

## CONSUMPTION OF INSTAGRAM CORPORAL PRACTICE CONTENT BY WOMEN CONSUMO DE CONTEÚDO DE PRÁTICAS CORPORAIS NA MÍDIA SOCIAL INSTAGRAM

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### Abstract

This study aims to understand women's perception of consuming corporal practices content present on social network platform Instagram. This is a qualitative descriptive research, which included 45 women, aged 18-55 years, from 26 Brazilian states, and who are Instagram users. The semi-structured interview model was used as a data collection instrument, and online interviews were conducted and later recorded and transcribed into an electronic file. Data analysis was performed by non-aprioristic categories. Results found that some of the volunteers consume Instagram corporal practices content and it is possible to observe different preferences about this consumption. It can also be seen that on the one hand content shared on Instagram generated volunteers' interest in trying and joining new modalities, and also made them know modalities hitherto unknown or that had not called their attention, but, on the other, possible issues in relation to mental health and aesthetic pressure were identified. In conclusion, consumption of Instagram information can be a way to encourage women to maintain their corporal practices if allied to the interests of Physical Education.

**Keywords:** Corporal practices; Social Networks; Woman Health; Communication.

## O CONSUMO SOBRE PRÁTICAS CORPORAIS POR MULHERES NA MÍDIA SOCIAL INSTAGRAM

### Resumo

O presente estudo tem como objetivo compreender a percepção de mulheres a respeito do consumo na mídia social Instagram sobre práticas corporais. Trata-se de uma pesquisa descritiva, de abordagem qualitativa. Participaram do estudo 45 mulheres, entre 18 e 55 anos em 26 estados do território nacional, que utilizam a rede social Instagram. Como instrumento de coleta de dados, foi utilizado o modelo de entrevista semiestruturada, as quais foram realizadas por mídia on-line e, posteriormente, gravadas e transcritas para um arquivo

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eletrônico. A análise de dados se deu por categorias não-apriorísticas. Os resultados obtidos demonstram que parte das voluntárias consomem conteúdos no Instagram sobre práticas corporais e sobre esse consumo conseguimos perceber preferências distintas. Também pode se perceber que o conteúdo do Instagram despertou o interesse em experimentar e aderir novas modalidades, trazendo conhecimento para modalidades, até então não conhecidas ou observadas pelas mesmas, por outro lado, possíveis problemas em relação a saúde mental e pressão estética foram identificados. Como conclusão, o consumo de informações no Instagram pode ser um caminho para o incentivo e manutenção das práticas corporais de mulheres se aliados aos interesses da Educação Física.

**Palavras-chave:** Práticas Corporais; Redes Sociais; Saúde da Mulher; Comunicação.

## 1. Introduction

Understanding modernity goes hand in hand with understanding the evolution of communication and its means. Thompson (1995) characterizes communication as a distinct type of social activity that involves the production, transmission, and reception of symbolic forms, and implies the use of resources of several types. When thinking about the present day, modernity is characterized by electronic communication, more specifically the Internet.

Martino (2014) states that the possibility of sharing data as digits combined with the integration of high-speed network processors established the conditions, throughout the twentieth century, for the development of a web of decentralized connections that have become the Internet. In view of the above, one understands the Internet as a social space that connects people.

In this context, there are "Social Networks" or "Digital Media," also called "Social Media". For Martino (2014), the first can be understood as a type of relationship between human beings guided by the flexibility of its structure and the dynamics between its participants; social media, on the other hand, is understood by the means in which this network takes place; as television and radio are analogue means of communication, digital media is the digital means where communication takes place. In this sense, any social media that is interested in relationships within the digital universe is digital media, such as Instagram, and can also be understood as a means of interaction within the relationships network in the online digital media universe.

Canclini (1995) understands consumption as the set of sociocultural processes in which the appropriation and use of products take place, understanding that social participation is more linked to consumption than to exercising citizenship. Mesquita e Utz (2021), based on McCracken (2003), state that being a consumer is one of the roles that human beings play in society in the fundamental search for self-expression, in accordance with the structure of meanings perceived by them in a given space-time.



According to Silva, Lazzarotti Filho and Antunes (2014), corporal practices constitute socially produced representations, ideas, and concepts, or express individual life perspectives of those who perform the activities. Among their characteristics, they are built from social interactions that confer a collective meaning. Goellner (2001) states that the female body, seen as something to be manipulated, constructed, monitored, and modified, becomes the target of different interventions – such as exercise –, since corporal practices and sports are identified as possibilities of control. In view of this, Goellner (2004) states that:

[...] thinking about female participation in corporal practices and sports presupposes, in my understanding, resorting to the historical narrative to identify the representations that were culturally constructed about this participation. These representations deserve our attention and recognition, as they were not always – and sometimes still are not – equal to the conditions of women's access and participation when compared to men [...] (Goellner, 2004, p.361, own translation).

Representations of corporal practices aimed at women, especially in the media universe, have always been associated with beauty standards. Wolf (2019) declares that women are indoctrinated to consume all kinds of products that can make them more beautiful, and products like cosmetics, clothing and sports, for instance, are consumed for this purpose.

In this sense, this study aimed to understand women's perception of consuming Instagram corporal practices content. It is a data selection from a master's thesis defended in 2022.

## 2. Method

This study was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee of the Federal University of São Paulo under CAAE No. 30304620.9.0000.5505 and all volunteers signed the informed consent form. This is a qualitative descriptive research, which, according to Minayo (1994), is characterized by working with human phenomena (meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes), which are seen as part of social reality, since human beings differ from each other by their thoughts and actions.

The study included 45 women residing in 26 Brazilian states, aged 18-55 years.

The inclusion criteria were:

- Women who have used Instagram for longer than one year;
- Women who have been involved in some corporal practice for longer than one year.

The non-inclusion criteria were:

- Women who stated not to use Instagram;



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- Women who interrupted their corporal practices for one month or longer.

Recruitment took place electronically based on an invitation that was published on the first author's Instagram account. That invitation was made as a video, published on IGTV, Instagram video tool that allows sharing. The video provided the study general data, such as the objective and method synthesis, as well as a link to the ICF. After this stage, in order to conduct the interviews, video calls were scheduled and the volunteers' preferred means (Skype, WhatsApp and Instagram) were used.

The semi-structured interview model was chosen due to the nature of the study, and, according to Triviños (2009), the investigation starts from certain basic questions, supported by the theoretical framework, in a way that allows the researcher to obtain answers that clarify the study queries.

Due to the limits imposed on a text like this type, one will address issues related to: volunteers' profile; total time spent in corporal practices (since the beginning until the time of data collection); modality practiced (at the time of data collection), and volunteers' perception of consuming Instagram corporal practice content.

The interviews were carried out between September 2020 and February 2021, then recorded and transcribed by the first author, who stored the data on her personal computer for later analysis. During this period, Brazil and the world were in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, which imposed restrictions on free movement and coexistence with a view to reducing contagion and deaths.

The content analysis was performed based on Campos (2004), through non-aprioristic categories, which arise in the context of the research itself. Triviños (2009) defines the non-aprioristic category as a study that does not contain predefined categories for fitting responses, that is, the information acquired from the volunteers' answers in the interview will lead the researcher to categorization and analysis. All volunteers are identified by means of pseudonyms.

### **3. Results and discussion**

Chart 1 provides information on the volunteers' profile, aged 18-55 years, where 66% are single (at the time of data collection) and all are active on social network. The chart presents data on the total time practicing the modality and the total time spent on Instagram since their accounts have been created until the time of data collection.



**Chart 1 - Volunteers' profile.**

PS	AGE (years) <b>M=32,53</b> <b>SD= 6,72</b>	SR	MS	TTSN (years) <b>M=5,96</b> <b>SD=2,87</b>	TTP (years) <b>M=6,47</b> <b>SD=5,73</b>
Sônia	28	AC	Married	7	10
Silvia	31	AC	Engaged	8	11
Ianna	29	AL	Single	6	9
Vivian	35	AL	Single	7	1
Nilce	55	AP	Married	7	15
Gisele	40	AM	Single	6	6
Aline	32	AM	Divorced	5	6
Marly	39	BA	Married	12	10
Wanda	35	BA	Single	6	10
Neide	23	CE	Single	10	5
Daisy	23	CE	Single	+ 1*	4
Mariah	18	DF	Single	8	5
Bela	18	DF	Single	8	1
Flora	32	ES	Single	7	7
Mel	33	ES	Single	9	13
Lua	36	GO	Single	3	9
Thais	37	GO	Married	5	9
Luiza	29	MA	Married	1	10
Tania	38	MT	Single	8	13
Izis	46	MT	Single	4	4
Alice	33	MS	Married	4	2
Maria	28	MG	Single	+ 1*	4
Tina	34	MG	Married	2	3
Carol	34	PA	Single	9	2
Carla	37	PA	Single	7	10
Maya	32	PB	Married	8	15
Liz	33	PR	Not declared	5	2
Cássia	33	PR	Married	+ 1*	+ 1*
Nathy	37	PE	Single	8	20
Yara	27	PI	Single	5	3
Bruna	34	RJ	Single	9	+ 1*
Cris	35	RJ	Single	9	+ 1*
Sandra	41	RN	Married	7	25
Iris	43	RS	Single	3	4
Catia	37	RS	Single	+ 1*	+ 1*
Bia	26	RO	Single	10	+ 1*
Nuria	31	RO	Single	8	2
Fábia	29	SC	Single	3	17
Lia	26	SC	Single	8	2
Zélia	32	SE	Divorced	4	1
Marcia	29	TO	Single	8	+ 1*
Mayra	28	SP	Single	3	3
Raiza	30	SP	Single	8	+ 1*
Kelly	24	SP	Single	8	+ 1*
Ana	34	SP	Married	+ 1*	10

**Source:** study data.



**PS:** pseudonym; SR: state of residence; MS: marital status; TTSN: total time spent on social network; TTP: total time practicing, M: mean, SD: standard deviation. \*It indicates volunteers who claimed to have a little more than one year of practice.

In chart 2, one can observe the modalities practiced by the volunteers and/or which they were involved with.

**Chart 2 - Number of women involved in corporal practices per modality**

Corporal practices	Number of practitioners
Bodybuilding	27
Run	20
Functional training	8
Pilates	7
Cycling	5
Swimming	4
Boxe	3
Dance	3
Walk	3
Jiu-Jitsu	2
Crossfit	2
Yoga	2
Surf	2
Stretching	1
Muay Thai	1
Kitesurfing	1
RPM <sup>1</sup>	1
Beach Tennis	1
Footvolley	1

**Source:** study data.

In view of the above, the gym is perceived as the preferred place for the volunteers' corporal practices, and bodybuilding is the most popular activity. In this sense, it is worth referring to Furtado (2009, p.9), who states that

The gym appears as a company that sells goods to satisfy this need. Companies, in this context, act with social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility is one of the ideologies that gained strength with neoliberalism, accompanying the State's withdrawal of responsibility for social well-being and the transfer of this responsibility to the private sphere. Parallel to the great incentive for the body with aesthetics within what is considered beauty standard, extremes arise such as, for example, cases of deaths or health issues due to anabolic steroid use and anorexia. There is also criticism of this

<sup>1</sup> A kind of cycling choreographed indoor training.

phenomenon that questions the excess corporal practices and other excesses in search of the body with perfect aesthetics.

On the same horizon, Hansen and Vaz (2006) claim that gyms function as a dear place to our society, in which a culture of codes, vocabularies, rituals, customs, and hierarchical structures is woven among the social actors present, giving them ways of being, thinking, and acting crossed by norms arising from generation, gender, ethnicity, and social class, among others.

When asked about the consumption of Instagram corporal practice content, 41 volunteers (91.11%) answered affirmatively and four volunteers (8.89%) denied consuming it. Here, consumption is understood as volunteers who access Instagram weekly, looking for ways to stay informed about practices on the network and posts about this universe.

Twenty-eight out of the 41 volunteers who answered affirmatively with regard to having consumed information did not justify such consumption. The other 13 volunteers had their answers categorized into three categories:

1. TIPS (nine volunteers): Sônia, Marly, Iris, Cris, Márcia, Nuria, Raiza, Alice;
2. NEW KNOWLEDGE (three volunteers): Neide, Liz, Ana.
3. ONLINE CLASS (two volunteers): Maria, Bruna.

The "TIPS" category encompasses volunteers who justified the use of Instagram as an attempt to get information that somehow helped in their practices. They are the following:

*"Yes, I follow many people who are bodybuilders to get some tips on supplementation, some exercises" (SONIA).*

*"Physical exercises, no, but supplements, food, diet, what "is being taken" to improve training performance, I do look for those" (MARLY).*

*"Yes! Regarding bodybuilding, I follow bodybuilding, nutrition, healthy eating accounts" (IRIS).*

*"The place where I work has Instagram [account], and it offers a lot of online classes. Then, sometimes they post: "Did you know?" and show some tips on posture, stretching, and I do it from time to time" (CRIS).*

*"I consume information, but much more information linked to nutrition and I think it helps in this part of the activity" (MARCIA).*

*"Guidance on shoes to use, which shoes to buy, running techniques" (NURIA).*

*"It's my research channel, I use it! Anyway, I may not follow people, but it's a channel of search, for these things, for reference" (RAIZA).*

*"Consumption is not "heavy", a lot of things. But I consume corporal practice content, and I also like nutrition content a lot. But it's not something I consume "too much," there are some people I like following, that's it" (ALICE).*



*"I study and consume a lot of Instagram information about what I practice, but I confess that I don't read nonsense. I choose well who I follow, for my mental health and for trusting the professionals. So I try to focus on the person I follow, I try to really observe and try not to trust the Internet so much, even though it is a renowned person" (DAYSE).*

Here, it is possible to observe a high prevalence of women who reported consuming information about food, supplements, and nutrition associated with the practice of physical activity. Only one volunteer stated being more careful when selecting the type of information she consumes. In this study, this fact and bodybuilding as a popular practice among women refer to Jacob (2014), who states that the fitness language on Instagram can be seen as a communicative strategy of biopolitical origin, as it aims to manage the lives of ordinary people attracted by some personalities and who feel compelled to follow that lifestyle. In the case of women, the practice of modalities has a long history in communication with an aesthetic bias, always associating physical activity with getting the ideal body. Hooks (2021) affirms that all women, regardless of age, are socialized both consciously and unconsciously to experience anxiety about the body, to see the flesh as something problematic. If such a message is 'internalized' in the women, it just has to be taken to the surface of their minds, and, in this sense, the "TIPS" category warns us about the type of communication consumed by these women.

In the "NEW KNOWLEDGE" category, volunteers state that they discovered other modalities:

*"When I started to really devote myself to running, I started following people from various states, as inspiration. As in Kitesurfing, in jujitsu, I'm always watching videos, I follow people who practice to know a little more and know the way people practice elsewhere" (NEIDE).*

*"Functional [training], Pilates, several things... Aerial Pilates, circus, I stay always tuned with anything that is related to sports and training on Instagram" (LIZ).*

*"Ballet [sic] I have a lot of friends, and as I take pictures of a lot of ballet dancers, it's something I consume more, because as I don't dance [ballet], I consume it to make my little heart happy" (ANA).*

Here, media consumption shows that it can be a way for women to track information and know other modalities. Sant'Anna (2014) states that, in 1980, the first specific good shape magazines arise, diffusers of fascination for the body considered "performative" (emphasis by author). Wolf (2019) reports that women are deeply affected by what their magazines tell them (or for what they believe they tell them) because these publications are all that most women have as their access to their own mass sensitivity.

On the other hand, Moreira, Soares and Mourão (2020) made an analysis of the blog Depois dos Quinze [After fifteen] and found that in its



content of several topics, the body is a central topic among young people that access the website. The researchers say that although young people are hit by the culture of beauty propagated by the media, in this space young people advise themselves on the effect of these posts and create a culture of resistance against this type of female body content.

In this sense, something positive in relation to the consumption of this media is observed, since it serves as a means of these women to acquire knowledge, allowing access to other types of modalities that are different from what is shown as essential, coupled with an aesthetic logic.

In the “ONLINE CLASS” category, volunteers say they use the network to attend classes given by professionals:

*“I was even doing some exercises with the personal that used to give classes every day via Instagram” (MARIA).*

*“In this pandemic these livestreams saved me. These free online classes, I was taking them, and I have a personal [trainer] for a month now, he is also my mother’s personal, and now we take classes here in my condominium, me and my fiancé” (BRUNA).*

In the “ONLINE CLASS” category it is possible to note that some women consumed this type of content and it was a means of staying active, and by their statements, they considered it to be positive, especially for this period of isolation. Although this study was designed before the Covid-19 pandemic that hit Brazil in March 2020, one believes that the dimensions of results may have been influenced by the context at the time of data collection. On March 11, 2020, COVID-19 was characterized by WHO as a pandemic (OPAS, 2020) and then the Brazilian Ministry of Health defined a series of measures to be adopted for fighting against the virus, and social isolation was one of them (AGÊNCIA BRASIL, 2020). This has led thousands of people to maintain a corporal practice in their homes, and online classes were a “way out.”

This also shows a positive aspect of this consumption, as women are discovering new modalities and new ways to stay active, given that technology often enables new ways of work for the physical education professional. On the other hand, nowadays applications and Artificial Intelligence can act as teachers, replacing their work. In an article published in *Veja* magazine, the following information about using an application for physical activity is described in this way:

It has a rigid posture and always requires the maximum of his students. It is perfectionist and, therefore, very attentive. It has its tough side, but always knows what to say to motivate. In addition, it is a great listener, and thanks to its intelligence – one of the most advanced in the world – it can give exclusive attention to each of its students, paying attention to their needs and limitations (*Veja*, 2020).

Oliveira and Fraga (2021) define the mentioned intelligence – known as Artificial Intelligence – as what allows for extremely rapid processing of large amounts of data, from different sources, and results, whether from individual



data or from several simultaneous users, can be transmitted to people (Joshi, 2020 cited by Oliveira; Fraga, 2021) – Big Data analytics. It allows, therefore, the training to be actually personalized, as the prescription is adjusted according to the user data. Thus, it shows an almost unfair competition to human limits, since this type of intelligence exceeds both our ability to collect data and our agility to process them to transform this information into a personalized workout. What should be emphasized is the way the magazine article describes the application as “perfectionist and very attentive,” and which “motivates, listens to,” bringing reflections about the physical education professional’s human nature, which goes beyond the technique; it brings other professional’s points that should be considered, showing that technique and speed of information are not the only things provided by the application, but there is also the emotional support for this relationship.

#### 4. Conclusion

One concludes that women’s perception of consuming Instagram corporal practices content on involves the search for expansion of knowledge, which covers additional tips and information from the modality practiced until the knowledge of new ways of exercising. In addition, this consumption shows that the corporal practice can be guided online, leading participants from virtual orientation to face-to-face practice.

Thus, Instagram is understood as a positive tool to help in disclosing information, and also as a means of interaction and goal achievement, bringing new ways to see corporal practices. A few decades ago communication was a one-way road, through magazines, radio and TV, and there was no possibility of interaction, but nowadays the communication on virtual spaces allows people to be closer to each other from their preferences, in the case of this study, from corporal practices. This does not mean that Instagram is free from market interests (such as sales of nutritional products and aesthetic services, through the exposure of the bodies of people who have obtained results by losing inches using a number of methods, among others); on the contrary, it is a more sophisticated media, as it gives the users, through Artificial Intelligence, what they want to see or anticipates what they are looking for. In this case, the effects of this social/digital coercion are equally deleterious to women’s autonomy and empowerment regarding corporal practices.

In short, if the consumption by those women is directed at expanding knowledge, it may not be that new, but just more of the same in a different way of being offered/published/put into circulation. After all, the massive message is still “Get moving and be healthy,” which reduces the complexity of people’s existence.

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