"Who to trust?": Antecedents in fashion consumption endorsed by digital influencers

"Em quem confiar?" Antecedentes do consumo de moda endossado por influenciadores digitais

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RESUMO

A expansão da internet fez surgir novas formas de comunicação e consumo. Com o acúmulo de informação, o gosto e interesse das pessoas se tornaram voláteis e confusos, necessitando cada vez mais de indivíduos que filtrem essas informações e indiquem produtos em suas plataformas. Nesse entremeio, uma das principais características se trata da criação de figuras digitais que são responsáveis por influenciar um determinado público, seja esse a produtos alimentícios, hotelaria e, no contexto deste artigo, os de Moda. Para tanto, neste artigo, buscamos entender os antecedentes que conformam o consumo de Moda endossado por influenciadores digitais. Conduzimos uma survey com 103 indivíduos usuários de Instagram, empregando uma série de escalas para mensurar tais relações e como influenciam na intenção de compra. Os dados foram tratados por regressão linear múltipla. Os resultados revelaram influência significativa de dimensões como estilo/atratividade e confiabilidade.

ABSTRACT

The expansion of the Internet has given rise to new forms of communication and consumption. With the accumulation of information, people's tastes and interests have become volatile and confused, increasingly requiring individuals to filter this information and recommend products on their platforms. In this context, one of the main characteristics is the creation of digital figures responsible for influencing a specific audience, be it food products, hotels, or Fashion in this paper's context. To this end, in this paper, we seek to understand the antecedents that shape the consumption of Fashion endorsed by digital influencers. We surveyed 103 individual Instagram users, employing a series of scales to measure such relationships and how they influence purchase intentions. The data were treated by multiple linear regression. The results revealed a significant influence of dimensions such as style/attractiveness and reliability.

1. Introduction

Contemporary lifestyles are characterized by increasing globalization, which implies strengthening interpersonal relationships previously limited by geographic distance and limited accessibility to multimedia communication media. As Lipovetsky (2003, p. 24) highlights, "fashion is a phenomenon that encompasses the language and manners of a society, from its tastes to its ideas," thus relating to the various sociocultural influences of consumption. Digital influencers (IDs) emerge as a contemporary feature of this transformation, guiding the tastes and demands of an audience reflecting the need to belong and be part of a group (Rech, 2002).

Given the diversity of applications, the term "fashion" is used in such broad contexts that it becomes complex for those seeking to understand its meaning. Fashion is not restricted to clothing alone; it encompasses behavior, language, opinions, and diverse aesthetic choices (Pollini, 2018). Carrasquilla (2008, p. 436) highlights that Fashion is "life itself, at certain moments in its process." In this context, Fashion becomes a form of communication about those who consume it (Moura, 2018). Consuming is seen as a form of communication, transcending the exchange of goods, and sharing values, ideas, and styles (Miranda, 2019).

Frings (2012, p. 39) highlights that "consumers are not a homogeneous mass," influenced by the current rapid consumption cycle, which leads them to change interests constantly. Therefore, fashion professionals create diverse models to serve specific market segments. The psychological tendency to imitate (Simmel, 2014) allows the formation of groups that share consumption interests, transferring creative activity and responsibility for their actions to others. Imitation arises from the need for similarity, providing the satisfaction of not being alone in one's actions (Miranda, 2019).

With the advent of the Internet, information reaches people predominantly through digital means, showing that virtual sources are consulted to validate the purchase of products, including in the field of Fashion (Borges, 2016). In this context, IDs significantly create value for brands, products, or services, endorsing consumption (Souza et al., 2020). These individuals contribute to constructing networks, transforming them into territories of alliances, negotiations, and co-creations, where consumption and production are interdependent (Souza et al., 2020).

Analyzing over time, digital influencers have emerged and consolidated themselves as consumer agents, especially in the fashion world, where they create content and use their
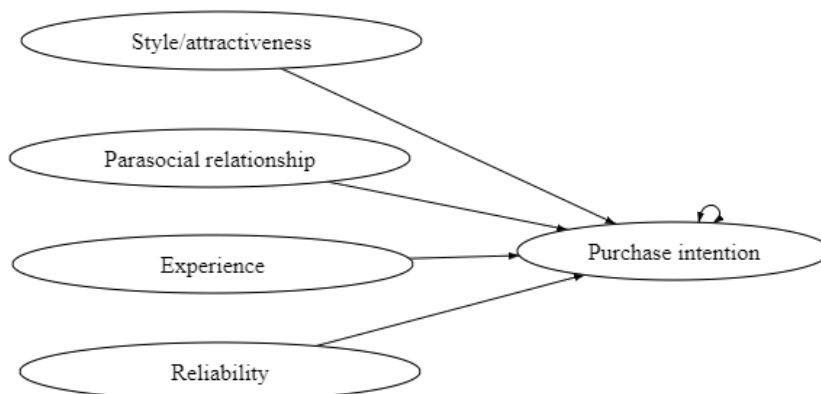
popularity on social networks to give visibility to brands and products, making them desirable (Abidin; Karhawi, 2021). Thus, Fashion and clothing become working tools for IDs, while the people accompanying them use them as a source of inspiration and reference.

Given this, potential fashion consumers orient themselves differently to the attributes of a product, relating positively or negatively to the meaning that this product has for them. IDs, in turn, cultivate differentiated interactions with different audiences, influencing them differently. The constant presence of IDs on the Internet means that communication through videos or photos on their social networks suggests to followers how to act and dress, meeting the desire for something quick and easy that is often in constant search (Mariano et al., 2017).

The influence exerted by IDs has become a crucial factor in the marketing and promotion of brands, leading consumers to consider the entire purchasing process, from engaging advertising to qualified service. Therefore, this paper seeks to understand the antecedents that shape fashion consumption endorsed by digital influencers.

2. Theoretical bases in consumption endorsed by digital influencers

The support of an individual's process, service, or product and its subsequent acceptance by others result from the interaction of several dimensions, which can have different origins, such as social, aesthetic, and cultural (Kotler, 2000). In the research conducted by Silva and Costa (2020), the authors propose two central dimensions, source credibility (CF) and parasocial relationship (RP), with some ramifications to explain this influence. In the theoretical scope of this article, these principles are applied as possible approaches to identify endorsement by digital influencers (IDs) in the fashion sector, with the purchase intention (CI) dimension acting as a critical point to be influenced. Therefore, this study adopts these same assumptions, adapting them to the fashion market (Figure 1).

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Figure 1. Conceptual model proposed in this paper

Source: Prepared by the authors according to literature review

The first dimension, source credibility, addresses "the extent to which individuals accept messages from information sources" (Silva; Costa, 2020, p. 54). In this sense, the assumption involves evaluating the potential of the digital influencer to communicate an image and be accepted by IDs. This dimension comprises constructs, that is, latent variables called reliability, attractiveness, and experience, which contribute to identifying different levels of source credibility.

In the first construct of this dimension, reliability, a value is attributed to the digital influencer's communication. Silva and Costa (2020, p. 55) state that reliability is "the measure by which receivers attribute veracity to what is communicated so that senders are perceived as trustworthy and honest." Therefore, under this assumption, the confidence of potential consumers (Kang; Namkung, 2018) in the information provided by the ID is assessed.

In the second CF construct, the authors introduce the dimension of attractiveness, which "refers to the physical appearance of the source" (Silva; Costa, 2020, p. 55), as a means of accepting the message. However, in the context of Fashion, the emphasis is more on IDs' idea of style than on physical attractiveness, as style is "a basic and distinctive mode of expression, the way objects are made as opposed to how the objects themselves are" (Doria, 2012, p. 102, our translation). Thus, in Fashion, identification focuses more on the personal style of the digital influencer, even if it is not necessarily original, but causes identification with the individual way of dressing or living of that individual being watched (Martínez-Sanz; Fernández, 2018; Cuenca-Piqueras; Moreno; Olmos, 2021). The third construct addresses experience, highlighting the appreciation of some previous training that the digital influencer has in their

work area. Silva and Costa (2020, p. 55) refer to this construct as "the skill and specialty of the source." Therefore, under this assumption, it is assessed whether demonstrating expertise in the area influences purchase intention.

The second dimension capable of anticipating endorsement by digital influencers (IDs) is the parasocial relationship (PR). According to the previously mentioned authors (2020, p. 55-56), this dimension is "an illusory mental process of face-to-face relationship developed by some viewers concerning communication media personas, such as celebrities." Thus, the perceived proximity between the viewer and the endorser can more objectively influence purchase intention. This occurs as the viewer starts to see the digital influencer as a friend, someone extremely close. When recommending a product, the influencer is perceived as someone who seeks the best for the viewer, generating influence and endorsement from this proximity (Horton; Richard, 1956; Prodanov et al., 2023; Wang; Huang, 2023).

We propose understanding the influence of these dimensions on a third assumption applied in this study, called purchase intention, which measures the consumption potential endorsed by these individuals. Purchase intention is the dimension of a subjective probability involving the individual and some action resulting in behavior (Fishbein; Ajzen 1975). Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel (2005) identify distinct behavioral intentions, including purchasing, repurchasing, selecting shopping locations, budgeting expenditures, and initiating search activities. Although intentions do not consistently mirror behavior, they frequently shape actions influenced by factors such as the strength and consistency of these intentions, as highlighted by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980).

3. Methods, techniques, and data

We conducted applied research (Gil, 2008), which aims to solve marketing problems and focuses on transforming local consumer information into insights for marketing strategies in the fashion area. The methods used to validate the objectives will be exploratory and descriptive, as Gil (2008) emphasizes, serving to develop and contribute to a new vision on a given subject, in addition to conducting a description of the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon, presenting it in full, in this case researching and describing the forms of fashion consumption based on local IDs. Regarding the nature of its approach, the research has a

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quantitative content (Gil, 2008), establishing the levels of influence of these individuals on fashion consumption.

3.1. Study location

The Seridó region of the state of Rio Grande do Norte (RN) is a mesoregion that covers 24 municipalities in the countryside of the state, with Caicó being considered, symbolically, as its capital, a consequence of the strategic location and its historical and cultural importance for the region (Medeiros, 2012). In this way, the main characteristics of the region are the appreciation of traditional festivities, regional cuisine, and the broad consumption and production of Fashion (Claudino, 2020). According to data presented in on FIERN (2022)[1], Seridó Region (Rio Grande do Norte) has approximately 100 100 clothing and hat making companies,

3.2. Technical procedures and survey process

Regarding technical procedures, this research is a survey shared in a virtual environment and disseminated only among residents of the Seridó region (Rio Grande do Norte). This research is primarily quantitative, designed to provide a comprehensive profile of a known population in response to a limited number of specific questions (Santos et al., 2018). This investigation takes advantage of this type of research by directly questioning potential consumers of fashion products about how their relationship with local IDs develops.

In this context, to assess individuals' self-perception, an adaptation of the questionnaire was used in the research conducted by Silva and Costa (2020), which investigated the role of ID in hotel chains, as discussed previously, but in this case, it into the context of fashion products. In this way, the possible relationships of these individuals were verified by identifying the correlation between the source's psychometric credibility scales, including reliability, style/attractiveness, and experience, and the parasocial relationship. As a dependent variable, the purchase intention scale was used (Table 1).

To classify the statements during the questionnaire response process, a Likert scale of five positive points was used, ranging from "totally disagree" (1), "neutral" (3), and "totally agree"

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[1] https://www.fiern.org.br/cidade-da-moda-em-acari-promete-fomentar-industria-textil-serido-potiguar-e-economia-rn/. (Acesso em: 01 ago. 2024).

(5). Furthermore, a last section of the questionnaire aimed at sociodemographic questions was also used. Such data could be crossed with the delimited segmentation, pointing out marketing characteristics. The questionnaire was created using the Google Forms platform and disseminated on the primary digital media (Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp). All volunteers agreed to a Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF). As inclusion/exclusion criteria, it was determined that respondents should have an active account on Instagram, follow at least two IDs from the city of Caicó (Rio Grande do Norte), and live in the Seridó region of the state of Rio Grande do Norte, as they are more susceptible to IDs considered local.

Table 1. Questions/Dimensions studied in the survey

SOURCE CREDIBILITY	
Reliabilty *Consider how much you agree that the characteristics below represent the digital influencers of Fashion in Caicó.*	
Trustwhorty	Sincere
Honest	Reliable
Transparent	
Style/Attractiveness *Which styles does she (the digital influencer) best fit into?*	
Sporty/Casual	Romantic
Classic/Traditional	Criative
Elegant	Modern/Urban
Experience *Consider how much you agree that the characteristics below represent the digital influencers of Fashion in Caicó.*	
Qualified	Specialist
Experienced	Skilled
Knowledgeable	
Parasocial relationship *Now, select your degree of agreement with the statements below, based on your perception of the fashion influencer(s) from Caicó (RN)*	
I feel close enough to contact her/him	
I feel comfortable with a message from her	
I can trust information I receive from her	
I feel fascinated with her/him	
In the past, I felt sorry for her when she made a mistake	
I think it is useful for my interests	
Purchase intention *Now, select your degree of agreement with the statements below, based on your perception of the fashion influencer(s) from Caicó (RN)*	
There is a high probability that I will buy fashion products advertised by Caicó digital influencers	
I would recommend the fashion product advertised by Caicó digital influencers to my friends or relatives	
The fashion product announced by digital influencers from Caicó would be a good purchase	

Source: Adapted from Silva and Costa (2020).

3.3. Participants

The initial number of participants was 147; however, after considering the established inclusion/exclusion criteria, particularly the need to follow at least two digital influencers from Caicó (Rio Grande do Norte), this sample was reduced to 103 people (71%). For data collection, non-probabilistic convenience sampling was used due to the subjective quality of the research.

Regarding the sociodemographic profile, it was observed that 80.6% (83) of the respondents were female, while 19.4% (20) identified themselves as male. The age of the individuals varied between 15 and 65 years old. However, around 84.8% of the respondents were people from Generation Z (between 15 and 27 years old), and the remaining 15.2% were between 31 and 65 years old. Therefore, it is worth highlighting that such results more significantly reflect a perspective of younger individuals rather than a broad and normal age distribution. Marital status did not vary considerably, with a significant predominance of single people (82.5%), followed by married people (15.5%) and divorced people (1.9%). On the other hand, the level of education showed a high variation between primary education (39.8%), secondary education (33%), and higher education (20.4%), even reflecting a relationship with the predominant age group.

3.4. Data analysis and treatment: multiple linear regression

We used the backward method to conduct a multiple linear regression considering the research objectives. According to Hair Junior et al. (2009, p. 17), "Multiple regression is the appropriate analysis method when the research problem involves a single metric dependent variable presumably related to two or more metric independent variables." therefore, such statistical test aims to understand whether independent variables can predict the increase or decrease in the influence of a dependent variable. In the context of this work, we focused on testing whether the dimensions of experience, reliability, style/attractiveness, and parasocial relationship can predict purchase intention based on the endorsement made by digital influencers in the city of Caicó in the state of Rio Grande do Norte.

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Checking data reliability and dimensionality

A study on the data's adjustment, reliability, and dimensionality was conducted to begin the inferential statistical analysis phase of the materials collected in the research. Silva (2020, p. 56) states, "Although the scales that made up the instrument had already been statistically validated by the studies that proposed them, methodological rigor does not eliminate the need for further investigation." Therefore, for validation purposes, exploratory factor analysis was generated to understand the factor loading of each latent variable, followed by the definition of attributes necessary for validation, such as Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Alpha measures. Cronbach's test (Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of data reliability and dimensionality

Variable	C. F.	KMO	Bartlett			V. Exp.	Cronbach
			df	Qui²	Sig		
CONF01	.792	.874 (Very good)	10	301.952	.000	71.901	.902 (Very high)
CONF02	.864						
CONF03	.860						
CONF04	.868						
CONF05	.852						
IC1	.822	.639 (Medium)	3	67.928	.000	64.701	.715 (Moderate)
IC2	.863						
IC3	.722						
EST01	.593	.737 (Good)	15	128.847	.000	44.741	.746 (Moderate)
EST02	.720						
EST03	.694						
EST04	.726						
EST05	.733						
EST06	.518						
EXP01	.747	.836 (Very good)	10	201.810	.000	62.815	.846 (High)
EXP02	.778						
EXP03	.819						
EXP04	.801						
EXP05	.815						
RPS01	*Excluded*	.681 (Medium)	6	54.841	.000	48.754	.634 (Moderate)
RPS02	.514						
RPS03	.717						
RPS04	.785						
RPS05	*Excluded*						

Source: Prepared by the authors according to research data

From the results found, it was identified that the observed variables of reliability, style/attractiveness, experience, and purchase intention presented adequate adjustment for all metrics, both Cronbach's alpha and KMO. However, the observed variable of parasocial relationship required the exclusion of two latent constructs (RPS01 and RPS05) so that the observed variable could present the minimum possible values to be considered in the study. In the end, the variable presented good fit metrics and were all considered.

4.2. Analysis of the theoretical model

After checking and confirming the statistical adjustment of the results, we developed inferential statistical analyses of the data. For initial purposes, it is worth returning to the descriptive analysis by compiling the latent (composite) variables into their observed variables. To reach this result, the calculation of the simple arithmetic mean was used, together with the standard deviation (Table 3).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the composite variables

Variables	N	Average	S. D.
Reliability	103	3.49	0.711
Experience	103	3.66	0.601
Parasocial relationship	103	3.53	0.712
Buy intention	103	3.84	0.599
Style/Attractiveness	103	3.76	0.524

Source: Prepared by the authors according to research data

As seen previously, the variables that make up this study were analyzed using a five-point Likert scale. Therefore, agreement was related to the proximity of the mean to this value. In general, a neutral relationship was noted for all dimensions evaluated. However, considering more specifically, it was possible to identify that the style/attractiveness dimension/variable presented a more significant agreement among the others so that potential consumers see digital influencers relating positively to this dimension, with an average of 3.76.

Next, it was observed that the experience and parasocial relationship variables presented degrees tending to positive, with an average of 3.66 and 3.53. In this way, it becomes noticeable that respondents believe that the knowledge and expertise of digital influencers and their level of proximity to these figures are essential. Furthermore, also tending towards positive but presenting the lowest level among the variables investigated, reliability reached an average

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of 3.49, which means that local digital influencers have a moderate degree of reliability. Finally, the purchase intention variable was also questioned, reaching an average of 3.84, demonstrating that a potential audience consumes based on the speech of digital influencers, but this consumer has not yet been defined and consolidated.

After descriptive verification of the composite variables, we began developing linear regression, focusing primarily on validating the proposed hypotheses. As previously presented, the hypotheses of this investigation followed those established in the work of Silva (2020) but were applied to the context of fashion consumption endorsed by local digital influencers (Table 4).

Table 4. Definition of hypotheses

Hypotheses		Preliminary theoretical assumptions
Source credibility	H1a	The source experience positively influences the intention to purchase fashion products in the city of Caicó (RN) endorsed by local digital influencers.
	H1b	Source reliability positively influences the intention to purchase fashion products in the city of Caicó (RN) endorsed by digital influencers.
	H1c	The style/attractiveness of the font positively influences the intention of fashion products in the city of Caicó (RN) endorsed by digital influencers.
Parasocial relationship	H2	The consumer's parasocial relationship with the endorser positively influences the intention of fashion products in the city of Caicó (RN) endorsed by digital influencers.

Source: Prepared by the authors according to theoretical framework

Considering adequate compliance with all assumptions, the data was ready to follow the multiple linear regression stage. Therefore, the backward method was used to arrive at the best possible model, starting with inserting all variables and subsequent exclusion one by one to identify better compatibility and adherence. In this context, it was observed that multiple linear regression suggested two models: the first, based on the insertion method, which considers all observed variables, and the second, which suggests excluding the experience variable (Table 5).

Table 5. Multiple Regression (backward method)

Inserted/Removed Variables			
Model	Inserted variables	Removed variables	Method
1	Parasocial relationship, Style/Attractiveness, Reliability, Experience[b]	.	Insert
2	.	Experience	Reverse (criterion: Probability of F being removed >= .100).
a. Dependent variable: Purchase Intent		b. All requested variables inserted.	

Source: Prepared by the authors according to research data

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Furthermore, to observe the most appropriate model to be selected as effective for this linear regression and subsequent tests, it is worth considering the metrics highlighted in Table 4, which demonstrates the summary of the suggested models. That said, although the regression suggests experience as a dimension to be disregarded, it was initially identified that its exclusion directly impacts the model's metrics, where the value of R, R², and the change in the last-mentioned index decrease compared to the first model. Even so, the initial choice for model 1 over two is based on the statistical significance presented when transposing one to the other, in which the backward method indicates that going from the first model to the second does not have a statistically significant difference in the value of F, therefore, it is understood, firstly, that it is not appropriate to exclude the experience dimension as one of the variables studied in the multiple regression (Table 6).

Table 6. Summary of the Multiple regression model (backward method)

Model summary							
Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	Standard error of the estimate	Change statistics		*Durbin-Watson*
					Change in R²	Sig. Amendment F	
1	.615[a]	.378	.352	.48224	.378	.000	
2	.606[b]	.368	.349	.48371	-.010	.208	2.019
a. Predictors: (Constant), Parasocial relationship, Style/Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Experience							
b. Predictors: (Constant), Parasocial relationship, Style/Attractiveness, Trustworthiness							

Source: Prepared by the authors according to research data

Considering these results, it is inferred that the R index, corresponding to 0.615 in model 1, comprises the correlation of the independent variables (experience, parasocial relationship, style/attractiveness, and reliability) with the dependent variable (purchase intention) – or 0.606, in model 2, excluding the experience dimension. In this way, it can be concluded from both metrics that the independent variables are positively and strongly related, with the intention of purchasing fashion products based on the endorsement of local digital influencers.

Still, on the items in Table 6, it is essential to observe the level of adjusted R², which indicates the potential, in percentage, of the multiple linear regression model in predicting the variation concerning the dependent variable investigated. In this, it was observed that 35.2% of the intention to purchase fashion products endorsed by digital influencers from Caicó (Rio Grande do Norte) can be explained by the three-dimensionality between the source credibility variables (experience, reliability, and style/attractiveness) and the parasocial relationship; or even, it is observed that 34.9% of purchase intention can be explained based on the dimensions of reliability, style/attractiveness and parasocial relationship. It is worth highlighting

that, given the indication of exclusion of the dimension of experience by one of the models, it was initially decided to accept the first model (which encompasses all variables), but that, however, it is intended to continue observing the behavior of the data, so that a holistic decision can be made about the best multiple linear regression model.

Therefore, the next phase of multiple linear regression consists of observing the analysis of variance (ANOVA). Hair Junior et al. (2009, p. 4) state that it is a "statistical technique used to determine, based on a dependent measure, whether samples are from populations with equal means." With this, the idea is that significance values (sig.) less than 0.05 represent a statistically significant difference. Therefore, it was observed in this study (Table 7) that both models present a significant result lower than the value mentioned above. Therefore, this means that at least one of the observed variables studied (reliability, style/attractiveness, experience, and parasocial relationship) has a statistically significant influence on purchase intention. This relationship can be observed for both model 1 and model 2.

Table 7. Observation of analysis of variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Medium Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	13.842	4	3.460	14.880	.000[b]
1 Residue	22.790	98	.233		
1 Total	36.632	102			
2 Regression	13.469	3	4.490	19.189	.000[c]
2 Residue	23.163	99	.234		
2 Total	36.632	102			
b. Predictors: (Constant). Parasocial relationship. Style/Attractiveness. Trustworthiness. Experience					
c. Predictors: (Constant). Parasocial relationship. Style/Attractiveness. Trustworthiness					

Source: Prepared by the authors according to research data

Considering such results, deciding which of the two regression models presents a more effective result is not yet possible. Therefore, the next step involves observing the coefficients within the models, that is, how each variable behaves and what its significance level is for the multiple regression. To this end, the reference standard is statistical significance when a sig. < 0.05. With this, the constructs present in Table 8 can be analyzed.

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Table 8. Correlation coefficients of variables with regression models

Coefficients							
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Standard model	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.142	.381		3.000	.003		
	Reliability	.202	.088	.240	2.298	.024	.580	1.723
	Experience	.135	.106	.135	1.266	.208	.555	1.800
	Style/Attractiveness	.249	.106	.218	2.348	.021	.735	1.361
	Parasocial relationship	.158	.087	.188	1.823	.071	.598	1.671
2	(Constant)	1.266	.369		3.430	.001		
	Reliability	.235	.084	.279	2.785	.006	.635	1.574
	Style/Attractiveness	.282	.103	.247	2.725	.008	.780	1.282
	Parasocial relationship	.196	.082	.232	2.394	.019	.678	1.475

Source: Prepared by the authors according to research data

In this context, it was observed that the presence of the experience variable in model 1 ended up compromising the influence exerted by the other constructs on the dependent variable of purchase intention. In this first model, it was concluded that only the dimensions of style/attractiveness (Sig. 0.021) and reliability (Sig. 0.024) have a statistically significant influence on the purchase intention variable, where experience (Sig. 0.208) and parasocial relationship (Sig. 0.071) were not significant in this model.

On the other hand, model 2, considering the exclusion of the experience variable, demonstrates that all other predictors have a statistically significant influence on the purchase intention endorsed by digital influencers, with results such as reliability (Sig. 0.006), style/attractiveness (Sig. 0.008) and parasocial relationship (Sig. 0.019). Therefore, based on these results, it was decided that model 2 of multiple linear regression was the most appropriate for this investigation. Therefore, it can be concluded that hypothesis H1a was rejected, considering that the experience dimension is not an item that influences the intention to purchase fashion products endorsed by digital influencers.

Kotler (2017, p. 286) states, "From the point of view of marketing communications, consumers are no longer passive targets; they are becoming active media of communication." Concerning this statement, it is necessary to understand why the dimension of experience is not a construct taken into consideration by fashion consumers based on Caicó's digital influencers. According to Mariano et al. (2017), one of the factors that most validate the work of digital influencers is self-elevation, since when making comments about products, they would

show themselves to be an intelligent consumer, as they would show their consumers their taste, in addition to their characteristics.

Gomes, Marques, and Dias (2022), as well as Liu (2022), highlight the importance of influencer characteristics such as trustworthiness, expertise, and similarity in influencing purchase intention. Renchen (2020) further emphasizes the impact of influencer network involvement, intrinsic motivation, and authenticity on brand awareness and purchase intention. However, we notice that the variable of experience may not be significant in this process, as it is not proven to be an intervening variable between digital marketing and social media influencers on purchase intention. This indicates that while influencer characteristics play a crucial role, the variable of experience may not be as influential in the context of fashion product endorsements by digital influencers. Pioneering consumer and the impression of being an expert on the subject. Therefore, as model 2 of multiple linear regression states, the experience requirement does not influence the intention to purchase fashion products but rather the style of the digital influencer, in addition to how they communicate and convince their followers.

Still, in this context, Table 6 shows the values of non-standardized coefficients, which indicate each construct's influence and valence (negative and positive) on the dependent variable. Therefore, positive coefficients of 0.282, 0.235, and 0.196 were identified for the variable's style/attractiveness, reliability, and parasocial relationship, respectively. Therefore, it is understood that the wider the presence of these dimensions in the endorsement of fashion consumption by local digital influencers, the greater the possibility of purchasing a product, mainly style/attractiveness, demonstrating a higher correlation level. Considering these results, it can be concluded that hypotheses H1b, H1c, and H2, proposed in the theoretical model, were confirmed.

The main factors that cause public attractiveness to the influencer are social values related to their physical appearance, personality, social status, or any similarity that exists between digital influencer and follower (Salomon, 2016), as this generates identification, sympathy, and reliability for with the one who presents himself publicly. According to Freire, Behling, and Reinert (2010), many people try to imitate the attitudes of endorsers because they judge their lifestyle as the key to success. Due to this thought, those who are inspired believe that what is shown, indicated, and disseminated by the digital influencer they follow becomes a good option, directly affecting how they make their choices and, consequently, their purchasing

intentions. Therefore, these conditions become of great importance to generate a real influence concerning the consumption of those influenced.

Given the results obtained, it was possible to admit the importance of the public's relationship with influencers regarding reliability when purchasing items from the fashion stores, specially through social media (Wang; Yu; Wei, 2012). Consumers do not just analyze numbers of followers or likes; their direct relationship with the digital influencer is also fundamental to them (Lim et al., 2017). Getting to know the influencer better and finding out more about their life through even their own stories is crucial. It is possible to observe whether the digital figure promotes any product offered to them or whether they carry out specific quality control, choosing only stores and products that the consumers consider reliable and of good quality based on the digital influencer opinion.

5. Final considerations

In the contemporary context, the internet is dominated by digital influencers who highlight trends and make products or services attractive to certain groups of consumers. In Fashion, such individuals are sometimes crucial in defining the commercial success of a product. This work sought to understand what are the antecedents that define the consumption of fashion products endorsed by digital influencers. To this end, we conducted a virtual survey with 103 fashion consumers.

The statistical analysis conducted on the data collected from the study revealed significant results into the dynamics of fashion consumption influenced by local digital influencers in Caicó (Rio Grande do Norte). Descriptive statistics showcased a neutral relationship across various dimensions evaluated, with style/attractiveness exhibiting the highest agreement among potential consumers, indicating a positive association with local digital influencers. Moreover, while experience, parasocial relationship, and reliability demonstrated tendencies towards positive perceptions, they varied in degrees of significance, with reliability scoring the lowest. Linear regression analysis further elucidated the interplay of these variables, highlighting the significance of factors such as reliability, style/attractiveness, and parasocial relationship in influencing purchase intentions. However, the inclusion of experience in the regression model raised questions regarding its relevance, ultimately leading to the selection of a model

excluding experience as the most appropriate for predicting purchase intentions endorsed by digital influencers.

The findings speak to the consumer behavior in the context of fashion influenced by local digital influencers. Contrary to initial hypotheses, the dimension of experience did not emerge as a significant determinant of purchase intentions, highlighting instead the crucial roles of reliability, style/attractiveness, and parasocial relationships. These reviews resonate with contemporary research that points to the evolving nature of consumer engagement with digital influencers, where characteristics such as trustworthiness, expertise, and relatability significantly influence purchase decisions. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of consumer-influencer relationships in shaping perceptions of reliability and quality, suggesting a shift towards more personalized and authentic forms of endorsement in fashion consumption. This approach acknowledges the diversity and complexity of interactions and opens avenues for future investigations to consider additional variables and qualitative methods for a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior.

Overall, these results gives a point of start to a deeper understanding of the nuanced dynamics shaping consumer behavior in the age of digital influence, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of influence and the significance of relational aspects in driving consumer choices. It is worth noting that these results cannot be generalized when considering a non-probabilistic sample. For future research, it is essential to expand the scope of analysis by incorporating various digital platforms beyond Instagram, such as YouTube and TikTok, and examining how different generations (Generation Z, Millennials, and Generation X) use these platforms. Additional studies could explore how content is consumed and how interactions vary across platforms, providing a more comprehensive and accurate view of the mediating relationships that influence purchasing decisions. Furthermore, a more representative and probabilistic sample can help generalize the results and strengthen the validity of the conclusions, enabling a more robust and applicable understanding of digital influences on consumer behavior.

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