offers stunned her: home-cooked food deliveries,