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Validity evidence of a scale on LGBTQphobia in consumer relations in Brazil

Evidências de validade de uma escala sobre a LGBTQfobia nas relações de consumo no Brasil

Evidencias de validez de una escala sobre la LGBTQfobia en las relaciones de consumo en Brasil

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ABSTRACT

Goal: This article presents the validation of a scale to analyze discrimination perceived by LGBTQ customers in Brazil and the emotional results of the discriminatory process. The objective of the research was to develop and test this scale with the target audience. **Methodology/approach:** Quantitative, online survey, with non-probabilistic sampling with 210 participants. **Originality/relevance:** Expands studies in marketing, consumer behavior, and marketing and society on the topics of sexual diversity and discrimination in consumer relations. **Main findings:** Empirical evidence indicates that the scale is effective in explaining the phenomenon and indicates the prominence of subtle discrimination. Furthermore, the indicator with the greatest intensity of discrimination is included in the level of service construct: inferior service because I identify as LGBTQ. It is not possible to state that discrimination predicts frustration and helplessness, but these issues are correlated. **Theoretical Contributions:** This study sought to fill a gap in the literature on marketing and consumer behavior, validating an instrument to assess discrimination perceived by LGBTQ customers in consumer relations, a segment little explored in Brazil. **Management contributions:** In addition to the social and humanitarian importance implicit in the research, the results can serve public and private organizations in the process of developing public policies and actions to prevent and combat discrimination.

Keywords: Perceived discrimination. LGBTQ. Scale. Consumption. Brazil.

RESUMO

Objetivo: O artigo retrata a validação de uma escala para analisar a discriminação percebida pelo cliente LGBTQ no Brasil, e os resultados emocionais do processo discriminatório. O objetivo da pesquisa foi desenvolver e testar esta escala com o público-alvo. **Metodologia/abordagem:** Quantitativo, de levantamento online, com amostragem não probabilística junto a 210 participantes. **Originalidade/relevância:** Amplia os estudos em marketing, comportamento do consumidor e marketing e sociedade, acerca das temáticas diversidade sexual e discriminação nas relações de consumo. **Principais resultados:** As evidências empíricas apontam que a escala é eficaz para explicar o fenômeno, e indicam proeminência da discriminação sultil. Ademais, o indicador com a maior intensidade de discriminação está contemplado no construto nível do atendimento: atendimento inferior por eu me identificar como LGBTQ. Não é possível afirmar que a discriminação prediz a frustração e o desamparo, mas essas questões estão correlacionadas. **Contribuições Teóricas:** Este estudo buscou preencher uma lacuna na literatura de marketing e comportamento do consumidor, validando um instrumento para avaliar a discriminação percebida por clientes LGBTQ nas relações de consumo, um segmento pouco explorado no Brasil. **Contribuições para a Gestão:** Além da importância social e humanitária, implícitas na pesquisa, os resultados podem servir às organizações públicas e privadas no processo de desenvolvimento de políticas públicas e ações de prevenção e combate à discriminação.

Palavras-chave: Discriminação percebida. LGBTQ. Escala. Consumo. Brasil.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El artículo retrata la validación de una escala para analizar la discriminación percibida por clientes LGBTQ en Brasil y los resultados emocionales del proceso discriminatorio. El objetivo de la investigación fue desarrollar y probar esta escala con el público objetivo. **Metodología/enfoque:** Encuesta cuantitativa en línea, con muestreo no probabilístico de 210 participantes. **Originalidad/relevancia:** Amplía los estudios en marketing, comportamiento del consumidor y marketing y sociedad, sobre los temas de diversidad sexual y discriminación en las relaciones de consumo. **Principales resultados:** La evidencia empírica indica que la escala es efectiva para explicar el fenómeno e indica la importancia de la discriminación sureña. Además, el indicador con mayor intensidad de discriminación se incluye en el constructo nivel de servicio: servicio inferior porque me identifico como LGBTQ. No es posible decir que la discriminación prediga frustración e impotencia, pero estas cuestiones están correlacionadas. **Contribuciones teóricas:** Este estudio buscó llenar un vacío en la literatura sobre marketing y comportamiento del consumidor, validando un instrumento para evaluar la discriminación percibida por clientes LGBTQ en las relaciones de consumo, segmento poco explorado en Brasil. **Contribución a la gestión:** Además de la importancia social y humanitaria implícita en la investigación, los resultados pueden servir a organizaciones públicas y privadas en el proceso de desarrollo de políticas y acciones públicas para prevenir y combatir la discriminación.

Palabras clave: Discriminación percibida. LGBTQ. Escala. Consumo. Brasil.

INTRODUCTION

In consumer relations, during retail or service provision, prejudiced attitudes towards minority customers can manifest themselves in various forms of discrimination (Crockett et al., 2003). This discrimination means unequal treatment on the basis of perceived characteristics, such as ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation, and produces unfavorable results. When customers experience discrimination, their intentions to return or recommend a company to others are nullified and/or reduced, spending is lower than originally intended, and negative word-of-mouth, customer defection, switching product providers, and seeking legal recourse may occur (Klinner & Walsh, 2013; Minton et al., 2017; Ro & Olson, 2020; Walsh, 2009; Walsh & Hammes, 2017).

Various studies address the different forms of discrimination in consumer affairs, in different service contexts. Bennett et al. (2015) analyzed the racial discrimination of consumers; McKeage et al. (2018) observed the experiences of vulnerability in consumer spending; and Linzmajer et al. (2020) studied ethnic prejudice. Some research addresses other aspects of the phenomenon of discrimination (Klinner & Walsh, 2013; Walsh, 2009), as well as exposing the unequal treatment of minority customers, for example, Brewster and Brauer (2017).

Ro and Olson (2020) and Rosenbaum et al. (2021) examined discrimination against homosexual consumers (gays and lesbians) in the USA and Colombia, respectively. However, according to the aforementioned authors, despite substantial empirical evidence on the existence of discrimination against customers, research on the experiences of LGBTQ consumers is scarce (Ro & Olson, 2020; Rosenbaum et al., 2021). In line with this, Cardoso et al. (2019) point out that no study in Brazil covers LGBTQ discrimination in marketing and consumer relations.

In this research, we have chosen to use the term LGBTQ to designate and identify Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites, Transsexuals, Transgenders individuals, and Queers. However, there are other semantic configurations used, such as LGBTQIA+ and LGBTQIAP+. A large part of the LGBTQ public is an important market due to their high purchasing power (Ro & Olson, 2020). According to the latest published data (Out Now Global, 2020), Brazil is home to one of the largest and most dynamic LGBTQ communities in the world, with recognized financial potential, high levels of expenditure, and purchasing intentions. It is estimated that of the total adult population in Brazil, 9.5 million Brazilians would be part of this market, which has an estimated annual income of 141 billion dollars (Cardoso & Rocha, 2022). Therefore, this market is very lucrative for organizations and should receive adequate attention (Boyd et al., 2020; Rosenbaum et al., 2021). Diversity and inclusion are important agendas for the future of marketing, and one issue that requires further study is discrimination (Rust, 2020).

Discriminatory experiences caused by employees and customer service agents raise not only ethical but also reputational issues for companies, since perceived discrimination or a deliberate attitude towards customer

service can degrade customer service experiences. (Walsh & Hammes, 2017). According to Out Now Global (2020), which interviewed 22,905 LGBTQ people in 15 countries, with the aim of understanding discrimination, harassment, or different treatment in the daily lives of these people, the percentage of respondents who said they had been refused goods and services because they were seen or recognized as LGBTQ was as high as 16% in some countries.

This prompted the question: is there a scale on discrimination perceived by LGBTQ customers in Brazil that identifies the emotional results of the discriminatory process? The study aimed to develop and test this scale with the aforementioned target audience residing in the national territory; and thus, expand marketing and consumer behavior studies around the themes of sexual diversity and discrimination in consumer relations. To this end, a quantitative, online survey was carried out with a non-probabilistic sample of 210 participants.

Organizations dedicated to improving consumer well-being must understand how they can help remedy, diminish (Rosenbaum et al., 2017), and eliminate the consequences associated with discriminatory conditions. Management and marketing professionals must understand the negative experiences of LGBTQ consumers, and strive to reframe them (Boyd et al., 2020).

From a social standpoint, the information presented here can support the development of public policies and government actions to combat violence against LGBTQ people, the promotion of strategies to raise awareness among the population, which promotes a more conscious and sensitized coexistence concerning discriminatory practices, their origins, and the harm their impacts can cause. It is important to establish a social commitment to equality, equity, inclusion, and diversity.

In addition to the introduction, this article is divided into five other sections, namely: perceived discrimination by the customer, which discusses the main theoretical assumptions that support the object of the research; methodological procedures, characterizing the paths adopted in the development of the study; results and discussions covering the sociodemographic profile of the respondents, the exploratory factor analysis, the multiple linear regression analysis, and the discussions; final considerations; and the references.

PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION BY THE CUSTOMER

Discrimination is the manifestation of prejudice, and prejudice is the *conditio sine qua non* of discrimination. It is expressed through arbitrary attitudes, whether commissive or omissive, related to prejudice; it usually takes the form of interpersonal violence. It is an adverse attitude towards a specific and different idiosyncrasy, incited by issues of racial-ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and social situation, among many other forms (Carrieri et al., 2014; Jones, 1997; Rios, 2007).

Discriminatory behavior has its genesis in the stereotypes or categorizations that people make about the information they receive, interpret, and react to. Discrimination has more immediate and serious social consequences than prejudice; in discrimination, prejudicial distinctions are made that exclude or segregate certain people or groups. Segregation is an

institutionalized form of discrimination, imposed legally or by habit and/or custom (Allport, 1954).

Prejudice manifested through discriminatory attitudes, perceived and considered by the targets as unjust, is externalized through pejorative differentiation or unequal treatment, inferior treatment in the case of the prejudice target, as well as offensive and capable of generating exclusion (Harris et al., 2005). O comportamento discriminatório pode para vários grupos de pessoas (Silva Júnior, 2016). It consists of negative behaviors that include avoidance, exclusion, and physical attacks against individuals based on their perceived characteristics (Allport, 1954; Taylor et al., 2006).

Only recently have prejudice and discrimination related to expressions of sexuality started to be studied (Garcia & Souza, 2010; Rios, 2007). Discrimination against LGBTQ people is commonly known as LGBTQphobia, which implies discrimination and violence based on the perception that any kind of non-heterosexual sexual orientation is negative (American Psychological Association, 2019; Butler & Rios, 2009; Martins et al., 2010; Palan, 2001). Such discrimination can be rooted in imposed social norms, political ideology, social conservatism, or hetero-cis-normativity (Li et al., 2020).

In turn, discrimination in retail is described as the differential treatment of consumers based on perceived traits (Crockett et al., 2003). It involves treating customers differentially based on group traits, producing favorable results for some and unfavorable ones for others. It can occur in the context of interpersonal interactions between customers and providers/attendants/suppliers/companies. Perceived discrimination refers to the individual's perception that they are treated differently, or unjustly, as a result of their association with a particular group (Sanchez & Brock, 1996). It implies rejection or exclusion of the target group and its members and can harm psychological well-being by threatening the satisfaction of inclusion and acceptance needs (Wirth & Williams, 2009).

Klinner and Walsh (2013) point to three modes of discrimination perceived by consumers: the type of alleged discrimination (subtle or explicit), the level of service (degradation or denial), and discrimination due to criminal suspicion (present or absent). Consequently, they identified three forms of discrimination in consumption: open, evident, or explicit discrimination; discrimination in the level of service and subtle discrimination.

Evident discrimination includes overt, clear, and direct manifestations such as verbal aggression, humiliation, offensive looks and gestures from employees, and physical or verbal attacks in the form of xenophobic, misogynistic, or homophobic insults. Discrimination related to poor service means that a customer from a stigmatized group experiences a lower level of service than a customer from a non-stigmatized group, with poorer product quality, higher prices, or denial of service. Subtle discrimination is ambiguous and indirect, hardly recognizable yet undoubtedly perceived by those who are on the receiving end of it (Klinner & Walsh, 2013; Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007; Walsh, 2009).

Klinner and Walsh (2013) argue that the three forms support a multidimensional analysis of perceived customer discrimination. These authors developed and validated a metric of perceived customer discrimination, which measures individual differences in customers' propensity to feel treated differently in the market, especially during service interactions.

The aforementioned metric, called *Perceived Customer Discrimination* (PCD), consists of three main blocks of questions, using a Likert Scale. The first part is composed of questions relating to the profile. Subsequently, there are questions related to discrimination, using three dimensions (explicit discrimination, discriminatory service level, and subtle discrimination). Lastly, two blocks of questions address the emotional results of the discriminatory process, frustration and helplessness.

Frustration and helplessness are negative emotions that force clients to perceive the impossibility of achieving a desired goal or avoiding discrimination through their actions (Klinner & Walsh, 2013). Frustration is defined as the impediment an individual faces during the process of achieving a goal or objective. People become frustrated when they want something and can't achieve it (Ladeira et al., 2016). Consumption behavior is influenced by the processing of frustration, since the likelihood of commitment to the choice of a product or service is significantly reduced, as a result of the ability of frustration to interfere with (mediate) behaviors (Lee et al., 2013).

The ultimate cause of helplessness is a subjective assessment, not an objective condition (Klinner & Walsh, 2013). Similar to frustration, helplessness is an affective reaction to an external event. Unlike frustration, which is a relatively strong emotion resulting from a barrier and/or impediment (Klinner & Walsh, 2013), helplessness is a loss of control that tends to occur when a person perceives low potential to cope with a situation. (Gelbrich, 2010).

In addition, Gelbrich (2010) conceptualizes frustration as a retrospective emotion that attributes goal incongruence to situational factors (for instance, service employees) and helplessness as a prospective emotion that results from an assessment of the possibilities of future options. In summary, frustration is a negative emotion caused by the perceived inability to achieve the goal; helplessness is an unpleasant emotion resulting from the inability to influence (future) outcomes.

Existing studies on *marketplace discrimination* almost exclusively consider customer loyalty and satisfaction concerning perceived discrimination (Walsh, 2009), largely ignoring emotional responses. Klinner and Walsh (2013) argued that this approach is insufficient since perceived customer discrimination is a psychologically stressful event that results in emotional reactions, which are likely to promote negative behavioral reactions, such as negative word-of-mouth, commercial rupture, and lawsuits, among others.

It is worth emphasizing that the publication of the research in the Journal of Business Research in 2013 prompted the development of thirty-nine studies, published between 2013 and February 2021, which directly or indirectly use the metric proposed by Klinner and Walsh (2013). These corroborate the usefulness and validity of PCD in different contexts. In general, they analyze ethnic-racial issues in the provision of services, such as Li et al. (2020), Linzmajer et al. (2020), Ghantous and Maher (2019), and Min and Kim (2019). Another study published by Ro and Olson (2020), addresses the issue of hospitality and how gay and lesbian customers perceive discriminatory attitudes and behaviors of service employees, in the USA.

Por isso, a presente pesquisa ampliou os resultados conhecidos ao incluir o universo LGBTQ (não somente gays e lésbicas), bem como as adaptações da métrica são distintas, in particular because it presents an intersectional analysis of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and relates it to perceived discrimination in customer consumer relations in Bra-

zil. It is believed that dealing with the discrimination experienced by these individuals requires tools that are appropriate to the sociocultural issues in which it is presented.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This research is characterized by adopting a quantitative approach to data analysis. The model adopted was cross-sectional, using a non-probabilistic sampling technique and a convenience sampling approach, using the Snowball technique (Aaker et al., 2001; Malhotra, 2006, 2011) for data collection, with the design of an online survey. (Shaughnessy et al., 2012). The data collection instrument was structured, with closed questions, a 5-point Likert Scale style (Hair et al., 2019), and was sent via the social network Facebook. The social network filter considered the number of members of the twenty largest LGBTQ lifestyle communities and pages or websites. The online data collection was carried out during the months of December 2019 and January 2020, using the *Google Forms* survey tool.

The instrument used in this research was based on the metric developed by Klinner and Walsh (2013). The process of translating the metric to the national context was carried out by two Portuguese/English language professors, and two types of evaluation or pre-tests were carried out: the first through professors and a researcher on the subject of consumer behavior to clear up doubts and another pre-test with representatives of the LGBTQ public to elucidate the emotions caused in the consumer relation. It should be noted that the first pre-test analyzed the clarity of the items, their practical relevance, as well as the appreciation of the content of the items; respecting the process of qualitative validation of metrics proposed by Cassepp-Borges et al. (2010).

In general, the instrument was composed of 20 indicators that form the Scale's five constructs: explicit discrimination (5); discrimination in the level of service (5); subtle discrimination (3); frustration (4); and helplessness (3). The indicators were presented on a 5-point Likert scale, anchored by the terms: none, low, medium, high, and very high. The indicators adopted can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Items Utilized for Measurement

Constructs	Indicators
Explicit Discrimination	D_EXP1 I experienced verbal aggression from the employees.
	D_EXP2 The employees insulted me.
	D_EXP3 The employees humiliated me.
	D_EXP4 The employees were offensive to me.
	D_EXP5 There was explicit discrimination.
Discrimination at the Service Level	D_ATEND1 The employees generally fail to respond to my needs or issues.
	D_ATEND2 The way employees attend to me is often disrespectful.
	D_ATEND3 The employees are often not very accessible to me.
	D_ATEND4 The employees often make me wait longer to be assisted.
	D_ATEND5 The level of service is lower because I identify as LGBTQ.
Subtle Discrimination	D_SUT1 I perceive various subtle forms of discrimination.
	D_SUT2 The way employees look at me is demeaning.
	D_SUT3 The tone of voice of the employees is rude and discriminatory.
Frustration	FRUST1 Uncomfortable / Fearful.
	FRUST2 Frustrated / Disappointed.
	FRUST3 Annoyed / Angry.
	FRUST4 Insecure.
Helplessness	DESAMP1 Vulnerable / Helpless.
	DESAMP2 Powerless / Incapable.
	DESAMP3 Defeated/Subjugated.

In addition to the indicators, the questionnaire consisted of eight sociodemographic items: a) biological sex; b) gender identity; c) sexual orientation; d) relationship status; e) age; f) occupation; g) education; and h) individual gross income.

The invitation to partake in the survey included a link directing the participant to the questionnaire's home page, which presented and explained the purpose of the research, its academic nature, ethical issues, and the protocol guaranteeing anonymity, as well as informing them that to take part in the survey they had to identify themselves as a member of the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, before the explicit, service-level, and subtle discrimination constructs, participants were prompted to think about their consumer relations in the retail or service sectors over the past twelve months.

The calculation of the minimum sample size took into account the assumptions of Hair et al. (2019), for whom a number of 10 cases should be considered for each indicator used (200 cases would be sufficient), and from this, the research counted 210 valid cases. Additionally, data analysis included descriptive analysis of sociodemographic variables, as well as ex-

ploratory factor analysis and multiple linear regression analysis, developed using SPSS® software.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section is structured in four parts: sociodemographic profile of the respondents, exploratory factor analysis, multiple linear regression analysis, and discussions.

Sociodemographic profile

The results of the descriptive analysis of the sociodemographic variables indicate that 50.98% of the respondents are between the ages of 15 and 26, 62% indicate the sum of incomplete and complete higher education, 45.79% have a student/ trainee occupation, with an income ranging from R$998.00 to R$2,994.00 (72.40%), and single relationship status (44.63%), followed by committed relationship (28.22%). As for the geographic location of the respondents, there was a distribution in various states of the federation, with the largest number of respondents from the state of Santa Catarina (41.23%), followed by Paraná (12.55%), Minas Gerais (11.42%), São Paulo (8.10%), Pernambuco (6.66%), Bahia (5.23%), and other states (14.81%).

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The initial factorability analysis of the data set considered visual inspection of the correlation matrix, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy, and Bartelett's test of sphericity (Hair et al., 2019). The factorability of the data set was considered appropriate. Visual inspection of the item correlation matrix revealed a substantial number of correlations greater than 0.30. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was considered excellent (0.930). Barlett's test of sphericity showed that the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming the suitability of the sample for applying factor analysis (χ^2 (78) = 2417,329, $p < 0,0001$).

Factor analysis was performed by using the principal axis extraction method and oblique oblimin rotation with Kaiser Normalization, considering that the dimensions show some level of correlation with each other (Hair et al., 2019). The extraction of factors was based on the a priori criterion of a fixed number of factors (03), as established by Klinner and Walsh (2013). The display of coefficients was sorted by their size and coefficients smaller than 0.30 were suppressed. The factorial solution found indicates a structure with three dimensions, with an accumulated explanatory variance of 79.10%. The factor solution found can be seen in Table 1. It is worth recalling that the forms of discrimination analyzed were: explicit discrimination, at the level of service, and subtle discrimination.

Table 1

Principal Axis Factoring Analysis, Oblimin Rotation, Communalities (h^2), and Cronbach's Alpha

Item	Fator 1	Fator 2	Fator 3	h^2
D_ATEND3 [The employees are often not very accessible to me]	0,88			0,67
D_ATEND4 [The employees often make me wait longer to be assisted]	0,67			0,69
D_ATEND1 [The employees generally fail to respond to my needs or issues]	0,66			0,46
D_ATEND 5 [O nível do atendimento é inferior, em virtude de eu me identificar como LGBTQ]	0,58			0,75
D_ATEND 2 [The level of service is lower because I identify as LGBTQ]	0,51			0,70
D_EXP3 [The employees humiliated me]		–0,96		0,76
D_EXP2 [The employees insulted me]		–0,91		0,82
D_EXP1 [experienced verbal aggression from the employees]		–0,82		0,75
D_EXP4 [The employees were offensive to me]		–0,65		0,78
D_EXP5 [There was explicit discrimination]		–0,55		0,61
D_SUT2 [The way employees look at me is demeaning]			–0,942	0,74
D_SUT1 [I perceive various subtle forms of discrimination]			–0,714	0,71
D_SUT3 [The tone of voice (...) is rude and discriminatory]			–0,674	0,69
Eigenvalue	**8,17**	**1,29**	**0,82**	
Explained Variance (%)	**62,87**	**9,89**	**6,35**	
Number of Items	**5**	**5**	**3**	
Cronbach's Alpha	**0,91**	**0,92**	**0,89**	

According to Hair et al. (2019), once the factor analysis has been conducted, it is advisable to assess whether the variables have high loadings on only one factor and whether they present commonalities (h^2) greater than 0.50. The values of the loadings distributed among the factors were considered acceptable. Only item D_SERV1 presented a communality index below the acceptable threshold, however, it was decided to preserve the item as proposed by Klinner and Walsh (2013).

The reliability analysis was carried out using Cronbach's alpha (α) internal consistency index, in order to observe the consistency of the scale's measurement items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient can range from 0 to 1, with a value of 0.6 considered the lower limit of acceptability for data (Hair et al., 2019). The items composing the factor dimensions D_ATEND (α = 0.91), D_EXP (α = 0.92), and D_SUT (α = 0.89) presented acceptable values.

The correlation levels (r) between the factors of the Scale were high. The factor dimension of discrimination at the service level showed high bivariate correlations with the factor dimensions of subtle discrimination (r = –0.679) and explicit discrimination (r = –0.658). The correlation between the dimensions of subtle discrimination and explicit discrimination was also high (r = 0.560). It can be observed that there is a high correlation between the different adopted constructs (variance overlap), perhaps due to the fact that three of the five constructs in the scale refer to the same phenomenon (discrimination) - the variation among them is in terms of perceived intensity

(explicit or subtle) and the object of discrimination (at the service level), in other words, they measure similar things. The factor correlation matrix can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Factor Correlation Matrix

Factors	1	2	3
1. Discrimination in the level of service	1,000		
2. Explicit discrimination	–0,658	1,000	
3. Subtle discrimination	–0,679	0,560	1,000

A second exploratory factor analysis was carried out to verify the internal structure of the items employed as measures of the "frustration" and "helplessness" variables. The factorability of this second set of data was considered appropriate. The visual inspection of the item correlation matrix revealed a substantial number of correlations greater than 0.30. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was considered excellent (0.876). Barlett's test of sphericity revealed the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming the suitability of the sample for applying factor analysis (χ^2 (21) = 1476,503, p < 0,0001).

The factor analysis was conducted using the principal axis extraction method and oblique *promax* rotation with Kaiser Normalization, considering that the dimensions present some level of correlation with each other (Hair et al., 2019). The factors were extracted based on the a priori criterion of a fixed number of factors (02), as indicated by Klinner and Walsh (2013). The display of coefficients was sorted by size and coefficients smaller than 0.30 were suppressed. The factorial solution found (Table 3) indicated a structure with two dimensions, with an accumulated explanatory variance of 85.31%.

Table 3

Principal Axis Factoring Analysis, Promax Rotation, and Communalities (h2) Indices of Measurement Items for "Frustration" and "Helplessness"

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	h^2
DESAMP1 [vulnerable/helpless]	,99		0,87
DESAMP2 [powerless/incapable]	,82		0,84
DESAMP3 [defeated/subjugated]	,82		0,72
FRUST4 [insecure]	,73		0,78
FRUST2 [frustrated/disappointed]		,95	0,78
FRUST3 [annoyed/angry]		,77	0,64
FRUST1 [uncomfortable/fearful]		,74	0,73
Eigenvalue	**5,28**	**0,69**	
Explained Variance (%)	**75,42**	**9,89**	
Number of Itens	**4**	**3**	

The results show that the items that measurement variables relating to frustration and helplessness had high loadings on only one factor and a communality (h^2) of more than 0.50. However, item FRUST4, theoretically related to the frustration factor dimension, showed a high factor load in the helplessness dimension. As a result, the item was removed and a new exploratory factor analysis was performed.

This second analysis was conducted keeping the same parameters as before, only excluding the aforementioned item. The factorability of this data set was considered appropriate. Visual inspection of the item correlation matrix revealed a substantial number of correlations greater than 0.30. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was considered excellent (0,873). Barlett's test of sphericity demonstrated rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming the suitability of the sample for applying factor analysis (χ^2 (15) = 1167.193, $p < 0.0001$). The factor solution found pointed to a structure with two dimensions, with an accumulated explanatory variance of 86.82%, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Principal Axis Factoring Analysis, Promax Rotation, Communalities (h2), and Cronbach's Alpha of Measurement Items for "Frustration" and "Helplessness"

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	h^2
DESAMP1 [vulnerable/helpless]	,89		0,81
DESAMP2 [powerless/incapable]	,89		0,84
DESAMP3 [defeated/subjugated]	,83		0,71
FRUST2 [frustrated/disappointed]		,95	0,77
FRUST3 [annoyed/angry]		,76	0,62
FRUST1 [uncomfortable/fearful]		,76	0,70
Eigenvalue	**4,55**	**0,66**	
Explained Variance (%)	**75,86**	**10,96**	
Número de Itens	**3**	**3**	
Cronbach's Alpha	**0,94**	**0,90**	

The reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha internal consistency index (α). The items composing the factor dimensions of helplessness (α = 0.94) and frustration (α = 0.90) presented acceptable values. The level of correlation (r) between the factor dimensions of helplessness and frustration was high (r = –0,755).

After the exploratory factor analysis of the data sets relating to the thirteen items of the Scale and the six items of the helplessness and frustration variables, new variables were created from the arithmetic mean of the items composing each of the respective dimensions encountered (discrimination at the service level, explicit discrimination, subtle discrimination, frustration, helplessness). The mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values for each of the variables created can be observed in Table 5.

Table 5

Minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values of the variables

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Explicit Discrimination	1,00	5,00	1,47	0,81
Discrimination at the Service Level	1,00	5,00	1,71	0,84
Subtle discrimination	1,00	5,00	2,09	1,04
Helplessness	1,00	5,00	2,41	1,36
Frustration	1,00	5,00	2,66	1,28

The aforementioned data reveal none to low levels of explicit discrimination and discrimination at the service level, and low to moderate levels of subtle

discrimination. The perception of subtle forms of discrimination is the one that presents the highest intensity of overall discrimination when comparing explicit discrimination and discrimination at the service level. However, it is not possible to affirm that discrimination induces frustration and helplessness, but the study indicates that these issues are correlated.

MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS

During the multiple linear regression analyses, the assumptions necessary for the technique were verified. The following assumptions were assessed: a) the presence of outliers (cases 71, 86, 126, 166, and 208 were removed as they were outside the range of three standard deviations). Having re-run the analyses, two more cases (70 and 75) were identified by observing the discrepant residual values on the outside of the three standard deviation range; b) absence of multicollinearity, by observing the correlation coefficients ($r > 0.80$), tolerance values (> 0.1) and VIF (< 10); c) homoscedasticity, by observing the distribution of points on the scatter plot; d) independence of residuals, by observing the values of the Durbin-Watson test (acceptable between 1.5 and 2.5); e) normally distributed errors, by observing the histogram and normal P-P plot of standardized residual regression; and f) linear relationship between variables, by observing the scatter plot.

It was observed that the frustration and helplessness variables do not present a normal distribution and the application of the multiple linear regression technique revealed unacceptable histograms and normal P-P standardized residual regression graphs. In other words, the residuals do not follow a normal distribution either. As an alternative, the frustration and helplessness variables were transformed into logarithms (Log10). However, the distribution of both variables continued to refute the hypothesis of normality by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests ($p < 0.001$) and, when applying the regression technique with the transformed variables, they still produced unacceptable histograms and graphs.

Therefore, the decision was made to apply Sperman's bivariate correlation technique as a non-parametric alternative to observe the level of correlation between the variables: explicit discrimination, discrimination in the service level, subtle discrimination, helplessness, and frustration. The correlation levels between the Scale variables and helplessness are moderate (< 0.50). The correlation levels between the variables and frustration are also moderate (< 0.50), except for the correlation between subtle discrimination and frustration, which is relatively higher (> 0.50). The correlations between the variables can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Bivariate Spearman Non-parametric Correlations

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
1. Explicit discrimination	1,00				
2. Discrimination at the Service Level	0,66**	1,00			
3. Subtle discrimination	0,60**	0,71**	1,00		
4. Helplessness	0,41**	0,40**	0,46**	1,00	
5. Frustration	0,43**	0,44**	0,54**	0,77**	1,00

** Correlation is significant at < 0.01.

It is noteworthy that the outcomes of the linear regression could not be deemed reliable, as the data did not present a normal distribution, and neither did the residuals. Consequently, an effort was made to address this issue by attempting a logarithmic transformation of the data. However, despite this intervention, the problem persisted.

Discussion

The research findings suggest that the Scale is effective (adjusted and valid) in explaining the perceived discrimination of LGBTQ people in Brazil. It is vital to contextualize the Scale for Brazil, as addressing discrimination experienced by individuals requires tools tailored to the various situations and sociocultural contexts in which it arises.

However, the validation conducted possesses two methodological limitations. Firstly, it relies on a single sample; it would be prudent to validate the Scale with two successive samples. Secondly, given the impossibility of performing multiple linear regression, it is advisable to employ structural equation modeling (a procedure for non-normal data).

Furthermore, the empirical evidence observed indicates the existence of discrimination. The indicators of the explicit discrimination construct, as well as at the customer service level, presented an intensity of perceived discrimination of none, followed by low. Subtle discrimination was perceived as none, low, and moderate, respectively, and the research findings indicate that subtle discrimination is the most commonly observed.

According to Ro and Olson (2020), low levels of perceived discrimination may be the result of identity management strategies. It is common for gays and lesbians to conceal their sexual orientation to avoid social disapproval. By deliberately presenting themselves as heterosexuals in consumer situations, LGBTQ customers minimize potentially discriminatory attitudes.

On the opposing side of the evidence of low levels of discrimination, Brazil is the country with the highest record of lethal crimes against the LGBTQ population worldwide. Every year the number of homicides has increased in the country due to the absence of public policies aimed at combating this violence. Public policies are needed to reduce the culture of hatred and disseminate respect for diversity (Mendes & Silva, 2020), and it is also important to promote public policies and strategies, especially in communication and education, aimed at preventing and combating discrimination.

Meanwhile, evidence of the prominence of subtle discrimination is corroborated by the study carried out in Colombia by Rosenbaum et al. (2021). According to the authors, it is now more common to observe indirect discrimination perpetrated by retail employees against homosexual consumers than overt discrimination. Notwithstanding the reduction in discriminatory behaviors among retail employees, their prevalence remains noteworthy (Rosenbaum et al., 2021).

The heightened perception of subtle discrimination, as opposed to explicit discrimination, may be due to the criminalization of LGBTphobia in Brazil, including its insertion into the Anti-Racism Law in 2019. The criminalization of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity was prompted by the inclusion of the terms "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" in Law No. 7,716/1989 (the Anti-Racism Law), which criminalizes any discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, religion or national origin. (Lima & Lima, 2020).

A superficial analysis of the data in this survey would suggest that the levels of discrimination observed are low and therefore acceptable, while in fact, they suggest the existence of discrimination. In an ideal society, none of the intensity of discrimination would be conceivable. From the perspective of consumer relations, the existence of perceived discrimination, however subtle, leads the discriminated customer to develop negative emotions, degrading the consumer experience. These emotions can engender a perception of sacrifice and dissatisfaction, gradually leading to a decrease in consumption, even to the point of complete exclusion. In general, the most common responses from LGBTQ consumers to discriminatory cases include negative word-of-mouth, customer defection, switching product providers, and seeking legal remedies (Minton et al., 2017; Walsh & Hammes, 2017).

Similarly to subtle discrimination, the variable with the highest intensity of perceived discrimination is included in the construct of discrimination at the service level, namely: inferior service due to my identification as LGBTQ; reinforcing the fact that the object of discrimination can be related to gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Due to the construction of sexuality as a moral objective, rooted in imposed social norms, political ideology, social conservatism, or hetero-cis-normativity (Li et al., 2020), people who have gender identities that deviate from the heteronormative standard often undergo a process of discrimination, which takes the form of homophobia (Cardoso et al., 2020). Discrimination permeates the most diverse forms of social relations, including consumer relations.

The evidence suggests that the correlation levels between the variables of the Scale and helplessness as well as between the variables and frustration are also moderate (<0.50), except for the correlation between subtle discrimination and frustration, which is relatively higher (>0.50); this could be justified by the low or nonexistent perception of discrimination experienced by the respondents in this study, as presented above.

Furthermore, it is not possible to say that discrimination induces or is a predictor of frustration and helplessness, but the study indicates that these issues are correlated. Another plausible explanation is that, perhaps, other variables are better suited to elucidate the emotional consequences of the discriminatory process, such as its impacts on mental and physical health (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009).

In addition to a negative emotion resulting from a poor consumer experience, discriminatory practices cause psychological distress and mental health disorders (McLaughlin et al., 2010), negatively impacting the well-being of LGBTQ individuals and even leading to suicidal tendencies (Meyer, 2016; Rosenbaum et al., 2021). Therefore, beyond its ethical implications or its impact on a company's reputation, discrimination in consumer relations can manifest as a social and public health concern.

FINAL REMARKS

Understanding the phenomenon of discrimination is still a theoretical (Rosenbaum et al., 2021) and social mystery. Grasping the underlying causes of intolerance and how it manifests in society, particularly in consumer society, should be included on the marketing research agenda. Whether from a marketing, macro marketing, or social marketing perspective, fostering debates that aid in combating and preventing discrimination in consumer relations is important.

Management and Marketing professionals must understand the LGBTQ experience at their points of sale and strive for inclusion and equality. (Boyd et al., 2020). Organizational efforts such as training, anti-discrimination policies, discrimination management systems, and consumer relations management practices can contribute to raising awareness of discriminatory practices and minimizing them, even leading to their elimination. (Ro & Olson, 2020).

Therefore, from a management point of view, the research findings can provide marketing professionals with insights into the negative consumer experiences of minority customers, especially LGBTQ customers, and provide opportunities to develop organizational efforts to prevent and combat discrimination.

In terms of academic contributions, this study seeks to address a gap in the literature on marketing and consumer behavior concerning the experiences of LGBTQ consumers, by validating a scientific instrument designed to assess the perceived discrimination by LGBTQ customers in consumer interactions, a segment that has received limited attention in the Brazilian context. Furthermore, we propose to investigate an unexplored relationship within the literature, specifically the intersectionality of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and consumer discrimination in Brazil.

Therefore, researchers and professionals are encouraged to understand discriminatory behavior in consumer relations. That said, it is worth encouraging the collective construction of knowledge about the modern/colonial cis-hetero-white/heteronormative system that regulates social and marketing practices, discourses, relationships, institutions, and subjectivities. In this sense, it is appropriate to bring a decolonial and intersectional perspective to marketing, which implies that the entire diversity of race, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation occupy the place of research subjects.

Nowadays the issue of discrimination is an important and prominent one, bearing implications across political, economic, scientific, legal, social, cultural, and human rights domains. Nevertheless, discrimination remains a disturbing issue, not only in the domain of race and ethnicity, which has

received most of the attention but also in many other domains, such as age, gender, physical appearance, language, weight, and financial perception; thus, it is clear that discrimination and injustice in the market come in many varieties, sizes, shapes and colors (Bone et al., 2014).

Discrimination against LGBTQ people feeds the cycle of violence to which they are subjected daily and creates an environment conducive to exclusion from opportunities in all social spheres, including consumerism, education, and political and civic participation. Despite the advancements in legislation in Brazil, with the criminalization of LGBTphobia in 2019, public policies and corporate actions aimed at advancing the recognition and promotion of LGBTQ rights are still necessary. Moreover, it is essential to convert public policies into legislation, so that violence and discrimination are prevented and combated.

This study did not exhaust the literature on the subject, since the scope of the investigation was limited to the analyzed period, as well as the selected sample. The discussions outlined in this study must be weighed in light of their limitations. Moreover, the attained results remain inconclusive, underscoring the necessity for further investigation.

Although this research has sought to improve understanding of the discriminatory consumer experiences among LGBTQ customers, there are still numerous gaps concerning the extent of customer discrimination and effective strategies to identify and alleviate the negative consequences of such discrimination.

This indicates the necessity for further quantitative and qualitative research on the subject, to supplement the outcomes of this investigation, and to facilitate the creation and validation of metrics for assessing perceived discrimination by the LGBTQ community and its impact on the consumer relations of this target audience in the retail and service sectors spanning both physical and online realms.

When focusing specifically on the proposed Scale, two significant enhancements emerge the development of a new dimension of discrimination, entitled guardianship discrimination or outcomes resulting from the discriminatory process, which would encompass items concerning the methods of defense (coping strategies) employed by consumers upon perceiving discrimination, such as pursuing legal action, discontinuing patronage, engaging in negative word-of-mouth; and the insertion of additional constructs and variables pertaining to the emotional consequences of discriminatory processes.

We conclude by emphasizing the importance of investigating the behavior of Latin American LGBTQ consumers within their specific contexts as well as developing cross-cultural studies designed to undertake a comparative analysis of perceived discrimination within the LGBTQ community in consumer relations. As such, the findings hold potential utility for both public and private entities in shaping the development of policies and initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing discrimination.

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