

Theoretical-empirical article

Understanding Conspicuity in the Dissemination of Experiences on Social Media: The Effect of Materialism



Compreendendo a Conspicuidade na Divulgação das Experiências nas Redes Sociais: O Efeito do Materialismo

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to develop and test a model that explains the motivations for the behavior of disclosing the consumption of experiences on social media, considering the effect of materialism. **Theoretical approach:** the reasons given by the literature for the use of social media and materialism are adopted to understand the increasingly popular behavior of disclosing experiential consumption. **Method:** the study is based on a sequential mixed methods approach. First, a qualitative study was carried out with social media users. Subsequently, conceptual models were tested by PLS-SEM. **Results:** the conspicuous consumption online refers to the final construct of the explanatory model of the behavior of disclosing the experiential consumption in social media. The dissemination of experiences is used to build a positive identity and for the creation interpersonal relationships. From the conceptual models analyzed, it is admitted that materialism can play different roles in the explanatory model of the behavior of disclosing the consumption of experiences in social media. **Conclusions:** when verifying the conspicuity in consumption and exposition of experiences, it is assumed that consumers are focusing more on symbolic meanings than on satisfying psychological needs when adhering to experiential consumption.

Keywords: experiential consumption; social comparison; social interaction; self-promotion; conspicuous consumption.

RESUMO

Objetivo: desenvolver e testar um modelo que explique as motivações para o comportamento de divulgação do consumo de experiências nas redes sociais, considerando o efeito do materialismo. **Marco teórico:** adotam-se as motivações para uso das redes sociais e o materialismo para compreender o comportamento de divulgação do consumo experiential. **Método:** o estudo está baseado em uma abordagem de métodos mistos sequenciais. Inicialmente, realizou-se um estudo qualitativo com usuários das redes sociais. Posteriormente, modelos conceituais foram testados por meio da abordagem PLS-SEM. **Resultados:** o consumo conspícuo se trata do constructo final do modelo explicativo do comportamento de divulgação do consumo experiential nas redes sociais. A divulgação das experiências é utilizada para a constituição de uma identidade positiva e para a criação de relacionamentos interpessoais. Com base nos modelos conceituais analisados, admite-se que o materialismo pode exercer diferentes papéis no comportamento de divulgação do consumo de experiências nas redes sociais. **Conclusões:** ao se verificar a conspicuidade no consumo e na exposição das experiências, admite-se que os consumidores estão focando mais nos significados simbólicos do que na satisfação das necessidades psicológicas ao aderirem ao consumo experiential.

Palavras-chave: consumo experiential; comparação social; interação social; autopromoção; consumo conspícuo.

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Cite as: Floriano, M. D. P., & Silva, A. H. (2023). Understanding conspicuity in the dissemination of experiences on social media: The effect of materialism. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 27(4), e220323. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-7849rac2023220323.en>

Published as Early Access: July 27, 2023.

Assigned to this issue: July 31, 2023.

Note: This text is translated from the original Portuguese version, which can be accessed [here](#).

JEL Code: M300, M310.

Editor-in-chief: Marcelo de Souza Bispo (Universidade Federal da Paraíba, PPGA, Brazil)

Guest Editors: Valter Afonso Vieira (Universidade Estadual de Maringá, Brazil)

Maria Carolina Zanette (Neoma Business School, France)

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Reviewers: Edar da Silva Añaña (Universidade do Vale do Itajaí, Brazil)

One reviewer did not authorize the disclosure of his/her identity.

Peer Review Report: The disclosure of the Peer Review Report was not authorized by its reviewers.

Received: December 01, 2022

Last version received: June 15, 2023

Accepted: June 23, 2023

of invited reviewers until the decision:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 st round	(X)	(X)	(X)						

INTRODUCTION

Experiential consumption, defined by [Van Boven and Gilovich \(2003\)](#) as purchases made to consume a life experience, is expanding in the market ([Pelletier & Collier, 2018](#)). In Brazil, for example, in a pre-COVID-19 scenario, about 57% of Brazilians said they preferred to spend on experiences rather than tangible products ([Altagamma, 2020](#)). This trend continues in moments after the pandemic, with 88% of Brazilians aiming to carry out experiences that can be enjoyed with family and friends and with 68% prioritizing experiences over material goods ([Alves, 2021](#)). From these perspectives, in 2023, the experience segment (luxury and non-luxury) is expected to move around BRL 1 billion in Brazil ([Euromonitor International, 2019](#)).

The popularity of experiential shopping occurs because this type of consumption promotes greater social connection, contributes to self-knowledge, provides more lasting satisfaction, and is considered to increase well-being and happiness ([Carter & Gilovich, 2012](#); [Kumar & Gilovich, 2016](#); [Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012](#); [Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003](#)). Within the scope of social media, this type of consumption has its records increasingly frequent, being shared by the consumers themselves through the publication of photos and videos in their profiles, demonstrating that the internet and the platforms of social media contribute to the consumers to expand their consumption limit ([Wang et al., 2020](#)).

[Zhang et al. \(2021\)](#) argue that, as it is associated with self-identity and well-being, sharing of purchasing activities is utilized by users of social media to increase interaction with other people and as a way of receiving social support. Furthermore, when considering that material and experiential purchases provide different levels of social approval ([Bastos & Brucks, 2017](#)), experiential consumption is shared on social media as the most effective mechanism for achieving the desired social results, given that observers tend to form more favorable impressions of those who report or share information about their experiences ([Bastos, 2020](#); [Valsesia & Diehl, 2022](#)).

[Duan and Dholakia \(2018\)](#) argue that the sharing of content related to consumed experiences can also occur with the aim, for example, of developing self-expression and social interaction with a view to the desire for attention and the demonstration of wealth and status ([Duan & Dholakia, 2018](#)). In turn, [Krasnova et al. \(2015\)](#) indicate that practicality and quick access, that is, the particular characteristics of social platforms, favor the constant publication of this type of acquisition, although such behavior cannot be attributed only to these aspects.

Psychological motivations for using social media, such as self-promotion defined as “the process by which individuals try to control the impressions that others build” ([Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 34](#)), appear to be positively related to behavioral response stimuli that would lead users to share their experiences and would increase their material values ([Taylor & Strutton, 2016](#)). In turn, [Prentice and Loureiro \(2018\)](#) indicate that the sharing of information by social network users can be motivated by the desire for status, social approval, and a sense of empowerment. Similarly, [Kim and Jang \(2019\)](#) agree that self-presentation and social benefits represent important motivators for sharing experiences on social media.

Although such propositions increase knowledge on the subject, the effect of social media on consumer behavior, more precisely the reasons that lead consumers to share their experiential consumption on the internet and the effect of this conduct, has been little researched ([Duan & Dholakia, 2018](#)), especially in the Brazilian context. Previous studies show that personal elements may be intrinsically associated with the behavior of sharing purchase content on the internet.

In this perspective, the present study suggests materialism is an important element in the relationship between the motivations behind the consumers' behavior of using and publishing experiential consumption on social media. Materialism is conceptualized as the subjects' tendency to place goods and experiences at the center of their life, considering them necessary for their happiness and as a basis for judging their success ([Richins & Dawson, 1992](#)). Thus, materialism is observed as a form of consumption that often generates negative effects on consumers ([Carter & Gilovich, 2012](#)).

The use of social media was identified as an influence of increasing material values ([Duan & Dholakia, 2018](#); [Islam et al., 2018](#); [Ozimek et al., 2017](#)), clarifying that digital platforms are not restricted to only obtaining information and the improvement of social relations, resulting in phenomena that determine levels and forms of consumption. Along with this view, [Chu et al. \(2016\)](#) clarify that the highly positive and status identities developed by individuals on social media trigger the main characteristics of materialism.

The role of material values in understanding the behavior of creating user-generated content has already been inferred ([Nguyen et al., 2023](#)), recognizing that materialistic individuals use social media more intensively and promote more content about their purchases ([Chu et al., 2016](#)). Materialism in the context of social media manifests itself through less material possessions ([Ozimek & Förster, 2021](#)), and the exaltation of possessions common to materialism is now carried out by the

'objectification' and exposure of experiences and people (Ozimek & Förster, 2021; Ozimek et al., 2017).

The change in the type of product used by consumers with more accentuated levels of materialism to demonstrate status may be a consequence of changes in the tools used to expose their consumption activities. Currently, the main status markers are not necessarily based on ownership, but on the experiences and social capital they can accumulate (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020). However, there is still the desire of individuals to promote themselves as successful people. According to Richins (2017), the excessive focus on displaying experiences on social media makes this type of consumption a defining form for many people, which may indicate the association of materialism with experiences.

For this reason, this study proposes that materialism exerts effects on the relationship between use motivations and the behavior of sharing experiential consumption on social media. It is recognized that material values play an important role in consumer behavior and psychology (Richins, 2017), assuming them as a means of maintaining and improving a positive self-image through consumption (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002), which in the context of social media is carried out by the accentuated exposition of the experiences lived by the individuals.

Thus, this study aims to develop and test a model that explains the motivations for the behavior of sharing the consumption of experiences on social media, considering the effect of materialism. The development of this research is justified by seeking to understand the meanings and motivations that generate the sharing of experience consumption on social media, extending the research on the creation of user-generated content related to consumption and its effects on the buying behavior of these people. Second, this study seeks to analyze three constructs rarely investigated together, which are material values, experiential consumption, and the effects of digital platforms on online consumer behavior.

Concerning the practical implications, the current research may help marketing professionals identify the characteristics of consumers who use the digital environment to disseminate their content related to experiences. This information can become guidelines for the development of more assertive marketing strategies, such as campaigns that can encourage consumers to create content about the services being consumed, aiming at positive word-of-mouth and brand popularization.

Finally, concerning social aspects, the themes addressed by the study meet requests from authors such as MacInnis et al. (2020), Chandy et al. (2021) and Mende and Scott (2021) for investigations of marketing and consumer behavior that focus on issues pertinent to

the interaction between consumers and others involved in creating a better world. This will make it possible to identify new contributions that the discipline and marketing research can generate to face the real challenges of humanity (Chandy et al., 2021).

Accordingly, when judging that experiential consumption has been used as a tool to obtain status, carried out for non-autonomous reasons that can lead to a decrease in people's quality of life and be a barrier to the promotion of sustainable consumption and mental well-being (Pandelaere, 2016), this research also provides knowledge that can help in the construction of actions that reduce the adverse impacts of consumption activities in two contemporary challenges indicated by the United Nations (UN): well-being (SDG 3) and responsible consumption (SDG 12).

It is known that consumption itself is neither good nor bad for the well-being of consumers, but that the motivations that lead to the acquisition of a product and the way the individual relates to this acquisition determine the effects that such consumption will have for that person's lifetime (Dittmar & Isham, 2022). Still according to the authors, when the consumers observe the acquisition of experiences or goods as a means of improving their image, increasing happiness, or achieving a certain social status, this will generally cause harmful effects on their mental and social well-being.

Based on the assumption that motivations such as self-promotion, social comparison, and the desire for status are positively associated with the stimuli that make social network users share the experiences they consume (Kim & Jang, 2019; Taylor & Strutton, 2016), the behavior of sharing experiences on social media becomes a warning sign for academics and public managers, since it can create a problematic consumption with negative consequences for the mental health of individuals (Herberholz & Prapaipanich, 2019) and several socioeconomic impacts.

The promotion of health and psychological well-being is encouraged in global discussions on sustainable development, making these elements closely related and making the promotion of the well-being of all people one of the 17 SDGs (Rahmani et al., in press). According to the United Nations (Sá & Benevides, 2019), physical and mental well-being is a stimulant and an indicator of sustainable development (SDG3), as people who are physically and mentally well have the potential to strengthen economic growth and social prosperity (Rahmani et al., in press), making the promotion of mental well-being an important challenge in contemporary society.

Therefore, given the influential role of social media in people's lives and the changes in consumer behavior

in these environments, we believe this research offers informative results regarding the adverse repercussions of the use of social media for consumers of experiences and, consequently, the potential risks to psychological well-being and negative impacts on responsible consumption, which is closely associated with the well-being of consumers (Buerke et al., 2017).

The work is structured in four parts besides this introduction. Next, the theoretical framework is presented, followed by sections that demonstrate the methodological procedures and the analysis of research results. Finally, discussions and final considerations of the study are made.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The behavior of sharing purchases on social media

Social networking sites have changed the way of communicating and sharing information, allowing their users to interact based on a wide range of resources (Zhang et al., 2021). In this context, within the scope of social media, the behavior of creating content generated by the users themselves has been propagated due to easy internet access generated by mobile technologies (Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, social media have become the main means of self-promotion today (Lin & Lu, 2011), by allowing the portrayal of individuals and contact with other people, being a tool for managing external impressions, and building positive self-images (Yang, 2020).

Ozimek and Förster (2021), when presenting the social online self-regulation theory, explain three underlying reasons for the use of social media and, consequently, the content generated by their users, namely: the need for self-presentation (self-promotion), the need for belonging, and need for comparison. Self-promotion configures the use of social media to disseminate relevant personal information that is shared with others in a selective, controlled manner and based on a conscious process by individuals (Ozimek & Förster, 2021). That is, self-promotion on social media concerns the desire and pursuit of fame, configuring the need for the individual to be seen and valued, and for this, using these platforms as tools for self-exposure (Greenwood, 2013).

Sung et al. (2016) established self-promotion as the main justification for joining social media, and studies such as those by Krasnova et al. (2015), Lin and Utz (2015), Taylor and Strutton (2016), Ozimek et al. (2017) and Duan and Dholakia (2018) suggest that users utilize the facilities offered by mobile technologies and social networking platforms for the construction of positive

self-presentations, which may increase these people's self-esteem and satisfaction.

In addition to positive self-promotion, the need for belonging (social interaction) may represent one of the motivations for using social media and other behaviors related to it. These platforms provided a wide range of tools that changed and allowed new connections between people (Verduyn et al., 2020). Through these sites, individuals can access social information that favors meeting the need for social connection intrinsic to human beings (Ozimek & Förster, 2021).

Phua et al. (2017) consider the desire for popularity or social interaction as the main reason for using social media since individuals can manage their relationships and build new relationships through these platforms. Studies by Huang et al. (2018) and Zolkepli et al. (2018) corroborate this understanding.

Another important reason for the popularity and massive participation of individuals on social media is the need for comparison (Ozimek & Förster, 2021). As previously discussed, social media offer their users presentation platforms, providing materials that can be used to trigger social comparisons (Ozimek & Bierhoff, 2016). Social comparison deals with how individuals place themselves in society, and such comparative behavior is adopted to carry out self-assessments based on other people's opinions and abilities. These comparisons provide people with information about their skills, social position, and performance, allowing immersion in the social world (Verduyn et al., 2020).

According to the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), individuals have an intrinsic tendency to compare themselves with other people, doing so based on different objectives. The condition for such behavior to occur is the access to personal information about those people you want to become similar to, and, given the peculiarities and popularity of social media, these environments become digital means for obtaining elements that favor knowledge about other individuals (Cramer et al., 2016; Islam et al., 2018; Ozimek et al., 2017). Thus, it is observed that the use of social media is positively influenced by the desire for social comparison and that these platforms are fertile ground for the occurrence of social comparisons (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015; Ozimek et al., 2017; Vries et al., 2018), as users are daily confronted with success and positive information from other people (Verduyn et al., 2020).

Based on these motivations and the facilities provided by online platforms for sharing different types of content (Zolkepli et al., 2018), publications related to purchasing activities have become means for users to self-promote and establish interpersonal relationships (Duan

& Dholakia, 2018), given that consumption is capable of conferring indicators of status and social prestige on consumers (Carter & Gilovich, 2012).

Among the existing types of products, those determined to be experiential are increasingly part of the content shared on social media (Bronner & Hoog, 2019; Duan & Dholakia, 2018), as verified in studies by Krasnova et al. (2015), Lin and Utz (2015), Duan (2016) and Duan and Dholakia (2018), according to which this occurs due to the ease of recording the experiences, which can be done during and after their realization. However, as it is a type of premature behavior in the digital environment, this factor may not represent the only influencer of this behavior (Duan, 2016; Kunst & Vatrappu, 2014), and there are still few investigations that seek to establish the reasons why consumers tend to promote their consumption practices on their social media profiles (Duan, 2016; Duan & Dholakia, 2018), especially considering experiential consumption.

Thus, Kunst and Vatrappu (2014) suggest that the determinants of using social media can be assumed as possible influencers of this new behavior, showing the need for studies that can support this argument. In addition to understanding what motivates publications on this type of consumption, there is a need to understand the effects that such behavior can generate (Vries et al., 2018). Thus, based on the discussions presented here, this study seeks to contribute to such gaps.

Next, we discuss experiential consumption, the main type of product advertised on social media.

Consumption of experience and materialism

Among the products that are on the rise in the market, experiences stand out due to their proximity to the consumer's self (Pelletier & Collier, 2018), originating the concept of experiential consumption as determined by Van Boven and Gilovich (2003). Experiential consumption is related to those purchases made with the main objective of consuming life experiences, while material goods refer to purchases made with the fundamental intention of obtaining a tangible good in return (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003).

In summary, Gilovich and Gallo (2020) differentiate these constructs by stating that "experiential purchases are things that people do," while "material purchases are things that people have" (Gilovich & Gallo, 2020, p. 20). Therefore, the main difference between experiential and material consumption is in the purchase intention: doing *versus* having (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), as well as the

effects that these types of products can have on consumers. For Van Boven and Gilovich (2003), experiential consumption offers a greater sense of satisfaction about life and happiness when compared to the consumption of tangible goods, because life experiences are central aspects for the formation of a person's identity, being the existence of human beings directly dependent on such practices (Carter & Gilovich, 2010).

The advantage of experiences over material goods can be understood by three factors. First, experiences contribute most significantly to individuals' sense of identity; next, experiences tend to encourage consumer connection with other people when compared to tangible products; and, finally, the experiences are evaluated in themselves and can be less compared with purchases of the same type (Gilovich & Gallo, 2020).

Although there is an understanding of the intangible character of experiences, authors such as Guevarra and Howell (2015) clarify that experiences can also result from the acquisition of material goods. The purchase of a television set or a car, for example, can be considered strictly a possession or can also be used to subsidize the realization of an experiment (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). According to Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2012), some material goods have characteristics that make it possible to promote experiences, and their consumption would be directly related to the desire to go through the experiences linked to them. In this way, it is understood that purchase intentions and motivations determine the usefulness of the product. Material goods can enable the occurrence of an experience, just as experiential activities can have the intention of consuming material goods (Guevarra & Howell, 2015).

Consumption motivations also define the position that the consumers will have concerning their acquisitions (Gilovich & Gallo, 2020), and, in a society marked by consumption and excessive exposure, obtaining experiences becomes susceptible to the development of problems related to consumption, as is the case of materialistic values derived from experience consumption (Shrum et al., 2013).

Materialism is defined by Shrum et al. (2013) as how individuals utilize the acquisition and use of products, services, experiences, or relationships for the construction and maintenance of the self. In this sense, materialistic purchases are used as social markers that grant prestige to their buyers (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Therefore, experiential purchases can also be considered materialistic. Vacations in an extravagant spa and luxurious parties, for example, have the same effect to signal status as luxury and high-value products (Carter & Gilovich, 2012).

Thus, a purchase is considered materialistic not because of the value of the good, but because of the existing intention for its realization, since the consumption of experience is only materialistic when it becomes ostentatious, in which the sign that signals is more important for the individual than the real usefulness of what is acquired (Carter & Gilovich, 2012). Therefore, material values are shaped according to context and personal motivations, verifying that individuals with high levels of materialism tend to spend high amounts on the consumption of extraordinary services (Meng et al., 2019).

METHOD

Overview of studies 1 and 2

Considering the lack of knowledge of the behavioral process capable of explaining the existing reasons for the sharing of experiential consumption on social media, we decided to undertake a study based on a sequential mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2015). First, we sought to explore and understand consumer behavior on social media through a qualitative step (Study 1). Then, so that it was possible to test and confirm the relationships found in the exploratory stage, we started the quantitative phase of the study (Study 2). The planning and results obtained in the two studies are presented below.

Study 1

Exploratory stage

We carried out a qualitative and exploratory research to deeply understand the specificities of the behavior of generating content related to experiential consumption on social media. The research analysis corpus intentionally corresponded to Facebook and Instagram social network users, who were selected based on the understanding that platforms based on photographic content demonstrate greater effectiveness in triggering the behavior of publications related to consumption (Sung et al., 2016). Thus, it was considered that the users of the aforementioned social media held the necessary information for the development of this investigation.

For the selection of interviewees, initially, questionnaires were applied through an online platform, with the access link to the research disseminated in groups on Facebook and through the chat tool on Instagram, seeking to measure the respondents' level of materialism through the material values scale of Richins (2004). Those individuals who had an average score greater than 3.34 on a scale with nine variables were considered highly

materialistic. The determination of this classification occurred following other studies that use the scale of material values by Richins and Dawson (1992), in which the closer the indices of the average marks are to the highest measurement value (five points in this case), the higher will be considered the degree of materialism of individuals (Islam et al., 2018; Ozimek et al., 2017).

Accordingly, respondents classified at this level were invited to collaborate with the qualitative phase of the study by email, and 27 individuals agreed to participate in the research. Data collection was performed through in-depth semi-structured interviews with Facebook and Instagram users. For the operationalization of the interviews, a script composed of 16 questions was elaborated based on the literature review on (a) experiential consumption; (b) sharing content related to consumption; and (c) materialism.

Before conducting the interviews, a pilot interview was carried out with a researcher from the marketing area, so that, in this way, it would be possible to improve the questions that made up the interview script. The researcher invited to evaluate the interview script is a Ph.D. professor in business administration and has taught at a public higher education institution located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul for 10 years, having articles published in national and international scientific journals, such as *Journal of Business Research*, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *International Journal of Business Marketing*, *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance*, *Brazilian Administration Review*, *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, among others.

In addition to evaluating the interview script with the specialist, the interview process was revised and extensively rehearsed before conducting the field interviews. These techniques were used to seek the internal validity of the qualitative phase of the study. The interviews took place both face-to-face and online, with six of them being face-to-face; another four interviews took place through the Microsoft Teams® communication platform. The interviews were carried out over one month, in which 10 interviews were counted after verifying the theoretical saturation principle. The information collected was recorded in audio. Subsequently, the interlocations were fully transcribed and compiled to follow the data analysis stage.

The next step consisted of data analysis, which was performed through content analysis (Bardin, 2011). The analysis categories, verified from the interviewees' speeches, were determined *a posteriori* (Bardin, 2011). It should be noted that to preserve the respondents' identities,

the interviewees are presented by the names FR (female respondents) and MR (male respondents).

Interview analysis

The respondents' profile is composed mostly of female individuals, aged between 24 and 36 years old. The most representative employment occupation was of public servant. Most respondents had completed higher

education, observing representatives of different levels of education. As for the use of the analyzed social media, only one individual does not have an active profile on both platforms, being an Instagram user only (MR1).

The information obtained in the field interviews is presented and discussed to understand the investigated phenomenon. Data were interpreted using the content analysis method, which, after grouping, resulted in four categories of analysis (Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis categories.

Category	Definition
Self-promotion	The use of social media due to the desire to manage the impressions that others form about oneself.
Social interaction	Social media facilitate obtaining information and social interaction. The creation of relationships configures one of the main rewards expected by users.
Online social comparison	Intrinsic stimuli that individuals have to compare their thoughts and abilities through online platforms based on other people's conceptions.
Online conspicuous consumption	The tendency for consumers to display, using face-to-face contact or social media, their social status, wealth, taste, or self-image to certain reference groups through the consumption of openly visible products.

Note. Developed by the authors.

Self-promotion

Respondents were asked about the reasons why they share the experiences they consume on their social media. Through the narratives obtained, it is evident that respondents use social media to control other people's impressions of themselves, characterizing self-promotion behavior (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). From the speeches of the interviewees, it is observed the concern that respondents have about other people's viewpoints and perceptions of what is done by them, as exposed by the interviewee MR2: "Normally, I post things to show myself to other people. I don't know how to explain this desire of wanting to show, but I share things because of it. From selfies to places I do not often go to. In reality, mainly the ones I seldom go to. I think it demonstrates who I am, what I like, or where I want to spend. Because there's a lot of that, isn't it?! I want to be like someone specific, then I end up doing the same things as her, and I want others to recognize me for liking those things" (MR2).

The concepts verified in the interviewees' speeches are directly related to materialistic consumption since they demonstrate proximity to some of the essential characteristics of this phenomenon, such as the understanding that an individual is more successful based on what he or she consumes and the perception that the activities of consumption serve as social markers (Richins & Dawson, 1992).

Social interaction

It is known that a large part of society uses and depends on smartphones to facilitate interpersonal communication (Lee et al., 2018), making social interaction with peers one of the main rewards of using social media. From these descriptions, the content analysis made it possible to observe that the respondents make the exposition of the experiences they consume public aiming at the social improvement and the maintenance of their relationships, according to the statements of the FR1 and FR2 respondents: "I like to show what I'm experiencing when it's something nice, somewhere nice, that I think is nice and that escapes my routine. I do this to interact with other people. What if someone is also doing or enjoying the same things as me? Sometimes I post somewhere to ask for a recommendation. In fact, it is for someone to come and give me a recommendation and then develop some interaction" (FR1). "I think most of my posts are for interaction. Sometimes there's no one to talk to, then I feel like interacting and I post something I bought or somewhere I went just to see if someone talks to me about it. Sometimes I post that I'm going to the movies, or whatever, and it generates an automatic interaction with other people. Sometimes that's why I post" (FR2).

It appears that social media allow people to obtain social benefits such as the feeling of control over their relationships. Phua et al. (2017) point out that the main reasons for using social media are the interaction between

people since these platforms allow for relationship management at the same time that they provide for the creation of new ones. Therefore, the respondents' positions reinforce the findings of Sheldon and Bryant (2016) and Phua et al. (2017), which show that social media provide gratifications that satisfy individuals' social needs.

Given this scenario, it is suggested that the sharing of acquired possessions on social media stems from individuals' belief that consumption can improve and strengthen relationships. Belk (1985) and Richins and Dawson (1992) clarify that materialistic people have significant concerns regarding social interaction. At the same time, these individuals believe that goods serve as tools for self-improvement and that possessions have a fundamental role in achieving an identity to other people's eyes.

Online social comparison

Respondents were asked about consumption and the sharing of experiences based on information obtained from their friends' profiles. It was found that individuals justify the display of what is consumed on social media as a result of comparison behavior. From the interviewees' point of view, it is common to carry out experiences inspired by those already consumed and published on their friends' or celebrities' profiles, so that they also end up exposing their consumption in search of acceptance by their peers: "I look at other people's posts a lot, especially those about shopping. I've been to places, like parties or restaurants, because a friend of mine posted about it. And then I shared it to say 'look, I went there too!' I think everyone ends up seeing what others do and wants to do the same, right?! It's a lie when people say they don't do that. I've already done many things because I saw others share too" (FR7). "I really want to do the things I see others posting. I have even saved lists of things I want to do because I saw so-and-so posting. And these are not things that I need in the short term or that are extremely necessary, it's because I see people that I think are nice or that I really want to be friends with, and I think what they post they are doing, like a trip, or somewhere they are eating at, whatever, they can bring me closer to the kind of people they are and what I want to be" (MR2).

Unlike initial studies that demonstrate experiences as attenuating social comparison (Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003), investigations that have social media as their object of study present the possibility that experiences are becoming elements used as targets for comparisons between their peers (Islam et al., 2018; Ozimek et al., 2017). This proposition is confirmed by the interviewees, who explain social comparison as one of the reasons why they publish their experiential consumption.

Online social comparison behavior is directly associated with materialism, since social media, by facilitating access to other individuals' personal information, lead consumers to make comparisons more frequently, to the point that they end up developing high material values when observing the excessive portrayal of various positive aspects of other people's lives (Islam et al., 2018).

Online conspicuous consumption

Respondents seem to consume some experiences with a view to their public display and the search for status, as well as due to the differentiation that some experiences offer, factors that can be considered as conditioning conspicuous behaviors (Assimos et al., 2019). Similarly, some consumers emphasized carrying out some experiences in order to get other people's attention and to express themselves, and it is possible to observe in some interviewees' speeches that social media are extremely relevant for such desires to be fulfilled since they allow consumers direct and immediate communication with others. The following statements exemplify this evidence: "It's happened that I've tried something out, didn't like it, and even so, posted it on social media pretending I liked it. For example, I went to Liberdade, in São Paulo. I thought it was horrible, I thought it was boring, but I posted it as if everything was beautiful. And saying it was nice, but personally I was finding it awful. So this happens to me. And I did it just to say that I was there (São Paulo). Just to say that I was really there, that I got to know the city" (FR1). "My last vacation just came to mind. I traveled and I was with my family. In addition to my family being very dependent on cell phones, it was not nice. But I made a point of taking a picture with everyone, posting it very happily, saying that everything was really cool, but in fact, it wasn't. I did that because it was the beach, a beautiful place, that deserved to be registered, even to say that I've been there, you know? And it looks good on one's profile" (MR3).

The relationship between conspicuous consumption and materialism resulting from possessions and tangible goods is also verified in experiential consumption, already pointed out in previous investigations (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). The association between experience consumption and conspicuous consumption has been recently investigated (Bronner & Hoog, 2018, 2019), in view of the growing importance that experiential purchases occupy in consumers' lives (Kumar & Gilovich, 2016).

Like Bronner and Hoog (2018), it is identified that the demonstration of identity and the desire to increase status come from experiential consumption, leading to the belief that conspicuity can be referred to as one of the determining characteristics of the behavior of sharing consumption experiences on social media.

RESULTS DISCUSSION AND ELABORATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The aspects verified in the exploratory analysis identify three different motivations that encourage the display of experiential consumption on social media: self-promotion, social interaction, and online social comparison. This finding is consistent with previous research on online consumer behavior (Duan & Dholakia, 2018; Islam et al., 2018; Ozimek et al., 2017; Phua et al., 2017).

The analysis also made it possible to verify that the behavior of publishing experiences is carried out as a means for individuals to meet their desires for status and exhibitionism, making it possible to reflect that this behavior can be understood as a digital form of conspicuous consumption. It is a fact that consumer behavior can be used to signal wealth/status to other people (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012), but for a long time, scholars focused on understanding consumption signals from the perspective of durable goods, and only recently discussions have shifted toward a new position of conspicuous consumption, resulting from the greater exposure of consumption provided by the widespread use of social media (Bronner & Hoog, 2019, 2021).

Social media provide consumers with the essential precondition for conspicuous consumption, that is, social visibility (Bronner & Hoog, 2021). According to the authors, an experience can only fulfill the desire to transmit status/wealth, exclusivity, or self-image if other people are informed about what is being experienced, and social media provide such visibility in previously unseen dimensions. Therefore, by registering them in photos and videos, experiences become a sign of status for other people, and their publication on social media can help consumers achieve their self-expression and social goals (Tambyah e Tan, 2022).

It is important to highlight that experiential consumption tends to be observed more positively by other people (Bastos, 2020; Valesia & Diehl, 2022), which has accentuated its exposure on social media and can determine changes in the conspicuity of consumption for the experiences. That said, in line with the propositions of Bronner and Hoog (2019, 2021) and Tambyah and Tan (2022), in this study, conspicuous consumption is considered the final construct of the explanatory model of the behavior of sharing the consumption of experiences on social media.

The reports obtained in the exploratory research also make it possible to glimpse the existence of materialistic traits in consumers who report carrying out the behavior of sharing their consumption activities linked to experiences. These findings support the judgment that materialism on social media manifests itself through consumption less related to physical possessions (Ozimek & Förster, 2021). However, the

role of this construct in the development of the behavior of sharing experiential consumption is not fully understood.

In fact, materialism has been described in different ways and can be observed as a personality trait (Belk, 1985), a personal value (Richins & Dawson, 1992) or even a cultural characteristic (Inglehart, 1990), making it possible to operationalize it in different ways (Larsen et al., 1999). Studies such as those by Ozimek et al. (2017) and Tuominen et al. (2022) present materialism as a determinant of self-presentation, belonging, and social comparison needs.

In this context, it is understood that people with higher material values value social status in the same intensity and are more sensitive to other people's opinions, which motivates them to manage impressions (self-promotion) and to compare with other social network users (Wang et al., 2019; Ozimek et al., 2017). Materialism is positively related to activities that allow the demonstration of success, wealth, and status, and people seek social interactions (maintaining online relationships) and status in the social media environment through impression management, specifically by displaying luxury goods or experiences (Tuominen et al., 2022).

On the other hand, other recent studies related to the online social media context operationalize material values as mediating elements in the use of social media and different behavioral constructions related to consumption, such as compulsive buying, impulsive buying, and conspicuous consumption (Islam et al., 2018; Sharif & Khanekharab, 2017; Sharif et al., 2022; Thourunroje, 2018). These investigations assume that material values can become higher when people are more susceptible to peer opinions and when individuals use social media to convey positive impressions to others.

The operationalization of materialism as a mediating variable and determined by self-promotion, social interaction, and social comparison is also based on the understanding that the main characteristics of materialism are triggered during the process of building an online identity on social media (Chu et al., 2016). Ozimek and Förster (2021) recognize that materialism is driven by the use of social media, so it is possible to presume and hypothesize that materialism can also be determined by motivations and behaviors of using online social media.

This study empirically analyzes the performance of material values based on the results of the exploratory study and on the ambiguous indications in the literature on the role of materialism in the model of explaining the motivations for the behavior of sharing consumption of experiences on social media. Thus, two models were developed to analyze the hypothetical relationships between the concepts (Figure 1, Figure 2). It is believed that the comparison between these models will allow the understanding of the ways that

can explain the conspicuity development in experiential consumption.

The first model suggests that online self-promotion, social interaction, and social comparison, influenced by materialism, directly impact online conspicuous consumption. The proposition of materialism as influencing the motivations for using social media establishes material values as a motive that triggers the need for self-presentation, belonging, and social comparison, which are achieved through online social media (Ozimek et al., 2017).

Materialism as a value comprises enduring beliefs and serves as a guide for conduct, attitudes, choices, and judgments (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Considering social interaction, self-promotion, and online social comparison behaviors related to achieving social and individual benefits, it is possible to consider the performance of materialism as

an influencer of these variables. It is known that individual values are higher-order elements that guide the development of attitudes and behaviors (Schwartz, 1994), and work as determinant guides for interactions in social environments (Rohan, 2000). In this study, taking into account materialism as an individual value, its analysis proved to be relevant as a measure capable of determining attitudes and behaviors related to the use of social media.

The second model includes materialism as a mediating variable of the relationships between the motivations for the behavior of sharing the consumption of experiences on social media and online conspicuous consumption, assuming that the material values of consumers represent a route to explain conspicuity in the consumption of experiences.

The proposed models are empirically tested based on a quantitative survey, as described below.

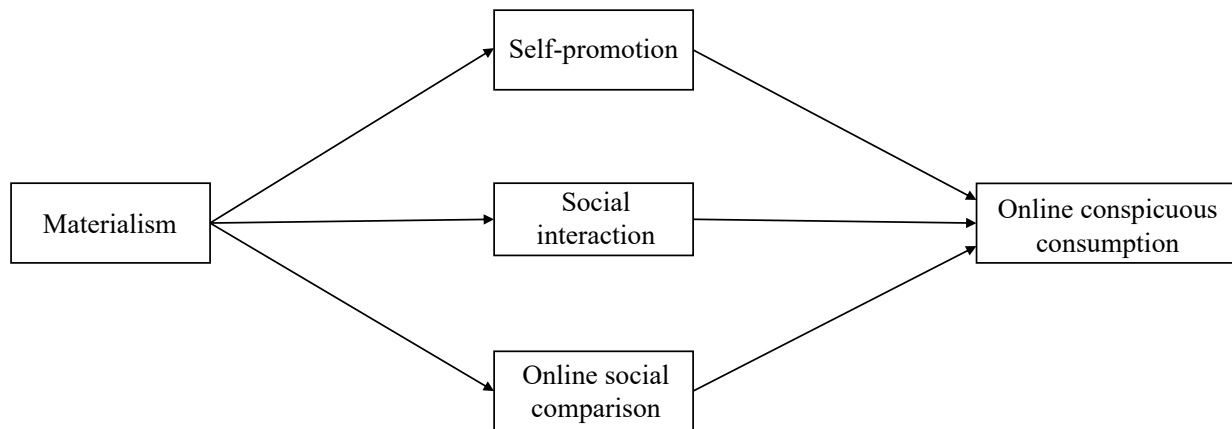


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Source: Developed by the authors.

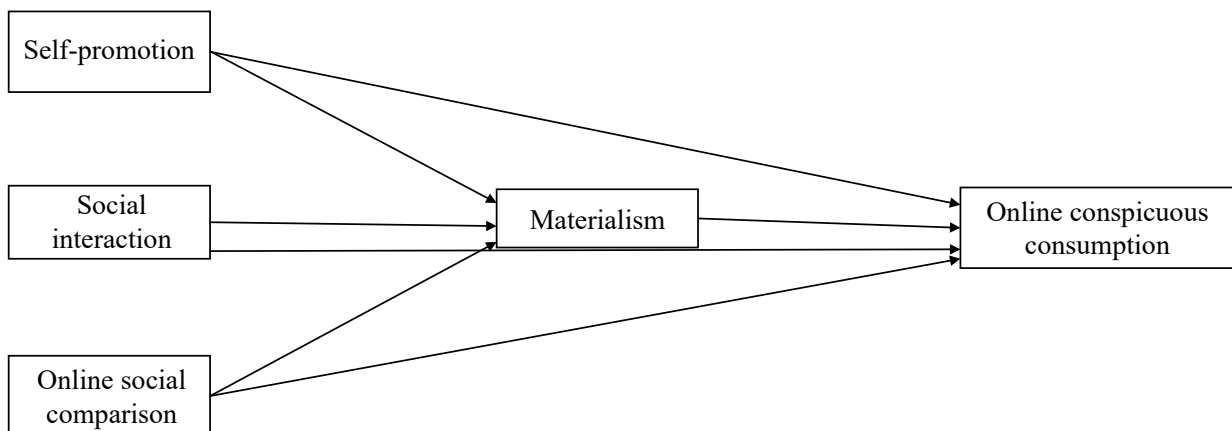


Figure 2. Conceptual model — Materialism mediation.

Source: Developed by the authors.

Study 2

Confirmatory stage

The second stage of the study is carried out through a survey, qualified as descriptive and quantitative research. As a research object, we delimited Facebook and Instagram social network users. Facebook and Instagram are two of the three most popular social media in Brazil, and 81% of internet users utilized these platforms in 2022 (Bianchi, 2022). In Brazil, the number of active profiles on Facebook reaches more than 116 million, while Instagram users correspond to 119.5 million profiles (Kemp, 2022). Thus, in view of the

lack of access to this population parameter, this investigation sought, through convenience sampling, to find information that could confirm the conceptual model arising from the exploratory phase of the study.

Data collection took place from the application of questionnaires focused on the self-report of Facebook and Instagram users about their consumption practices and use of social media. The collection instrument consisted of 48 objective questions, segmented into four structured blocks and made up of five scales developed in previous studies (Table 2), questions on demographic profiles and use of social media, in addition to filter questions.

Table 2. Scales used in the study.

Scale	Author	Items	Scale
Materialism	Adapted from Richins (2004)	9	
Self-promotion	Saenger et al. (2013)	8	
Social interaction	Sheldon e Bryant (2016)	3	(1) Strongly disagree / (5) Strongly agree
Online social comparison	Nesi e Prinstein (2015)	7	
Online conspicuous consumption	Taylor e Strutton (2016)	4	

Note. Developed by the authors.

We elaborated four filter questions as a criterion to determine the constitution of an adequate sample. Thus, at the beginning of the questionnaire, respondents were asked about: (a) having an active profile in at least one of the social media studied; (b) having an active account on the social network(s) for at least one year; (c) being a personal profile user; and (d) making publications related to their experiential purchases.

It is important to highlight that, in this study, individuals who daily access their social media were considered active users of social media, even if they do not publish daily, and that people who only manage profiles of organizations and companies were not considered in the sample. This information was previously presented to the respondents.

After preparing the questionnaire, a pre-test was carried out with 10 graduate students who had a similar profile to the study's target audience, with no need for changes in the research instrument. In the field research, the questionnaires were applied completely online, via a Google Forms link shared in Facebook buy and sell groups and through the Instagram chat tool. At the end of the collection, 540 responses were obtained.

Data analyses were performed using IBM SPSS 22.0 and SmartPLS 4 software. The demographic characteristics of the participants were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Before the analysis of the structural model, the existence of

missing data was evaluated, so 16 responses were identified that needed to be excluded from the analysis. The normality of the data was verified using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which resulted in a value of $p < 0.05$ and indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis of normality.

Thus, the need to use a non-parametric test was observed to ensure greater security in the analysis of the structural model. Therefore, we selected the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to analyze the measurement model and test the proposed relationships. The PLS approach is an appropriate technique for research in which (a) the data do not adhere to a normal distribution, (b) the structural model includes several relationships, (c) the main statistical objective of the study is to predict a certain variable, and (d) the research seeks to expand a theory (Hair et al., 2019; Manley et al., 2021). Therefore, since this study comprises such conditions, the PLS approach proved to be the most suitable for the analysis.

Confirmatory stage data analysis

Respondents' profile: It can be seen that the dominant characteristics of the sample are female individuals (57.4%), aged between 18 and 23 years old (37.2%), single (73.9%), whose level of education is complete high school (44.7%), have a monthly family income of up to BRL 2,000.00 (32.2%), and were unemployed at the time of the survey (35.1%). Next, we verify the measurement model.

Measurement model analysis

It was verified that the variables of the five constructs presented loads above the acceptable limit (0.50). Regarding reliability, the composite reliability (CR) values and the Cronbach's alpha of the constructs were higher than the critical value of 0.70, recommended by Hair et al. (2019) for both indices. Likewise, the rho_A index, a specific reliability measure for the PLS-SEM context (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015), was higher than the minimum value of 0.70 in all latent variables. Regarding the average variance extracted

(AVE), the five constructs exceeded the minimum value of 0.40, following the precepts of Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), which indicate that in exploratory studies, as is the case of this investigation, the AVE value must be equal to or greater than 40%. The indices presented ensure the convergent validity of the model (Table 3).

The discriminant validity of the measures was determined by the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria. As shown in Table 3, the AVE square root of each construct was superior to the correlation between any pair of factors, confirming the discriminant validity of the model.

Table 3. Measures evaluation and discriminant validity.

Construct	α	rho_A	CR	AVE	Fornell-Larcker				
					(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Self-promotion	0.863	0.873	0.895	0.521	0.722				
Online social comparison	0.866	0.877	0.896	0.554	0.491	0.745			
Social interaction	0.763	0.842	0.853	0.660	0.235	0.266	0.813		
Materialism	0.841	0.848	0.875	0.440	0.441	0.461	0.280	0.663	
Online conspicuous consumption	0.824	0.830	0.885	0.661	0.572	0.381	0.193	0.362	0.813

Note. α = Cronbach's alpha coefficient; rho_A = Specific reliability measure for the PLS-SEM context; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

Next, we analyze the models proposed for the study.

STRUCTURAL MODELS ANALYSIS AND RESULTS DISCUSSION

The bootstrapping method was adopted to assess the significance of correlations and regressions (structural model) with 5,000 samples. Confidence interval estimates become

more robust and stable as the number of bootstrapping samples increases (Hair et al., 2019), which is why the value of 5,000 samples was adopted in this study.

First, the results obtained for Model 1 are presented, which analyze whether the motivations for the behavior of sharing the consumption of experiences on social media are influenced by materialism and have effects on online conspicuous consumption (Table 4).

Table 4. Structural model result — Model 1.

Relation	β	S.E.	I.C. [2.5% – 97.5%]	t-value	Sig	f^2	R ²
Total effect							
Materialism → Self-promotion	0.437	0.036	[0.366 – 0.507]	12.225	0.001	0.236	0.191
Materialism → Social interaction	0.279	0.044	[0.197 – 0.368]	6.400	0.001	0.085	0.078
Materialism → Online social comparison	0.458	0.034	[0.392 – 0.526]	13.405	0.001	0.265	0.210
Self-promotion → Online conspicuous consumption	0.502	0.039	[0.424 – 0.580]	12.753	0.001	0.287	
Social interaction → Online conspicuous consumption	0.042	0.031	[-0.021 – 0.103]	1.336	0.181	0.002	0.342
Online social comparison → Online conspicuous consumption	0.123	0.041	[0.041 – 0.204]	2.998	0.003	0.017	
Indirect effect							
Materialism → Self-promotion → Online conspicuous consumption	0.219	0.027	[0.170 – 0.273]	8.273	0.001	-	-
Materialism → Social interaction → Online conspicuous consumption	0.012	0.009	[-0.006 – 0.030]	1.287	0.198	-	-
Materialism → Online social comparison → Online conspicuous consumption	0.056	0.020	[0.019 – 0.097]	2.822	0.005	-	-
Total indirect effect							
Materialism → Online conspicuous consumption	0.287	0.028	[0.291 – 0.236]	10.294	0.001	-	-

Note. Developed by the authors.

By estimating the model, it is observed that materialism positively impacts self-promotion ($\beta = 0.437$, $t = 12.225$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001$), social interaction ($\beta = 0.279$, $t = 13.405$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001$) and online social comparison ($\beta = 0.458$, $t = 6.400$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001$), while self-promotion ($\beta = 0.502$, $t = 12.753$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001$) and online social comparison ($\beta = 0.123$, $t = 2.998$, $p\text{-value} = 0.003$) positively influence online conspicuous consumption. In turn, social interaction indicated that it had no direct and significant effects on the construct ($\beta = 0.042$, $t = 1.336$, $p\text{-value} = 0.181$).

The verified results indicate that materialism can act as an antecedent of the motivations that lead consumers to share their consumption activities on social media, corroborating previous research that investigated the positive influence of materialism on self-promotion, social interaction, and online social comparison (Ozimek et al., 2017; Tuominen et al., 2022).

Human beings need to be perceived positively, which makes them susceptible to frequent involvement in online impression management activities (Wang et al., 2019; Wu & Zheng, 2019); and to analyze whether their behaviors and choices are socially appropriate, people resort to social

comparison to verify external factors that will serve as reference points (Ozimek & Förster, 2021). In this sense, based on the findings of the structural model, it is possible to infer that people with high levels of material values tend to be more involved in managing impressions (self-promotion) and social comparisons in the online environment, often resorting to these online activities to be able to show their social status (Tuominen et al., 2022).

The absence of social interaction effects on online conspicuous consumption is in agreement with the study by Rai et al. (2020). The authors suggest that the greater the importance attributed to material values, the more time individuals will spend posting photos and performing exhibitionist activities and the less time these people will spend with conversations and social interaction activities, an element that may justify the findings of this research.

Different from the previous model, the second model includes materialism as a mediating variable of the relationships between the motivations for the behavior of sharing the consumption of experiences on social media and online conspicuous consumption. Estimated values are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Structural model result — Model 2.

Relation	β	S.E.	I.C. [2.5% – 97.5%]	t-value	Sig	f^2	R^2
Total effect							
Self-promotion → Materialism	0.264	0.046	[0.172 – 0.354]	5.709	0.001	0.073	0.291
Social interaction → Materialism	0.139	0.044	[0.054 – 0.230]	3.144	0.002	0.025	
Online social comparison → Materialism	0.294	0.046	[0.205 – 0.385]	6.355	0.001	0.090	
Self-promotion → Online conspicuous consumption	0.499	0.039	[0.422 – 0.579]	12.677	0.001	0.241	0.349
Social interaction → Online conspicuous consumption	0.046	0.030	[-0.020 – 0.103]	1.560	0.119	0.001	
Online social comparison → Online conspicuous consumption	0.128	0.040	[0.042 – 0.205]	3.165	0.002	0.009	
Materialism → Online conspicuous consumption	0.102	0.036	[0.029 – 0.171]	2.841	0.005	0.011	
Indirect effect							
Self-promotion → Materialism → Online conspicuous consumption	0.027	0.010	[0.008 – 0.048]	2.571	0.010	-	-
Social interaction → Materialism → Online conspicuous consumption	0.014	0.007	[0.003 – 0.029]	2.183	0.029	-	-
Online social comparison → Materialism → Online conspicuous consumption	0.030	0.012	[0.008 – 0.055]	2.531	0.011	-	-
Direct effect							
Self-promotion → Online conspicuous consumption	0.474	0.042	[0.392 – 0.556]	11.370	0.001	-	-
Social interaction → Online conspicuous consumption	0.028	0.031	[-0.033 – 0.089]	0.882	0.378	-	-
Online social comparison → Online conspicuous consumption	0.093	0.042	[0.010 – 0.177]	2.205	0.028	-	-

Note. Developed by the authors.

Based on the exposed data, statistical support was found for the relationships proposed in the conceptual model. That said, it was found that self-promotion positively impacts

materialism ($\beta = 0.264$, $t = 5.709$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001$). Online self-promotion has represented people’s self-presentation needs, who generate content about their life to receive

feedback that can validate their positive aspects and trigger their self-affirmation. By understanding that social media can be used as a display mechanism and that consumption is intrinsically related to the subject's identity (Duan & Dholakia, 2018; Ozimek et al., 2017), one considers the sharing of purchasing activities as a means of managing the impressions that other people create about oneself and to value different aspects of one's life. As materialists tend to value their public self-image, it seems pertinent to consider that the desire for positive self-promotion on social media can accentuate material values.

The understanding of consumption as a way to promote positive signals to others can also justify another result verified by this study, specifically, the positive impact of social interaction on materialism ($\beta = 0.139$, $t = 3.144$, $p\text{-value} = 0.002$) indicates that the need to connect with other people stimulates the creation of a virtual identity associated with the user's consumption practices. That said, it is considered that individuals who crave greater social interaction tend to raise their material values. This is because consumption as a means for developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships is an essential and determining characteristic of materialism (Richins & Dawson, 1992; Shrum et al., 2013).

It was also observed that online social comparison has a positive impact on materialism ($\beta = 0.294$, $t = 6.355$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001$). The main condition for the occurrence of comparisons between individuals concerns access to information, and social media serve as a means of obtaining elements that serve as a basis for online social comparison (Liu et al., 2017; Nesi & Prinstein, 2015), especially when considering that a lot of information is visible about different consumption activities on these platforms that serve as a basis for comparisons. Therefore, this research ratifies the findings of Islam et al. (2018) that materialism tends to grow in people when they use social media as a means of social comparison.

It is noteworthy that online social comparison is present among the reasons for users to share their experiential consumption, in view of the existing consent that the purchase of experience is a comparison mitigating factor (Gilovich & Gallo, 2020; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012). Thus, in line with what is proposed in the literature, it was evident that, like material goods, experiences can become the target of comparisons due to the use and particularities of social media, which can mean changes in one of the main characteristics of consumption of experience.

The hypothesis test also indicated that self-promotion ($\beta = 0.499$, $t = 12.677$, $p\text{-value} = 0.001$), online social comparison ($\beta = 0.128$, $t = 3.165$, $p\text{-value} = 0.002$) and materialism ($\beta = 0.102$, $t = 2.841$, $p\text{-value} = 0.005$) have a positive impact on online conspicuous

consumption. Furthermore, the partial mediation of materialism in the relationship between self-promotion and online conspicuous consumption ($\beta = 0.474$, $t = 11.370$, $p < 0.001$) was attested, as well as in the relationship between online social comparison and online conspicuous consumption ($\beta = 0.093$, $t = 2.205$, $p < 0.028$), given that there were reductions in direct effects when compared to total effects.

The effects of self-promotion, social comparison, and materialism may occur due to the role that experiences play today, being identified as an important social and status marker (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020). Part of consumers abandoned the indispensability of possessions to signal success and status (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2020) and began to get involved in experiences as they give them increased social capital, allow the demonstration of personality, signal wealth/status (Bronner & Hoog, 2021) and are more socially accepted (Valesia & Diehl, 2022). Therefore, it is possible that the appreciation for the ephemeral and non-property guarantees more and more elements of conspicuity to experiential consumption, which are influenced by the need to manage perceptions, by social comparisons, and by the material values of consumers.

Social interaction has no direct impact on online conspicuous consumption ($\beta = 0.046$, $t = 1.560$, $p\text{-value} = 0.119$), but it had an indirect effect ($\beta = 0.014$, $t = 2.183$, $p < 0.029$), indicating that materialism exercises a total mediation in this relationship. Therefore, it is inferred that social interaction only has a relationship with conspicuous consumption if materialism is the mediator. This result seems to make sense if one considers that conspicuous consumption is less related to the desire to improve or generate interpersonal relationships and more to the search for status, the need for differentiation, the desire to display achievements, and the representation of self-identity (Bronner & Hoog, 2018, 2019; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Therefore, the results of this study suggest that only when their material values are incited, the consumer will seek new social connections from the exhibition of their conspicuous experiences.

These results indicate that materialism can also act as a mediator of the relationships between the motivations for the behavior of sharing experience consumption on social media and online conspicuous consumption, contributing to previous findings that analyzed the role of materialism as a mediating variable (Islam et al., 2018; Sharif & Khanekharab, 2017; Sharif et al., 2022; Thourunroje, 2018).

Due to the main objective of this study being to develop and test a model that helps explain the motivations for the behavior of sharing the consumption of experiences on social media, considering the effect of materialism, two

conceptual models were proposed and are compared based on the coefficient of determination R^2 of the final variable

of the model (online conspicuous consumption) and in the other structural quality indices (Table 6).

Table 6. Model quality indices.

Index	Model 1	Model 2
R^2	Online conspicuous consumption = 0.342	Online conspicuous consumption = 0.349
SRMR	0.074	0.074
NFI	0.737	0.800
RMS_Theta	0.124	0.110

Note. Developed by the authors.

The quality of the model is determined, in addition to the R^2 , by the SRMR — standardized root mean square residuals, NFI — normed fit index, and RMS_Theta — root mean square residual covariance. SRMR values below 0.08 indicate that the data fit the proposed model. Similarly, RMS_Theta indices below 0.12 indicate a well-fit model, while for the NFI index, values closer to 1 indicate a better fit. Thus, the verified values demonstrate the quality of both estimated models, with Model 2 obtaining relatively more favorable indices.

In Model 1, the R^2 for the final dependent variable of the model is 0.342. That is, self-promotion, social interaction, and online social comparison together explain 34.2% of the variation in online conspicuous consumption. When materialism is inserted as a mediating variable of the model's relationships, the R^2 of the response variable is 0.349. Therefore, the motivations for publishing the consumption of experiences on social media and materialism explain 34.9% of the variance of online conspicuous consumption.

The results allow the understanding that materialism can play different roles in the explanatory model of the behavior of sharing the consumption of experiences on social media. Despite the recognition of the best quality indices, the highest R^2 of the response variable, and the contribution of material values to understanding the impact of social interaction on online conspicuous consumption in Model 2, it is not possible to state considerable changes between the models.

Therefore, this study is unable to judge whether materialism is better as a predictor of motivations for carrying out the behavior of sharing consumption of experiences (conspicuous consumption) or as a mediating variable of the relationships between independent and dependent variables. However, it is noteworthy that regardless of the role played, it is possible to affirm the significant effects of materialism in relation to the behavior of sharing consumption on social media. Further studies in this regard should be carried out in future opportunities.

Finally, the findings indicate that the motivations related to the use of social media platforms may generate harmful psychological results in the future, decreasing the quality of life and well-being of their users and generating serious socioeconomic impacts. Therefore, the findings of this study serve as an alert so that possible determinants of problematic consumption behaviors can be previously mitigated.

It is known that materialism and conspicuous consumption, verified in this study as elements that help explain the popular behavior of sharing the consumption of experiences on social media, are important stimulants of problematic behaviors, such as, for example, compulsive shopping. By recognizing that compulsive consumption is not an isolated phenomenon (Fennis & Rucker, 2023), resorting to the prior mitigation of its influencers seems to be an advisable action.

Materialism and conspicuous consumption are still recognized as antecedents of financial problems, such as the propensity for debt (Matos et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2020) and the increase in family debts (Jaikumar & Sharma, 2021; Lee & Mori, 2021). The negative effects of these variables on income and family financial management can make consumers financially vulnerable, generating various socioeconomic problems for individuals and society. Consequently, recognizing the role of materialism and conspicuous consumption in the consumption behavior of Brazilian consumers, as carried out by this study, and understanding the negative effects associated with these variables is an important way to create measures that increase consumers' financial well-being and act preventing the forces and mechanisms that sustain family poverty.

In the last years, discussions about excessive spending awareness and conscious consumption have increased, recognizing the need to raise consumers' financial well-being as a way to provide important improvements to individuals' lives (Bashir & Qureshi, 2023). Consumers' financial well-being is seen as a tool and a useful indicator to promote the progress of several Sustainable Development Goals, such as,

for example, SDG 1 (eliminating extreme poverty), SDG 3 (promoting health and well-being), and SDG 10 (reducing inequality within and between countries) (Fu, 2020), given that financial development and financial inclusion are essential elements for reducing poverty and generating income among the poorest families (Churchill & Marisetty, 2020), therefore, toward sustainable development.

Therefore, this study signals the importance of carrying out actions aimed at encouraging social and financial well-being. This can be done through campaigns aimed at reducing excessive consumption and programs that help consumers be more aware of the use of social media and their consumption practices. Furthermore, it is important that government agencies and other institutions are able to execute actions that highlight and encourage the consumption of experiences carried out with hedonic purposes. It is believed that preventive activities can help deal with two real challenges facing humanity, that is, reducing possible risks to psychological well-being and raising awareness about responsible consumption.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to develop and test a model that explains the motivations for the behavior of sharing the consumption of experiences on social media, considering the effect of materialism. Based on exploratory research with Facebook and Instagram social media users, three different motivations were found that justify the generation of content related to experiential consumption by consumers, namely: self-promotion, social interaction, and online social comparison. In addition, online conspicuous consumption and the existence of materialistic traits in the reports made by consumers were verified as the final construct of the explanatory model.

However, the role of material values in the behavior of sharing consumption activities was not fully understood in the results of the exploratory investigation. Thus, two conceptual models were developed and tested to explore the role of materialism (Study 2). There were positive and significant results in almost all investigated relationships, revealing that the structural models are acceptable and have direct and indirect associations between the factors. The findings of both models highlight that self-promotion and social comparison positively determine online conspicuous consumption, regardless of the role played by material values. However, social interaction has an effect only when materialism is the mediator of its relationship with conspicuous consumption.

When comparing the results of the two proposed models, the data demonstrate that the one that describes materialism as a mediating variable explains relatively better

the development of online conspicuous consumption. However, it is not possible to conclusively indicate whether materialism acts better as a mediating variable in the relationships between self-promotion, online social interaction, and online social comparison with online conspicuous consumption than as an antecedent variable to these constructs.

Finally, it is possible to conclude that although conspicuous consumption has traditionally been associated with the possession and display of physical goods, nowadays, the experiences can be about alternative status symbols in the social media environment.

Theoretical and practical implications

Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature by proposing and testing models that allow understanding of the social and psychological motivations that determine the behaviors performed by consumers in the online environment. The results of this investigation provide additional support to theories of social comparison and conspicuous consumption, particularly in their application to analyze behavior in digital environments. The motivations found in the qualitative phase of the study and later tested in the quantitative phase configure the elements proposed by the social online self-regulation theory (Ozimek & Förster, 2021), which demonstrates that the constructs exposed by the theory can also be used for analyzing online consumer behavior.

The findings corroborate the understanding of the new roles of experiences in consumers' lives. When verifying the conspicuity in consumption and exposition of experiences, it is assumed that consumers are focusing more on extrinsic factors, such as symbolic meanings, than on satisfying psychological needs when buying and promoting experiential products. Furthermore, it is possible to infer that experiences can act as alternative status symbols.

The study also showed that online social comparison and the desire for self-promotion influence conspicuous consumption. In both models, self-promotion was the variable with the greatest impact on online conspicuous consumption, raising the understanding that the more people are involved in the need for self-promotion, the more they tend to share ostentatious consumption activities on social media.

This demonstrates that the display of extraordinary, expensive, and/or luxurious experiences is used as external signs of prestige and status. Therefore, as a managerial contribution, this research provides information so that marketing managers can prepare materials that encourage the social visibility of experiential products, making it pertinent to create promotions that encourage consumers to

share their consumption activities on social media. Likewise, digital marketing content creators must signal the individual, social, and singularity benefits present in the experiences they are advertising in their promotional materials.

On the other hand, the evidence presented by the study may signal a warning to public health managers, organizations, and researchers, since it was observed that social media have been propitious environments for the increase of materialism and conspicuous consumption. Thus, these agents need to consider the negative impacts that these consumption behaviors can generate on people, in order to minimize the harmful effects of social media and consumption on the psychological well-being and health of social media users.

Furthermore, Buerke et al. (2017) indicate that “consumption that turns into excessive consumption — as is often the case with conspicuous consumption or consumption motivated by materialism — has been considered unsustainable” (Buerke et al., 2017, p. 963), and when verifying that social media are observed as fertile environments to enhance material values and conspicuous consumption, it is believed that responsible consumer behavior needs to be rethought.

Responsible consumption should not be understood only as one of the Sustainable Development Goals that aim to reduce the environmental impacts of purchasing activities, but should also be seen as a means of promoting the psychological well-being of consumers themselves (Buerke et al., 2017). Thus, it is believed that the findings of this research help consumers and other stakeholders verify that ostentatious consumption, motivated by issues in the

opposite direction of increasing well-being and quality of life, can generate several negative socio-psychological effects. Thus, this research suggests the implementation of public interventions, such as programs, workshops, and training that address the conscious use of social media, conscious consumption, well-being, and quality of life as themes.

Limitations and further studies

Although the objective of this study was achieved, some limitations can be highlighted, such as, for example, the context focused on this research, which concerns only Brazilian social media users. It is known that cultural factors have different impacts on consumer behavior, which can also contribute to a better understanding of sharing experiential consumption on social media. Furthermore, this research was based on convenience sampling, and its findings should not be considered as representative of all social media users. Therefore, further research is encouraged with culturally diverse and robust samples that allow some generalization of the results.

It is also important to highlight that this study focused on only four possible determinants of online conspicuous consumption in the context of experiences, with three of these variables presented by the social online self-regulation theory. New investigations can use other psychological theories (for example, personality traits, personal values) and specific theories of technology acceptance (for example, UTAUT), as well as situational factors, in order to increase knowledge about the behavior of sharing consumption activities on the internet.

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Funding

The authors thank the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Funding code 001) for the financial support for this work.

Peer Review Method

This content was evaluated using the double-blind peer review process. The disclosure of the reviewers' information on the first page, as well as the Peer Review Report, is made only after concluding the evaluation process, and with the voluntary consent of the respective reviewers and authors.

Authors' Contributions

1st author: conceptualization (equal); data curation (equal); formal analysis (equal); investigation (equal); methodology (equal); project administration (equal); software (equal); validation (equal); visualization (equal); writing – original draft (equal); writing – review & editing (equal).

2nd author: conceptualization (equal); data curation (equal); methodology (equal); project administration (supporting); supervision (equal); validation (equal); writing – review & editing (equal).

Conflict of Interests

The authors have stated that there is no conflict of interest.

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The authors claim that all data used in the research have been made publicly available through the Harvard Dataverse platform and can be accessed at:



Floriano, Mikaela Daiane Prestes; Silva, Andressa Hennig, 2023, "Replication Data for: "Understanding conspicuity in the dissemination of experiences on social media: the effect of materialism" published by RAC-Revista de Administração Contemporânea", Harvard Dataverse, V1.
<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/WJHXFP>

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