

**NAVIGATING CONSTRAINTS: FASHION CONSUMPTION AND DECISION-  
MAKING AMONG LOW-INCOME WOMEN IN URBAN BRAZIL**

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## **Introdução**

Fashion consumption is a symbolic and economic activity through which individuals express identity and social positioning. In emerging markets, low-income women actively participate in fashion, despite financial and infrastructural constraints. Their consumption behavior remains underexplored, especially in peripheral urban areas affected by digital and logistical exclusion.

## **Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo**

Given this context, the objective of this study is to understand the decision-making processes of women at the base of the pyramid in the purchase and use of fashion apparel. By examining the fashion consumption behavior of low-income women, this research seeks to address a significant gap in the literature regarding a demographic that, despite financial constraints, actively participates in the consumer market (Cardoso et al., 2023; Subrahmanyam & Gomez-Arias, 2008; Vishnoi et al., 2022b).

## **Fundamentação Teórica**

The study draws on theories of symbolic consumption (McCracken, 1986), consumer behavior at the base of the pyramid (Subrahmanyam & Gomez-Arias, 2008), and digital inclusion (Olaleye et al., 2019). Fashion functions as a medium for self-expression, social mobility, and identity, even among economically constrained consumers. Decision-making is shaped by cost-benefit logic, social influence, and digital exposure.

## **Metodologia**

A qualitative design was used, combining 11 semi-structured in-depth interviews and one focus group with 8 participants in Brasilândia, São Paulo. Data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using thematic analysis and narrative interpretation. The study adhered to rigor criteria, including credibility, transferability, and dependability, supported by MaxQDA software.

## **Análise dos Resultados**

Participants prioritize price, but also assess quality and value. Brand loyalty is low, except for luxury items. E-commerce improves access, yet delivery and returns remain problematic. Social media influences impulse buying, while self-affirmation shapes choices. Women demonstrate rationality, creativity, and agency in navigating constrained consumption contexts.

## **Conclusão**

Fashion consumption among low-income women is complex and multidimensional. Decisions are driven by rational evaluations, emotional needs, and symbolic aspirations. Despite structural limitations, participants show autonomy, strategic use of online and offline channels, and resilience in pursuing fashion that aligns with their identity and social environment.

## **Contribuição / Impacto**

The study advances consumer research by highlighting adaptive strategies and agency among low-income women. It challenges stereotypes of irrationality in vulnerable groups, revealing informed, expressive consumption. Practical implications include inclusive digital retail policies and improved logistics. The research contributes to debates on social equity, fashion, and digital access.

## **Referências Bibliográficas**

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