

**ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USE  
INTENSITY, ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH, AND CONSPICUOUS  
CONSUMPTION**

**ANÁLISE DAS RELAÇÕES ENTRE INTENSIDADE DE USO DAS MÍDIAS  
SOCIAIS, BOCA A BOCA ELETRÔNICO E CONSUMO CONSPÍCUO**

**ANÁLISIS DE LA RELACIÓN ENTRE INTENSIDAD DE USO DE REDES  
SOCIALES, CONSUMO ELECTRÓNICO BOCA A BOCA Y CONSUMO  
OSTENTOSO**

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The central purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of the intensity of social media use on electronic word-of-mouth and conspicuous consumption.

**Originality/Relevance:** This study seeks to address an existing gap within national studies regarding the relationship between the variables concerning the intensity of social media use and the propensity of individuals to engage in electronic word-of-mouth and conspicuous consumption practices.

**Methodology/Approach:** The survey data were collected through a questionnaire with scales adapted from the study by Thoumrungrroje (2014), accessed by convenience through the Internet, where a sample of 165 valid responses was obtained. The analysis procedures were carried out through exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling to certify the scale's reliability and test the hypotheses formulated.

**Main results:** The results obtained from the research showed no statistical evidence that the intensity of online social media use influences electronic word-of-mouth and conspicuous consumption, but there is a positive relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and conspicuous consumption in the studied context.

**Managerial contributions:** The positive relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and conspicuous consumption makes marketing professionals consider the relevance of social media in the repercussion of consumers' impressions about the products of this category. Encouraging the sharing of customers' consumption experiences may be essential to strengthen the brand.

**Keywords:** Electronic word-of-mouth; Social media; Conspicuous consumption; Structural equation modeling.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** O presente estudo tem como objetivo central analisar a influência da intensidade do uso de mídias sociais no boca a boca eletrônico e no consumo conspícuo.

**Originalidade/Lacuna:** Este estudo busca contemplar lacuna existente dentro dos estudos nacionais a respeito da relação entre as variáveis intensidade de uso das mídias sociais com a propensão dos indivíduos em realizar boca a boca eletrônico e se envolver em práticas de consumo conspícuo.

**Aspectos metodológicos:** O levantamento de dados da pesquisa se deu através de um questionário com escalas adaptadas do estudo de Thoumrungrroje (2014), acessado por conveniência por meio da internet, onde obteve-se uma amostra de 165 respostas válidas. Os procedimentos de análise foram realizados através da análise fatorial exploratória e modelagem de equações estruturais, com o intuito de atestar a confiabilidade da escala e testar as hipóteses formuladas, respectivamente.

**Síntese dos resultados:** Os resultados obtidos na pesquisa mostraram que não há evidências estatísticas de que a intensidade de uso de mídias sociais online influencia no boca a boca eletrônico e no consumo conspícuo, porém há relação positiva entre o boca a boca eletrônico e o consumo conspícuo no contexto estudado.

**Contribuições gerenciais:** A relação positiva entre o boca a boca eletrônico e o consumo conspícuo enseja que os profissionais de marketing considerem a relevância que as mídias sociais possuem na repercussão de impressões dos consumidores sobre os produtos desta categoria. O estímulo ao compartilhamento das experiências de consumo dos clientes pode ser, então, uma via importante para o fortalecimento da marca.

**Palavras-chave:** Boca a boca eletrônico; Mídias sociais; Consumo conspícuo; Modelagem de equações estruturais.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** El objetivo principal de este estudio es analizar la influencia de la intensidad del uso de las redes sociales en el boca a boca electrónico y el consumo ostentoso.

**Originalidad:** Este estudio busca abordar una brecha dentro de los estudios nacionales en cuanto a la relación entre las variables de intensidad de uso de las redes sociales y la propensión de los individuos a realizar el boca a boca electrónico y realizar prácticas de consumo ostentoso.

**Metodología/Enfoque:** Los datos de la encuesta se recolectaron mediante un cuestionario con escalas adaptadas del estudio de Thoumrungroje (2014), al que se accede por conveniencia a través de internet, donde se obtuvo una muestra de 165 respuestas válidas. Los procedimientos de análisis se llevaron a cabo mediante análisis factorial exploratorio y modelado de ecuaciones estructurales, con el fin de dar fe de la confiabilidad de la escala y probar las hipótesis formuladas, respectivamente.

**Resultados principales:** Los resultados obtenidos en la investigación mostraron que no existe evidencia estadística de que la intensidad del uso de las redes sociales en línea influya en el boca a boca electrónico y el consumo ostentoso, pero existe una relación positiva entre el boca a boca electrónico y el consumo ostentoso en el contexto estudiado.

**Contribuciones gerenciales:** La relación positiva entre el boca a boca electrónico y el consumo ostentoso significa que los especialistas en marketing consideran la relevancia que tienen las redes sociales en la repercusión de las impresiones de los consumidores sobre los productos de esta categoría. Por tanto, animar a los clientes a compartir sus experiencias como consumidores puede ser una forma importante de fortalecer la marca.

**Palabras clave:** Boca a boca electrónica; Redes sociales; Consumo ostentoso; Modelos de ecuaciones estructurales.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of internet use makes people increasingly connected. In this context, the growing interaction of individuals through online platforms is remarkable, especially social networking sites, which allow an excellent approximation between geographically-distant people, as well as the instantaneous sharing of information, ideas, news, and opinions, besides photos, videos, audio files, and blogs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In recent years, social networks have conquered a faithful space in people's lives, serving differentiated subjects and tastes (Rocha & Alves, 2010). Modern society lives the time of connection, mobility, and ubiquity in human communication, generating new forms of exchange and interaction in networks and online environments. The assiduous use of mobile devices can affect the relationships of human beings with their environment (Zancan & Tono, 2018).

From the perspective of consumption, online social media have played an essential role in sharing information about either products or services consumed among their users. With the creation of the Internet and social networks, interpersonal communication has changed, and people have started to use the Internet to exchange various types of information. This exchange in the online environment is seen by marketing as a new modality of word-of-mouth marketing, the eWOM (Electronic Word-of-mouth) (Ramirez-Correa, Mariano, Alfaro-Perez, & Paiva, 2015).

In the virtual world, on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, people choose what they want to show and often portray positive information because they know they are being followed by their followers (Thoumrungraje, 2014). What people receive in response can make them proud of themselves, and studies by Wilcox, Kramer, and Sen (2011) show that pride increases indulgent behavior when it generates a sense of achievement. This factor, coupled with electronic word-of-mouth about consumed products, makes people more likely to consume a specific good, often to increase their social prestige, defined as conspicuous consumption.

The intense use of the Internet makes people more connected to others worldwide, generating a massive flow of information, including the personal display of their consumption habits. Consequently, the pleasant impression conveyed makes followers want the same thing for themselves, even if it is not within their financial or social means.

When people communicate with others in their social networks and consume other social media, they become more convinced and motivated to consume products they do not need on impulse (Thoumrungroje, 2014). An interpersonal network of contacts helps people deal with uncertainty regarding new products and ideas and minimizes or relieves tension caused by very positive or negative experiences with the product or service (Bentivegna, 2002).

Consequently, the present research aims to understand the existing relationship between the intensity of social media use, its reliance on electronic word-of-mouth, and the occurrence of conspicuous consumption motivated by the previous factors.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following theoretical foundation topics will be presented, divided into three parts: the first will address word-of-mouth communication in the online environment, the second will bring concepts and studies of conspicuous consumption, and the third, on the intensity of social media use.

### **2.1 Electronic word-of-mouth**

Communication through online word-of-mouth, as it is known, allows virtual interaction between diverse consumers. The Internet allows customers to share their opinions and experiences with goods and services with many other consumers through web-based consumer opinion platforms, interacting through electronic word-of-mouth (Hennig-Thural, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). Online interpersonal influence or electronic word-of-mouth advertising is a vital aspect inherent in consumer perceptions of consumer experiences. Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006) state that consumers give and seek online opinions the same way they do offline, thus influencing the purchasing behavior of individuals who are part of their network.

According to Hening-Thural et al. (2004), electronic word-of-mouth can be conceptualized as a statement made by potential, actual or former customers about specific products or companies made available to many people over the Internet. For Cheung, Lee, and Rabjohn (2008), eWOM can also be considered the extension of traditional interpersonal communications into the new generation of internet use.

In a broader sense, Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008) define eWOM as communication among consumers about a product, service, or company in which sources are considered, independent of commercial influence. Business owners should pay attention to the fact that electronic word-of-mouth by digital leaders is a strong ally, as customers tend to have greater trust in what their peers say virtually than in traditional advertisements (Nunes, Ferreira, & Ramos, 2017). Managers also need to monitor the content disseminated about their company and maintain a genuine relationship with consumers in the online environment (Tubenchlak, Faveri, Zanini, & Goldszmidt, 2014).

Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, and Wilner (2010) point out that word-of-mouth goes beyond the possibility of augmenting (or amplifying) marketing messages and can systematically alter them and their meanings in their embedding process. Moreover, Kozinets et al. (2010) bring important implications about how marketers should plan, target, and leverage word-of-mouth and how academics should understand word-of-mouth in a network context.

There was a true revolution in word-of-mouth marketing caused by the Internet because communication, which previously required physical contact, started to be shared through virtual platforms among unknown and geographically dispersed people (Ferreira, Freitas, Guaraná, Lima, Rodrigues, & Giovannini, 2016). Besides allowing an opening of dialogue between consumers and companies, social media also allowed customers to exchange information among themselves. Two phenomena are of interest in this process: the ease generated by social media, particularly social networks, for creating company-sponsored communities, and the ease for word-of-mouth communication about brands and products by consumers (Seller & Laurindo, 2018).

The emergence of electronic word-of-mouth marketing comes with the development of new technologies from the Internet. This rapid change also alters social behavior, causing individuals to stay more connected and around common interests (Mariano, Tagliari, & Rocha, 2017).

## **2.2 Conspicuous consumption**

Conspicuous consumption is exercised to have greater prestige in society, achieved by demonstrating wealth to others, usually in an ostentatious manner (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004). This attempt to demonstrate wealth is related to the acquisition of luxury products. According

to Madeira (2009), luxury consumers are motivated by psychological or physical factors that allow them to meet psychological needs, symbolizing a consumption pattern and revealing a specific social class or communicating a self-image.

Shukla (2008) says that conspicuous consumption is the act of buying a variety of products or services, usually expensive and unnecessary, to get people's attention. In his work "The theory of the idle class", published in 1965, Veblen talks about a group of people who live in idleness, that is, who practice activities that do not bring any human advantage, such as sports, games, horse racing. According to him, this class differs from the working class by the conspicuous consumption of goods, promoting the individual's reputation and status.

According to Camatta (2014), for Veblen, consumption occurs not only by necessity, as a way of subsistence, or for comfort, but by the pecuniary appeal intrinsic to its acquisition and goes far beyond physical, spiritual, aesthetic, and intellectual needs. It serves as a demonstration of honorability and thus becomes a means of adding social status to its acquirer.

According to Pereira and Teixeira (2018), there are three types of status: status by definition, inherited from parents; originating status, coming from social recognition by demonstrated aptitude; and status by consumption, which originated from the consumption of products that symbolize status. Pezzini (2014) defines conspicuous consumption as an economic activity that can be inserted from an evolutionary point of view, a way to signal characteristics that positively contemplate the basic instincts of species.

Consumption aims to meet the consumers' physical needs, such as material comfort, and higher needs, such as aesthetic, spiritual, and intellectual needs, among others (Borges & Madureira, 2010). Conspicuous consumption involves a symbolic and visible purchase engagement, possessing and using products and services to communicate a distinctive self-image to others (Coelho et al., 2017). In agreement with this view, Assimos, Pinto, Leite, and De Andrade (2019) state that conspicuous consumption is evidenced when consumers make their consumption of products public in order to showcase their self-image to others.

Still, on the factors related to conspicuous consumption, Pezzini (2014) says that the predatory instinct enables the creation of the idle class, causing the practice of leisure and conspicuous consumption. He also states that these practices are manifested by man's endless desire to show superiority, differentiate himself before society, seek status, respect, honor, and

several other reasons from predatory instinct (Pezzini, 2014). Based on these notes, we sought to test whether:

*H1: Electronic word-of-mouth is positively related to conspicuous consumption.*

### **2.3 Intensity of social media use**

Social media has caused a revolution in social and business relationships and is a significant highlight of Web 2.0, influencing many industries (Gonçalves & Mazaro, 2013). An increasing number of people spend much time in the cyber environment, connected and searching for information. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and others, play an essential role in people's daily lives, changing their routines (Thoumrungroje, 2014). Social media influence their participants and impact purchasing and consumption decisions in online and offline environments (MacLennan, Lugoboni, Zittei, Tabata, & Correa, 2014).

According to data from the Regional Center for Studies for the Development of the Information Society (CETIC, 2018), through the ICT Households survey, 126.9 million people in Brazil used the Internet in 2018, corresponding to 70% of the population. Of these, 75% used social networks, most often through mobile devices. Also, according to the survey, in the same year, 43.7 million people shopped over the Internet, representing 34% of all users, and 48% of users purchased some online service, such as apps, movie, and music streaming services, or ordering food (CETIC, 2018).

The massive increase in the acquisition of personal computers and several other types of mobile communication devices and the ease of access to the Internet have significantly contributed to their rise and dissemination (Gonçalves & Mazaro, 2013). According to Menegatti, Ribeiro, Meneghatti, and Serra (2016), users today remain connected to social media for a considerable amount of time, mainly through mobile devices, and this time of use may cause users to get close to their favorite brands and get to know the characteristics of their products and services better.

Given these considerations, we sought to analyze the relationship between social media use intensity in electronic word-of-mouth and conspicuous consumption. Additionally, we tested the relationship between social media use intensity on conspicuous consumption behavior mediated by electronic word-of-mouth, generating the following research hypotheses:



*H2: Social media use intensity is positively related to electronic word-of-mouth;*

*H3: The intensity of social media use is positively related to conspicuous consumption;*

*H4: Social media use intensity is positively related to electronic word-of-mouth, which, in turn, is positively related to conspicuous consumption.*

### **3 METHOD**

In order to reach the research objective, we used descriptive research, which aims to identify possible relationships among variables (Gil, 2002). The nature of the research is quantitative, and the study has an applied purpose since it can be used by researchers and professionals interested in the area, and the source of the research is field and bibliographic.

As for data collection procedures, a survey was conducted to collect data from the public studied, through a survey questionnaire, with a 10-point Likert scale, adapted from the article by Thoumrungrroje (2014), with a translation of the original scales and validation by 4 experts, who received the translated questionnaire and returned it with suggestions for adaptations to the translation of the instrument.

The collection was operationalized through an electronic form made available through the Google forms platform. Besides the measurement scales of the constructs, questions were added to characterize the respondents, such as gender, income, education, and age group. The research environment is composed of a sample of social network users, accessed by convenience.

The exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling techniques were used to analyze the research results. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is one of the multivariate techniques whose most comprehensive objective is to identify the underlying relationships between the variables measured (Hongyu, 2018). Structural equation modeling, on the other hand, according to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2014), is a technique that allows separating relationships for each set of dependent variables. EFA will test the scales used in the research, while Structural Equation Modeling will support the hypothesis testing. SPSS and SmartPLS software was used for the statistical analyses, the latter for the structural equation modeling.

## 4 – RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we will present the results of the empirical study. In item 4.1, we have the sample description, where we seek to present the data cleaning procedures and the participants' profiles. In item 4.2, we have the psychometric analysis of the scales and the study's hypotheses. The psychometric analysis seeks to evaluate and ensure the conditions for the structural model of the study to be tested.

### 4.1 Sample description

A total of 170 questionnaires were answered, five of which were ruled out of the sample because they had a large amount of missing data (missing values). An analysis was also performed to check for outliers, and no exclusion procedure was necessary, leaving 165 valid questionnaires for analysis. We found that 50.3% had either finished or incomplete higher education in the sample. Regarding the respondents' gender, there was a good balance, with 54.5% of women and 45.5% of men, which, in a way, is close to the characteristics of the population. Most of the sample, about 75%, has an individual monthly income of up to R\$1,500.00. As for the age group, the highest number of answers was from people up to 21 years old, with 40.6%. The sociodemographic information is listed in Table 1:

**Table 1**  
Sociodemographic data (percent)

<b>Gender</b>		<b>Level of education</b>	
Female	54,5	Elementary school	1,2
		High school graduate	30,9
Male	45,5	Bachelor's degree	50,3
		Graduate school	17,6
<b>Individual monthly income</b>		<b>Age group</b>	
Less than R\$ 1.500	75,7	Less than 21 years old	40,6
		Between 21 and 24 years old	21,2
Between R\$ 1.501,00 and R\$ 3.000,00	10,5	Between 24 and 27 years old	9,1
Between R\$ 3.001,00 and R\$ 4.500,00	7,2	Between 27 and 30 years old	7,9
More than R\$ 4.501,00	6,6	More than 30 years old	21,2

### 4.2 Psychometric analysis of the scales and the study's hypotheses

After the sample's descriptive analyses, this section will present the analyses of the psychometric consistency of the scales followed by the study's hypotheses.

For the psychometric analysis of the scales, the exploratory factor analysis was performed, aiming to verify the factor structure of each set of items to measure the variables and the analysis of internal consistency through the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's sphericity tests were performed to verify sample adequacy.

For each construct, the following were formed in this order: the variance extracted from each construct (desirable  $\geq 0.5$ ), the factorial scores (desirable  $\geq 0.5$ ), Cronbach's alpha (desirable  $\geq 0.6$ ), and the KMO (desirable  $\geq 0.5$ ). Bartlett's sphericity test provides a significant statistic that the correlation matrix shows significant correlations between at least some of the variables (significance parameter: p-value  $< 0.05$ ) (Barboza, Carvalho, & Costa, 2017).

The six variables present in the research questionnaire were evaluated for the construct's trust in 'Electronic Word-of-mouth' (eWOM). The analyses verified that there is a good alignment between the items, with a variance of 78.36%. The Cronbach's alpha value obtained was 0.945, showing a reasonable degree of reliability and scale consistency. As for sample adequacy, the results found (KMO = 0.922 and Bartlett's sphericity test with  $p = 0.000$ ) denote adequacy at acceptable levels. The lowest factor score found was 0.859, and no items had to be ruled out.

In the construct concerning 'conspicuous consumption' (Consp), which has four measurement items, the variance obtained was 57.68%, while the minimum factorial score of the scale was 0.628. The other measures attest to an excellent internal scale consistency and sample adequacy within desirable parameters.

Regarding the construct that measures the 'intensity of social media use' (SMU), the sample presented an adequacy index (KMO = 0.589) considered insufficient by the parameters established by Hair *et al.* (2014), but still at an acceptable level of adequacy. The measure of internal consistency of the scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.613) was the lowest found among the study constructs, although it is also within the acceptable margin according to the literature (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The leading indicators resulting from the exploratory factor analysis are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
Extractions

Constructs	Variance (%)	Minimum score	Cronbach's alpha	KMO	Bartlett
eWOM	78,36	0,859	0,945	0,922	Sig. = 0,000
Consp	57,68	0,628	0,749	0,707	Sig. = 0,000
SMU	60,77	0,710	0,613	0,589	Sig) = 0,000

Before testing the study's hypotheses, the measures related to convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity were initially verified. The convergent validity analysis was performed by observing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As a parameter, the Fornell and Larcker criterion was used (Ringle, Da Silva, & Bido, 2014), which considers that the AVE values should be higher than 0.50 ( $AVE > 0.50$ ), which is verified by the measures presented in Table 3.

After checking the Convergent Validity, the analysis of the Composite Reliability (CR) measures was then performed. This indicator is usually used to assess whether the sample is free of biases or whether the answers, when analyzed together, are reliable (Ringle, Da Silva, & Bido, 2014). According to Hair et al. (2014), values above 0.70 represent high construct reliability, which shows that the scale measures consistently represent the same latent construct. According to Table 3, the CR measures proved adequate in all constructs.

To analyze whether the latent variables were independent of each other, that is, whether one construct is genuinely different from the others, the model's discriminant validity (DV) was assessed. According to Hair *et al.* (2014), when the AVE square roots of the latent variables are higher than their corresponding correlations with the other variables, they establish sufficient discriminant properties. Table 3 shows that these assumptions were adequately met.

**Table 3**  
Convergent Validity, Composite Reliability and Discriminant Validity

	eWOM	Consp	SMU
eWOM	<b>0.887</b>		
Consp	0.671	<b>0.755</b>	
SMU	0.199	0.125	<b>0.770</b>
Composite Reliability	0.957	0.838	0.812
AVE	0.786	0.571	0.593

After the model measurements showed that the scales used were valid and reliable, the study’s hypotheses were tested. The results extracted from the modeling, run on the SmartPLS software, are presented in Table 4. The beta coefficients, which are standardized measures that represent the linear influence between the variables, were verified.

Of the three initial hypotheses of the study, we noticed that hypothesis H1 was supported, showing a positive and statistically significant influence of the variable concerning ‘electronic word-of-mouth’ on the variable concerning ‘conspicuous consumption’ ( $\beta = 0.776$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). However, hypotheses H2 and H3, despite presenting beta coefficient values mathematically different from zero, statistically speaking, the relationships between the variables could not be supported, as they presented  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ . H4, which tested the indirect relationship between ‘intensity of social media use’ and ‘conspicuous consumption’, mediated by the variable concerning ‘electronic word-of-mouth’, was not statistically supported either.

**Table 4**  
Hypothesis Testing

Research Hypothesis	beta	P-value	Support
H1: Electronic word-of-mouth is positively related to conspicuous consumption	0,776	0,000	yes
H2: Social media use intensity is positively related to electronic word-of-mouth	0,199	0,088	no
H3: The intensity of social media use is positively related to conspicuous consumption	-0,029	0,528	no
H4: Social media use intensity is positively related to electronic word-of-mouth, which, in turn, is positively related to conspicuous consumption.	0,155	0,090	no

Unlike Thoumrungroje’s study (2014), no positive relationships were identified between ‘social media use intensity’, ‘electronic word-of-mouth’, and ‘conspicuous consumption’. Although the model showed a positive effect on the indirect relationship of ‘social media use intensity’ and ‘conspicuous consumption’, this was not statistically significant. However, corroborating Thoumrungroje’s (2014) study, the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and conspicuous consumption was significant. Perhaps, this positive relationship in both studies reinforces the findings of Assimos *et al.* (2019), who show that the consumers’ desire to establish relationships with their social groups, and communicate their wealth in order to demonstrate they belong to a specific class, ultimately

encourages people in their group to purchase branded products to gain status, respect, and conformity in their social groups.

Although the results point out that the degree of activity in online social media does not seem to have an influence on their propensity for word-of-mouth in the online environment, when individuals are exposed to the opinion of friends or people in their networks about experiences with products/services, they may be more likely to show conspicuous behavior in their consumption practices.

Ferreira et al. (2016) point out that one factor that makes electronic word-of-mouth so influential derives precisely from the spontaneity with which ordinary users are willing to share their experiences with products or services. Furthermore, Nunes, Ferreira, and Ramos (2017) concluded that factors such as the source's credibility and the positive perception of individuals contribute positively to the acceptance of information in the social media environment, making electronic word-of-mouth more effective on the consumption behavior of individuals. In other words, individuals tend to accept and be influenced by electronic word-of-mouth in social media because the people who make up their network have some level of credibility for them.

The variations in the results found by this research compared to the test of similar relationships in Thoumrungroje's (2014) study may stem from the geographical context of the sample (Asian versus South American) as well as the temporal context (2014 versus 2020), considering that the characteristic of media use and how its users interact tend to change over time, as Larangeira, Cardoso, and Kum (2016) point out.

Still, on the sample characteristics, it should be noted that, in this survey, there was a predominance of respondents with a lower age group - a little over 60% of the respondents were up to 24 years old - which denotes a different profile of the comparative study, whose average age was 34 years old. Another sample element that may have influenced the results is the individual's monthly income since approximately 75% of the respondents said they had a monthly income of up to R\$ 1,500.00. Literature shows that income variable directly influences materialistic consumption and, consequently, conspicuous consumption (Santini, Ladeira, Sampaio, & Araújo, 2017). However, the confirmation of these relationships in the context worked out in this study warrants further investigations.

## 5 - FINAL REMARKS

This study sought to analyze the possible influence of the intensive use of social media and electronic word-of-mouth on conspicuous consumption behavior. From the four hypotheses mentioned in the paper, we reinforce that electronic word-of-mouth exerts influence on the conspicuous consumption of products/services, i.e., when people receive opinions and suggestions from their contacts/followers/friends in online environments, they are more likely to present conspicuous behavior in their consumption practices. In this sense, we believe that the desire for consumption of products considered a luxury or representing a sense of belonging to a particular social group is reinforced by opinions of people who are part of the individual's online social networks.

We understand that the present work also brings essential contributions to the theoretical field to see that there is no statistical evidence to corroborate that the intensity of social media use influences electronic word-of-mouth and conspicuous consumption. Although Thourunroje's study (2014) points out this relationship, the non-confirmation of these hypotheses shows the need for further research in this area.

In the managerial spectrum, the hypothesis confirmed herein can be beneficial for marketing professionals in applying sales strategies for luxury products since social networks configure an environment of the potential repercussion of consumers' impressions about the products of this category, besides being a space that produces considerable reach. Given the limitations of this study, such as the predominantly younger and lower-income sample, there are still many gaps to be filled in future studies about this theme, such as a deeper understanding of the motivations for conspicuous consumption practices and a study with a more varied age and income sample that would deepen the knowledge about this consumption practice and the relationship with online social media, or an analysis of the behavior of people with different demographic profiles.

This study did not look at the word-of-mouth communication content in the online environment, nor the reputation of the sender of information in this users' environment. Perhaps these elements further strengthen the influence of electronic word-of-mouth on conspicuous consumption. Thus, we believe it is relevant that variables such as the quality of the argument and the source's credibility are analyzed as antecedents of conspicuous

consumption to understand the relationship between the variables concerning electronic word-of-mouth and conspicuous consumption more deeply.

Moreover, the conspicuous consumption variable was addressed here in an aggregate manner. The literature recognizes a subdivision of the variable in the dimensions concerning singularity, social conformity, and ostentation and signaling. Finally, we recommend that future studies analyze the relationships between electronic word-of-mouth and these dimensions mentioned above to elucidate whether the influence already recognized and reinforced in the literature occurs on the variable in general or partially, on some specific dimension.

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