

## **Beyond Avoidance: Navigating the Transgender Consumer's Coping Journey**

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## **Introdução**

Service encounters are routine, yet for transgender consumers, they often involve invalidation, discrimination, and hostility. Transphobia, or repulsion towards gender non-conformists, is common and subtle, intensifying systemic vulnerability. Retail environments can reinforce this vulnerability by signaling exclusion. Coping strategies are employed to manage this vulnerability, mitigating stress.

## **Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo**

The literature on consumer vulnerability coping is underdeveloped, often simplifying complex strategies. This article addresses this gap. The objective is to examine the coping strategies utilized by transgender consumers in service encounters marked by vulnerability. It contributes a processual model of the coping journey and a continuum of strategies.

## **Fundamentação Teórica**

Coping strategies are dynamic cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage demands. Originating in psychology (Lazarus; Folkman, 1980), they serve two functions: addressing the stress source (problem-focused) and regulating emotional responses (emotion-focused). Though complementary, choices vary and combinations are common. Research in consumer behavior and with minorities (LGBTQIA+) addresses the topic, identifying strategies like avoidance, seeking support, and self-acceptance (Sang et al., 2020).

## **Metodologia**

This study employed a qualitative approach, suitable for exploring meanings and experiences. The oral history method was used, focusing on transgender consumers' perspectives. Data were collected via 20 semi-structured interviews with trans men and women, recruited through snowball sampling until theoretical saturation. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis.

## **Análise dos Resultados**

Narratives revealed a repertoire of coping strategies along two axes: self-preservation and affirmation/change. Self-preservation includes avoiding spaces/interactions, ignoring, social isolation, visibility management, and distraction. Avoidance, while protective, incurs physical and emotional costs (e.g., Caio's urinary infections). Affirmation/change strategies encompass direct confrontation, educating others, cisnormativity performance, seeking social/professional support and self-affirmation.

## **Conclusão**

The transgender consumer's coping journey is complex, continuous, and exhausting, involving anticipation and response to threats. Coping strategies are not merely passive but a multifaceted repertoire of emotional, cognitive, and physical actions. It demonstrates that consumption, for trans people, is a struggle for dignity and recognition, where vulnerability can be transformed into power.

## **Contribuição / Impacto**

The study theoretically contributes by proposing a processual coping journey model and a continuum of strategies, challenging the "active versus passive" dichotomy and showing self-preservation as an active, costly effort. Practically, it offers recommendations for service providers (employee training, space adaptation, inclusive communication) and public policymakers (strengthening support centers, service protocols, document debureaucratization, and awareness campaigns).

## **Referências Bibliográficas**

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