Reimagining Beauty: Digital Consumption Practices in a Disrupted World

Isabela Carvalho de Morais[1] , Thaysa Costa do Nascimento[2] , Débora Bogea da Costa Tayt-son[3]

[1] Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto, Escola de Minas, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil
[2] Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Instituto COPPEAD de Administração, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil
[3] Universidade Federal Fluminense, Faculdade de Administração e Ciências Contábeis, Niterói, RJ, Brazil

ABSTRACT

Objective: the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted societal norms, reshaping daily routines and consumption practices by blurring the boundaries between personal and public spaces. This study examines how beauty consumption adapted to these disruptions, focusing on the role of digital platforms in fostering self-expression, self-care, and social interaction. **Methods:** using practice theory as a framework, we employed netnography, in-depth interviews, and archival analysis to explore the interplay between digital tools, self-presentation, and consumer behavior during the pandemic. **Results:** our findings highlight three key triggers — perception of free time, domestic social exhibition, and insecurity with new routines — that drove the adaptation of beauty practices. Consumers prioritized mental health and self-presentation in digital spaces, embracing new at-home routines facilitated by tools like social media tutorials and virtual try-on technologies. Social media influencers encouraged experimentation, while brands adapted their strategies to promote DIY solutions and align products with emerging values around self-care and virtual presence. **Conclusions:** this study extends the literature on consumption disruption, offering a framework to understand the co-evolution of consumer practices and market adaptations in digitally mediated contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted daily life, forcing consumers to adapt routines and practices in response to social isolation and heightened digitalization. Physical spaces transformed into multifunctional hubs for work, leisure, and social interaction, blurring the boundaries between domestic and social environments. This reconfiguration required individuals to navigate diverse social roles simultaneously, profoundly influencing consumption practices. These dynamics were particularly evident in beauty consumption, where traditional grooming and self-care practices — historically tied to external social contexts — were redefined for virtual interactions and the intimacy of home settings.

Digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram surged in popularity, enabling consumers to adapt their routines through social media tutorials, influencer-driven content, and virtual try-on technologies. The hashtag #staysafestayhome, for instance, amassed over 425 million views, illustrating how digital platforms became arenas for exploring and sharing beauty practices. These platforms facilitated experimentation, showcased routines, and supported grooming adaptations for virtual engagements, such as Zoom and Google Meet calls. With countless meetings, classes, and events, people reevaluated their beauty routines to adapt to camera presence. Who didn't find themselves tweaking their look for the screen, choosing lighting that flattered, or opting for subtle makeup that appeared more natural on video?

This shift also transformed marketing strategies. As Appel et al. (2020) argue, social media fosters consumer engagement while reshaping marketing approaches. The beauty industry responded by promoting DIY solutions and emphasizing self-care as empowerment (Mintel, 2023). Despite reduced access to salons and professional services, global beauty sales rose by 5% in 2021 as consumers prioritized self-care and personal upkeep (Euromonitor International, 2022). Notably, skincare product sales, such as face treatment masks — distinct from masks used for COVID prevention — increased by 102.6% from 2019. In Brazil, the fourth-largest global beauty market in 2020, pandemic-induced changes propelled at-home self-care routines (*Associação Brasileira da Indústria de Higiene Pessoal, Perfumaria e Cosméticos* [ABIHPEC, 2020]). Digital marketing strategies adapted by emphasizing products aligned with virtual presence and values surrounding mental well-being and digital self-identity (ABIHPEC, 2020).

Brazil offers a compelling context for examining these changes. As Vieira et al. (2023) highlight, digital marketing in Brazil reflects a dynamic interplay of emerging technologies, consumer behavior, and cultural contexts. Daily life increasingly mediated by platforms like Zoom influenced beauty routines, emphasizing how digital spaces influenced the interaction of self-presentation and consumption.

The reconfiguration of beauty consumption reflects broader consumer behavior motivations in digital contexts, highlighting how practices evolved amid the merging of personal and public spaces. With a heightened focus on self-care and mental health, beauty practices became mechanisms for navigating personal and public boundaries online. Marketing and consumer culture literature emphasizes that beauty products facilitate self-expression and connection to various social identities (Askegaard et al., 2002; Belk, 1988; McCabe et al., 2020). This role is intensified on digital platforms, where visual self-presentation is central to maintaining social presence (Mardon et al., 2023; Scaraboto & Fischer, 2013).

As beauty practices shifted to domestic spaces, individuals reconsidered their relationship with grooming. Literature positions such practices as expressions of identity, with beauty products enabling connections to different social roles (Belk, 1988; McCabe et al., 2020). Social media influencers played a key role in this context, promoting new self-care norms and encouraging experimentation with at-home beauty routines (Mardon et al., 2018; Nascimento et al., 2020).

Recent consumer studies explore how crises prompt adaptation, including economic (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020), religious (Kapoor et al., 2022), technological (Sheth, 2020), and generational changes (Zwanka & Buff, 2021). Literature suggests that disruptions prompt consumers to adapt and rethink their practices (Bahmanyar et al., 2020; Ben Hassen et al., 2020; Castilhos et al., 2017; Kapoor et al., 2022; Phipps & Ozanne, 2017). Here, the pandemic functions as a major disruption that reconfigured consumption logics and prompted market adaptations (Campbell et al., 2020; Greene et al., 2022).

While the marketing and consumer culture literature has extensively examined beauty practices in relation to identity and self-presentation (Arnould et al., 2005; Askegaard et al., 2002), less attention has been paid to the micro-macro dynamics of practice restructuring during periods of disruption. Scholars have noted that crises such as the pandemic serve as catalysts for the adaptation and realignment of practices (Campbell et al., 2020; Greene et al., 2022; Phipps & Ozanne, 2017), yet the specific ways in which disruptions blur spatial and social boundaries and reconfigure practices remain underexplored. This study aims to uncover the triggers that led to the restructuring of beauty consumption

practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the role of digital platforms and the material, social, and symbolic elements influencing these changes.

Guided by practice theory (Schatzki, 2001), which views practice as the "regular, skillful performance of (human) bodies" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 251), we employed netnography (Kozinets et al., 2023), combined with in-depth interviews (McCracken, 1988), and archival analysis (Golder, 2000) to examine beauty practices during quarantine. Our findings reveal how disruptions blurred boundaries between domestic and social environments, prompting reconfigurations of beauty practices, in which individuals prioritize inner experiences and adopted digital tools for identity maintenance. Three key triggers — perception of free time, domestic social exhibition, and insecurity with the new routines — emerged as central drivers in reshaping beauty practices during the pandemic.

This study contributes to the literature on practice disruption and digital consumption by offering a nuanced understanding of how blurred boundaries between domestic and external environments drive the reconfiguration of consumption practices. Specifically, it advances three key insights: (1) the critical role of digital platforms in enabling the adaptation and continuity of beauty practices during crises; (2) the integration of mental health, self-care, and identity work into digital consumption practices; and (3) a framework for examining the triggers that influence consumer practice adaptations and market responses to external disruptions. By situating beauty consumption within the broader context of digitally mediated practices, this study provides actionable insights for brands and policymakers aiming to better understand and support consumers during times of profound change.

BEAUTY PRACTICES, IDENTITY, AND RITUALS: A HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

Historically, women have engaged in beauty practices for a variety of purposes (Scott, 2005). These practices are described here as procedures applied to the body, encompassing personal hygiene, attractiveness, preparation for social roles, and social acceptability (Rook & Levy, 1983). Through beauty rituals, women navigate and trade different selves in their daily lives. Building on this premise, McCabe et al. (2020) argue that individuals, products, rituals, and discourses converge to shape women's self-identity and authenticity. In this context, cosmetics consumption functions as a bridge between inner and external beauty.

Among beauty practices, makeup plays a pivotal role in connecting these internal selves to various social roles. In social psychology, makeup is linked to trust, the socially accepted performance of beauty (Goffman, 1976), and external perception (Etcoff, 2011). Within consumer behavior, research on gender and body issues explores conflicting narratives surrounding beauty and consumers' perceptions of their bodies (Askegaard et al., 2002; Featherstone, 2010; Holliday & Cairnie, 2007; Thompson & Haytko, 1997; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). These studies investigate the ambiguity of social roles and the role of makeup within this complexity (McCabe et al., 2020). As a ritual, makeup helps women prepare for diverse social contexts, fostering confidence, readiness, and excitement for daily interactions.

The importance of beauty rituals is particularly evident in women's morning routines, where these practices not only transform physical appearance but also align with professional identities before stepping into public spaces (McCabe et al., 2020). Beauty consumption has been extensively analyzed within cultural consumption research (Black, 2004; Dolan & Scott, 2009; Featherstone, 2010; Fung, 2002; Mardon et al., 2023; McCabe et al., 2020; McFerran et al., 2010; Rocha & Frid, 2018; Scott, 2005). Recent studies emphasize the influence of digital content creators, such as influencers, who act as brand endorsers (Cocker et al., 2021; Nascimento et al., 2020) and play a significant role in marketing strategies (Kozinets et al., 2023; Mardon et al., 2023). However, the intersection of beauty consumption and periods of disruption — particularly how digital environments reshape beauty practices when routines are challenged (Phipps & Ozanne, 2017) — remains underexplored.

ADAPTING CONSUMPTION PRACTICES: DIGITAL RESPONSES TO DISRUPTION

Practices are understood as consistent, embodied activities involving interconnecting elements such as symbols, technologies, meanings, mental aspects, and material artifacts (Magaudda, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002). These practices are embedded in sociocultural contexts, which frequently reconfigure their constituent elements (Akaka et al., 2022). Practice theory has become a widely used paradigm in marketing and consumer behavior (Echeverri & Skålén, 2011; Genus & Jensen, 2019; Warde, 2005), emphasizing consumers' needs as actions embedded within broader social structures and institutions (Shekhar et al., 2020). The reproduction of practices involves dynamics guiding their replication and transmission within the social sphere (Akaka et al., 2022; Shove et al., 2012).

Practice theory focuses on the enactment of practices through socially observable actions, showing how

individuals integrate elements such as objects, meanings, and actions (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). Socially observable practices demonstrate how meanings, materials, and skills are articulated and integrated to sustain a given practice (Shove et al., 2012).

Several factors influence the enactment of consumption practices. Social identities and roles shape perceptions of acceptable behaviors (Gregory-Smith & Manika, 2017). Through specific behaviors, consumers activate their social identities, choosing practices that reflect their values and lifestyles (Rizi & Sabeghi, 2015; Thompson & Loveland, 2015). Norms and social pressure further influence practices, leading individuals to align their actions with group expectations (Chang & Nguyen, 2018), especially regarding aesthetic standards (Wang, 2023). This alignment can internalize norms while generating anxieties about judgment and status (Boström, 2021).

Consumption practices, as socially shared ways of doing, are shaped by time and space (Warde, 2005). Schatzki (1996) highlighted that practices produce temporality, influencing daily performance experiences. Practices demand coordination with other actors and practices, generating temporal rhythms and sequences (Southerton et al., 2012). These dynamics are evident in routines, which structure collective social rhythms but can change through gradual or abrupt disruptions (Shove et al., 2012).

The relationship between time and space also affects the popularization of consumption practices. Temporal orientations shape consumer engagement, influencing their goals and emotional connection with experiences (Rosenthal, 2024). The immediacy of experiences creates cycles of gratitude and dependency on certain products necessary for the practice, which generates comfort and strengthens the consumer's identity (Bouacida & Khawaldeh, 2023). Spatial contexts, including domestic spaces, also shape practices by combining material infrastructures (e.g., possessions, efficiency) and social norms (Jack, 2017).

Recently, private domestic spaces have blended with public spaces through digital platforms, compelling consumers to adapt practices to new routines and settings (Lima et al., 2022). During such shifts, materiality becomes central, as changes in objects and tools alter the practice circuit (Magaudda, 2011). These shifts often involve rematerialization, where symbolic meanings are rearticulated with new materialities, enabling continuity through adaptation (Shekhar et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a pertinent context to study disruptions in consumption practices. Lockdown measures restricted routines, compelling adaptations through creativity while exposing dis-

parities in experimentation capacities (Hoolohan et al., 2022). Studying the lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, Gordon-Wilson (2022) reflected on consumer narratives about their post-lockdown practices. According to the author, consumers change consumption practices to regain self-control, feeling some degree of control in seemingly uncontrollable times. Gordon-Wilson (2022) conceptually considered lockdown a crisis — an unexpected event creating uncertainties, threatening routines, and impacting practice performance. During crises, consumers modify consumption practices in various ways, such as prioritizing material goods purchases (Castilhos et al., 2017). Beauty consumption practices, for example, shifted toward functional and self-care-oriented products addressing stress and mask-related skin issues (Kim & Choi, 2023). Consumers also indulged in affordable luxury items, exemplifying the 'lipstick effect' during economic downturns (Bahl et al., 2022).

Digital platforms played a vital role in maintaining social connections and meeting new consumer needs (Singh & Shukla, 2022; Vengusamy & Visvanathan, 2023). Social media facilitated access to products and shared information while also creating uncertainties that influenced consumption behaviors (Naeem, 2021). These adaptations, while initially reactive, often restructured long-term practices by aligning old lifestyles with emerging needs.

Existing literature emphasizes micro-level perspectives, focusing on individuals as carriers of practices (Reckwitz, 2002). However, understanding how consumers restructure practices during crises requires examining interactions among meanings, objects, and actions across social and domestic spaces. In this sense, this study analyzes the adaptations of beauty consumption practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring how consumers negotiate disruptions and reconfigure routines in digital and physical spaces.

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to understand the triggers that led consumers to restructure their beauty practices in response to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. To address this objective, we adopted a multi-method approach, combining netnography (Kozinets, 2019), in-depth interviews (McCracken, 1988), and archival research (Golder, 2000) to investigate how consumers adopted and adapted their beauty practices. Data collection was conducted in three stages between March 2020 and September 2021, with a particular focus on periods of stricter quarantine in Brazil.

In the first stage, we analyzed diverse archival sources to construct an analytical narrative about the role of

beauty practices during the pandemic. Using Google News, we identified news articles published between March 2020 and August 2021 from Brazilian newspapers and magazines, which provided insights into societal perceptions of beauty during this period. These sources highlighted evolving beauty norms and the challenges faced by consumers.

To deepen our understanding, we reviewed industry reports published by *Associação Brasileira da Indústria de Higiene Pessoal, Perfumaria e Cosméticos* (Brazilian Association of Personal Hygiene, Perfumery, and Cosmetics Industry — ABIHPEC). These reports detailed trends in the beauty sector, guidance on adapting practices, and market data. Secondary sources from influential market players and beauty industry experts, accessed via platforms like YouTube and media outlets such as CNN and GNT, further contextualized the changes in beauty consumption.

The second stage employed netnography (Kozinets, 2019) focusing on Instagram and YouTube as primary platforms for beauty-related content. We explored hashtags such as #belezanapandemia (#beautyinpandemic), #cuidadoemcasa (#careathome), #creinovoshábitos (#createnewhabits), and #façopormim (#Imadeformyself) to identify emerging beauty trends and practices shared online. Systematic data collection involved capturing posts, comments, and videos from profiles specializing in natural beauty, beauty brands, and makeup influencers.

During the key periods (March, June, and September 2020), we collected over 360 screenshots, 800 comments, 200 posts, and 20 videos, archived in a Google Drive folder. Profile selection was informed by two prior immersive research projects conducted by the authors (details withheld for anonymity). Among the profiles followed were: @jessicajuvenciooficial, @niinasecrets, @apmarcal. @nathcapelo, @quemdisseberenice, @VultCosmetica, @anaturalissima, @nyleferrari, @monasoars, and @carolcronemberger.

In the third stage, we conducted seven in-depth interviews (McCracken, 1988) with women aged 25-45 from the Brazilian Northeast and Southeast regions, representing social classes A, B1, and B2, as classified by the Critério Brasil (https://abep.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/01_cceb_2024.pdf). All the participants had established beauty routines before the pandemic, encompassing practices like skincare, makeup, and hair care. Interviews, lasting 45-60 minutes each, were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed, resulting in 103 pages of textual data. The interview script covered pre-pandemic routines, changes during the pandemic, and future expectations regarding beauty practices. These interviews provided rich insights into the new beauty routines and adaptations adopted during the pandemic. The dataset collected during these stages is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Data sources.

Types of sources	Exemplary sources	Amount of data
Archival data	Classical texts Magazines articles Secondary reports Industry reports	5 30 5 12
Interview data	Brazilian women (25-45)	7 interviews — 103 pages of transcribed data
Netnographic data	Instagram posts YouTube videos Comments on social media	360 pages 20 videos 200 prints with comments

Note. Research data.

Data analysis followed a comprehensive, qualitative approach using an iterative, hermeneutical analysis (Thompson, 1997). We began by coding the interview transcripts, identifying 46 initial codes that captured meanings, expressions, and behaviors related to beauty practices. Through collaborative coding sessions, this list was refined to 11 core codes that reflected the study's central themes.

To ensure consistency across diverse data sources — interviews transcripts, netnographic data, and archival materials — we used a unified coding document. This triangulated analysis integrated insights from each source, focusing on consumer tensions and challenges in adapting beauty practices during the pandemic. Netnographic data analysis, guided by Kozinets' (2019) methodology, emphasized the interplay between individual adaptations and broader societal disruptions. This multi-method approach revealed significant shifts in beauty practices during the pandemic, culminating in typologies that describe consumer-driven adaptations during a time of societal upheaval.

TRIGGERS OF CHANGE: ADAPTING BEAUTY PRACTICES DURING ROUTINE DISRUPTION

Despite significant disruptions to their routines, consumers continued engaging in beauty practices as a means of enhancing well-being, demonstrating a significant shift toward digital platforms that facilitated these activities. Digital tools and platforms became essential for constructing and maintaining identity and self-security amidst the uncertainties of altered routines. Featherstone's (1982) concept of the 'performing self' highlights how identity construction involves integrating aesthetic practices with cultural and material resources. In the digital age, this 'performing self' extends into virtual spaces, where social media, online tutorials,

and beauty apps enable consumers to construct and align their identities in real-time across multiple digital and physical contexts.

Building on this perspective, Elliott (2020) emphasizes the tension between the agency to shape identities through social practices and the constraints imposed by social positions and personal histories. In digital spaces, this tension is mediated by new opportunities for self-expression and adaptation, alongside challenges related to access and representation.

The pandemic's relocation of social activities to domestic environments blurred the boundaries between internal and external spaces, prompting significant adaptations in beauty practices. This reconfiguration was further shaped by digital environments, where consumers joined online beauty communities, participated in virtual consultations, and used digital resources to navigate and balance work, leisure, and self-presenta-

tion within their homes. These adaptations offered individuals tools to foster identity security and manage the uncertainties brought about by the pandemic.

Our analysis identified three behavioral triggers — perception of free time, domestic social exhibition, and insecurity with the new routine — that acted as mechanisms prompting changes in beauty consumption practices during this period. These triggers operated as motivational drivers, catalyzing shifts in beauty practices by encouraging consumers to explore and adopt new rituals and routines. These triggers, supported by digital marketing tools and platforms, encouraged consumers to innovate and transform their pre-disruption beauty practices. Table 2 summarizes how these behavioral drivers shaped the adaptation process, demonstrating their role in provoking disruption and facilitating the adoption of new beauty practices in a digitally mediated environment.

Table 2. Behavioral triggers driving adaptations in beauty practices during routine disruption.

Behavioral triggers	Actions	Digital marketing tools	Changes in practices	Preparation level
Perception of free time	Training and acquisition of new skills	Use of teaching videos on video platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, as well as searching for information on Google.	The previous practice now contains more material elements and improves perceived effectiveness.	Individual preparation for time management
Domestic social exhibition	Discovery of tools for online display	Use of online meeting tools, such as Zoom, and social media platforms to test your self-appearance on camera.	The level of elaboration of normal practice becomes defined based on the level of social display required for each occasion.	Preparing to show off in front of others
Insecurity with new routine	Intensification of practices in order to restore self-security	Online shopping to increase material elements and search for information on social media.	Normal practices become more considered, with outsourcing being replaced by do-it-yourself and the practice script taking longer with the replacement of some material elements.	Individual self-care preparation

Note. Research data.

Free time and the digital transformation of beauty practices

The disruption caused by the pandemic created a surplus of idle time for many individuals. This new-found free time served as a trigger for consumers to improve their skills in routine beauty practices. With limited access to professional services like beauty salons, many have turned to online resources to address their well-being needs. Social media platforms and online forums became central spaces for self-directed learning and experimentation in beauty practices — a process significantly mediated by digital platforms. This shift is exemplified in the following interview excerpt:

I can take better care of my hair now, can't I? I started paying more attention to it. I've learned to stick to a hair care routine and have become more mindful

of skincare, which I neglected despite dealing with acne throughout my teenage years. ... So, quarantine came, and I stumbled upon a skincare group on Facebook. At 28, I decided to finally start taking care of my skin, not just my hair (Interviewed C., 28, RJ).

With this additional time, consumers began engaging in new activities or making beauty routines more elaborate in terms of time and materials involved. Digital marketing played a pivotal role in facilitating this transition, providing accessible information and tutorials.

Consumers not only learned new skills but also engaged in prosumption practices (Fracalanzza & Campos, 2019), becoming active participants in the creation and dissemination of beauty-related content. Platforms like YouTube became instrumental in this process, as highlighted by one respondent: "It was great

seeing so many makeup tutorials during this period. I learned how to apply false eyelashes, something I had never done before" (Interviewed L., 35, RJ). The internet fostered a transition from passive users to prosumers — individuals actively producing and sharing content that shapes broader beauty practices (Fracalanzza & Campos, 2019). Influencers also played a key role in this transformation, adapting their content to focus on at-home beauty routines. For instance, YouTuber Jéssica Juvêncio shared her 'quarantine makeup' tutorials and DIY beauty tips, emphasizing the value of self-care within domestic settings: "Even though I'm staying in, I still enjoy dressing up, doing my makeup just to watch series, just to relax… Alongside my favorites, I'm sharing the makeup techniques I've found most useful" (Juvêncio, 2020a).

Similarly, Instagram accounts specializing in natural beauty promoted homemade cosmetic recipes, underscoring the accessibility of self-care practices independent of professional services. These influencers became instructors, teaching followers new skills. For example, one post provided a DIY eyebrow treatment recipe, complete with instructions and benefits (see Figure 1).
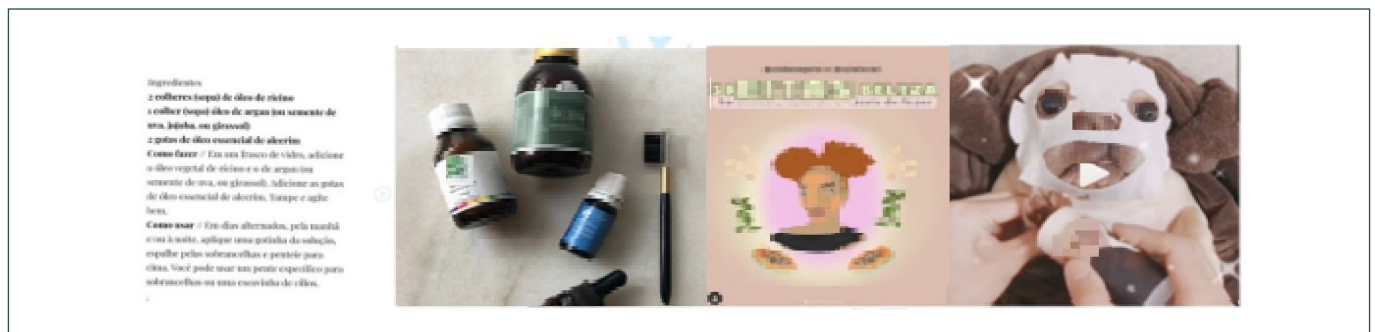
Source: Research data. The first image contains a recipe for a cosmetic. Translated content for DIY eyebrow solution: Ingredients: two tablespoons castor oil, one tablespoon argan oil, and two drops rosemary essential oil. Instructions: 1. Combine castor oil and argan oil in a glass jar. 2. Add rosemary essential oil drops. Shake well. 3. Apply a drop of the solution to your eyebrows in the morning and/or at night, combing upwards.

Figure 1. Examples from Instagram accounts featuring DIY cosmetics recipes and wellness tips.

With the perception of free time and subsequent engagement in skill-acquisition activities, consumers began investing in individual preparation as a way of better managing their routines. This prompted them to rethink their beauty practices, incorporating more material elements and dedicating additional time to each activity. As a result, many consumers reported feeling more satisfied with themselves and more confident in their ability to carry out these practices. This is illustrated in the following excerpt: "I feel more attuned to my skin now. I can calmly follow my moisturizing routine, observe how my skin responds, and test more products, varying the order of application. It's been rewarding to learn things I never had time for before" (Interviewed C., 35, RJ).

Consumers recognized the value of dedicating time to understanding their personal needs and preferences — a process made possible by the accessibility of digital platforms. This not only enhanced their sense of self-awareness but also highlighted the transformative role of digital tools in reshaping contemporary beauty practices.

Digital exposure and the reconfiguration of beauty routines

With the pandemic, social exposure and interactions shifted entirely to online platforms, such as Zoom and social media. This shift created a new trigger for domestic social exhibitions, where consumers found themselves exposed to external audiences, while remaining within their homes. This form of exposure, mediated through digital cameras, led consumers to prepare for their virtual presence by testing how they appeared on screen: "I noticed that I would be seeing myself all the time in the square on the Zoom screen. After the first meeting where I was without makeup, I said I can't look like this. I started to pay more attention to my skin, to the finish of my makeup. It was horrible!" (Interviewed N., 42 years old, SP).

Video communication tools, such as Zoom, heightened the need for high-production beauty practices, tailored to the demands of being 'camera-ready.' These practices involved using multiple beauty products to achieve a polished appearance suitable for virtual spaces. The extent of these efforts often depended on the significance of the social interaction, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

During this entire period, there was only one meeting in which I did full makeup because it was an important meeting. It was a national project presentation with over ten participants, and I was going to speak. So, I wouldn't go unnoticed. If it's a meeting

where I'm just another attendee, that I'm not going to attract too much attention, I only apply eyeliner, mascara, and a bit of concealer (Interviewed C., 38 years old, RJ).

As these examples show, the level of perceived social exposure in virtual environments influenced the complexity and duration of beauty routines. High-production practices were reserved for significant occasions, while tutorials addressing these specific needs gained traction on platforms like YouTube. For instance, professional makeup artist Vanessa Rozan, on the Vult makeup brand's YouTube channel, demonstrated how to achieve a professional look for live meetings and video calls. She advised, "Always face a light source to make your skin appear more uniform and avoid highlighting dark circles. … The goal is to look wonderful for your live work meeting" (Vult, 2020).

At the same time, some consumers embraced minimalist routines, prioritizing comfort and practicality over elaborate preparation. Economic impacts and the domestic nature of these virtual interactions often led to a simplified approach: "I'm not going to do my makeup at home. I don't want to waste my products, and I have no one to show it to" (Interviewed C., 38, RJ).

This adjustment in beauty routines reflects a balance between the demands of digital social exposure and the freedom of being in a private space. High-production beauty was reserved for key moments of external presence in digital spaces, while less significant interactions allowed consumers to prioritize simplicity and comfort.

The trigger for domestic social exhibition ultimately prompted consumers to reassess their beauty practices, tailoring their routines to the importance of the social display occasion. This led to a movement of preparation, where material elements were chosen and combined based on the level of exposure required. In this way, beauty practices were adapted to meet the varying demands of virtual social interactions.

Insecurity and adaptation: Maintaining beauty practices during disruption

The disruption brought by the pandemic left many consumers feeling insecure about the changes in their daily lives. This sense of insecurity triggered a series of activities aimed at providing stability and restoring a sense of control, aligning with the findings of Phipps and Ozanne (2017). These activities often focused on maintaining pre-pandemic beauty practices, which served as tools for self-care and preparation to navigate the new reality. Even during isolation, beauty routines persisted as they were seen as integral to daily life and personal identity, especially in an increasingly digital environment.

Amid intensified virtual interactions, maintaining beauty practices served two key purposes: self-expression and fostering a stable sense of self amid uncertainty and heightened digital exposure. One interviewee shared: "I use everything. Foundation, concealer, eyeshadow, mascara, contour, blush, eyebrow filling, lipstick… I love [doing it]. For me, it's fun, the best time of day. I have fun, I learn, I understand my skin" (Interviewed N., 42 years old, SP). For such consumers, beauty practices became a source of self-assurance, allowing them to feel authentic and confident despite the upheaval of their routines.

This pursuit of self-security also prompted consumers to turn to digital media for support, including purchasing replacement items and learning more about self-care techniques: "I can't buy the mascara I use again now because it's imported, but it's running out and I can't live without it, so I think I'll end up looking at it on the Sephora website here in Brazil" (Interviewed N., 42 years old, SP).

This digital engagement allowed consumers to adapt their beauty routines by replacing certain products and recalibrating their practices to fit the new scenario: "I kept my skincare routine regardless of whether we were in quarantine. I kept this routine. For me, it's much better because now my skin breathes. So, I invested, went to the pharmacy and bought the complete treatment to do at home" (Interviewed C., 38 years old, RJ).

To address insecurities and adapt to restrictions, many consumers began performing DIY beauty activities at home, such as nail care that was previously outsourced to salons. However, not everyone felt fully capable of executing these practices, leading to emotional tension. Consumers found themselves torn between adhering to isolation measures and addressing their insecurities. For some, the emotional significance of beauty practices outweighed the perceived risks. For example, one respondent admitted: "There was something I did in quarantine that I shouldn't have done, but I didn't regret, which is my biggest vanity — polishing my nails [in a beauty salon]" (Interviewee L., 35 years old, RJ).

This highlights the emotional weight attached to beauty practices as tools for confidence-building, particularly under the pressures of digital exposure. Dissatisfaction with one's appearance sometimes exacerbates feelings of insecurity, promoting consumers to seek support from online tutorials. For instance, a YouTube tutorial presented as "Makeup today is literally to get out of bed because I'm already freaking out, I'm getting scared of this coronavirus… This makeup is ideal for the bad days when you have nothing to do, you're feeling down, low self-esteem" (Juvêncio, 2020b) demonstrated how beauty routines were employed to

address emotional well-being during disruption alongside aesthetic concerns.

The insecurity triggered by changes in routines ultimately led consumers to seek stability through the continuation of pre-pandemic beauty practices, albeit with adaptations such as substituting products and replacing outsourced steps with DIY efforts. The digital environment played a key role in guiding and facilitating this process. However, emotional tensions arose from perceived incompetence or limitations brought on by the pandemic's restrictions, underscoring the complexities of maintaining self-care during uncertain times.

DISCUSSION

The disruption of routines caused by an unexpected crisis, such as the pandemic, necessitates a restructuring of established practices. This restructuring involves reconfiguring the elements of practice as consumers navigate the blurred boundaries between domestic, social, and digital environments. Faced with disrupted routines, consumers sought to regain a sense of normalcy and self-control by adapting their practices, resulting in the emergence of new beauty behaviors.

The digital environment played a pivotal role in this process, serving not only as a platform for adaptation but also as an active agent in reshaping practices. Digital marketing tools and platforms — including social media tutorials, influencer content, personalized recommendations, and virtual try-on technologies — enabled consumers to learn, experiment, and sustain their beauty routines in innovative ways. These tools fostered the emergence of new beauty practices structured around three key triggers: perception of free time, domestic social exhibition, and insecurity with the new routine.

While perceiving the idle time, consumers engaged with digital tutorials, social commerce, and influencer-generated content, driving the development of new skills and fostering prosumption (Fracalanzza & Campos, 2019). Digital platforms became spaces for discovery and creativity, enabling consumers to co-create value by producing and sharing content alongside consumption. Domestic social exhibitions, on the other hand, were mediated by social media, where consumers adapted ritualized self-presentation to the aesthetic and interactive demands of virtual spaces (Rook, 1985). Finally, the insecurity provoked by the pandemic made consumers search for security practices that acted as stabilizing rituals, providing consumers with a sense of continuity and ontological security (Phipps & Ozanne, 2017) in an uncertain context.

The materialities of beauty practices also underwent significant transformation. Consumers redefined their relationship with products, categorizing them into 'special' or 'essential' items. Special products, often imbued with symbolic or situational value, were reserved for significant virtual or social occasions. Essential products, in contrast, became central to maintaining daily routines and preserving a sense of normalcy. Digital marketplaces played a crucial role in this process, facilitating the discovery of new products while supporting adaptations to existing practices.

Through these adaptations, consumers actively restructured their beauty practices to meet the demands of their transformed realities. The digital environment, with its capacity to foster learning, experimentation, and social connection, emerged as a critical enabler of these changes. As illustrated in Figure 2, the process of adaptation reflects the interplay between disruption, triggering factors, and the evolving role of the digital tools and platforms in reshaping beauty practices. The figure highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted pre-pandemic practices, activating triggers such as perceived free time, the need for social exhibition, and feelings of insecurity. These triggers, mediated through the digital environment, facilitated the transformation and adaptation of beauty practices to new routines and social contexts.
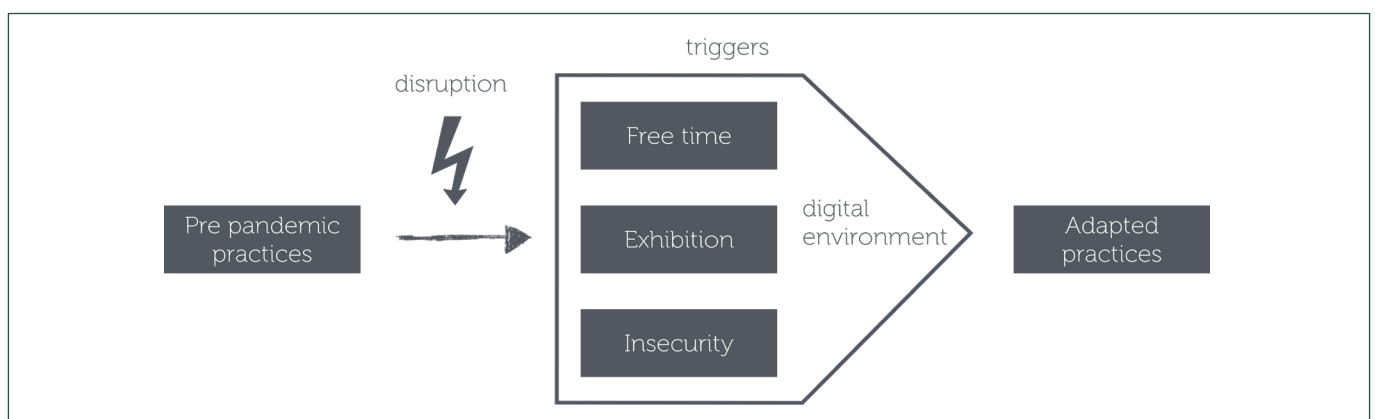
Source: Research data.

Figure 2. Triggers and the role of the digital environment in disrupting and adapting beauty practices.

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Moreover, digital marketing strategies were instrumental in amplifying the socio-material transformations. By connecting consumers with tailored content, fostering community through interactive features, and enabling the exploration of innovative products and services, these strategies embedded new meanings and routines into consumers' lives. The digital environment thus became a central node where material resources, social interactions, and emerging meanings converged, supporting consumer adaptation and redefinition.

This perspective aligns with the transformative dynamics of digital marketing discussed in this call for papers, highlighting the significance of digital platforms not only as spaces of consumption but also as agents of cultural and practical transformation. By situating the digital environment as a central player, this framework sheds light on how disruptions and subsequent adaptations are deeply intertwined with evolving socio-material practices.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted daily routines and consumption practices worldwide, compelling consumers to adapt in unprecedented ways (Bahmanyar et al., 2020; Ben Hassen et al., 2020; Kapoor et al., 2022). The beauty sector, in particular, experienced profound transformations as individuals navigated the blurred boundaries between home, social, and digital spaces. Employing a methodological approach that combined in-depth interviews with netnography and archival sources, this study examined how consumers restructured their beauty practices during moments of disruption. Our findings revealed that the disruption of routines caused by the pandemic prompted consumers to restructure their beauty practices around three key triggers: the perception of free time, domestic social exhibition, and insecurity with the new routine. These triggers, supported by digital marketing tools and platforms, enabled consumers to adapt their practices in ways that fostered learning, experimentation, and the maintenance of beauty routines during the crisis.

This study contributes to existing literature by advancing the understanding of how consumption practices evolve under disruption. Unlike prior studies (e.g., Phipps & Ozanne, 2017; Thomas & Epp, 2019) that emphasize materiality, social norms, and mental activities, our findings highlight the interplay of external social environments (e.g., workplaces) and domestic spaces, revealing how these shifts reshape traditional beauty practices. The heightened perception of being observed in virtual environments brought increased awareness to consumers' appearances, driving significant changes in their routines. Moreover, this research underscores the

role of collective responsibility and emotional states in shaping adaptations to beauty practices, offering a more nuanced perspective than frameworks focused solely on material configurations and practical understandings (Barnhardt & Ginns, 2017; Phipps & Ozanne, 2017).

Theoretically, this research extends practice theory in contexts of disruption, expanding its scope beyond economic (Mittal & Griskevicius, 2016), religious (Kapoor et al., 2022), or health crises (Pavia & Mason, 2004). While prior studies have documented changes to rituals during the pandemic (Greene et al., 2022; Kapoor et al., 2022), our findings emphasize the pivotal role of the digital environment in helping consumers navigate disruptions. This dynamic process reveals a multi-dimensional restructuring of practices, contributing to a richer understanding of consumer adaptation during crises.

Practically, this research offers actionable insights into digital marketing, brands, and policymakers aiming to support consumers during periods of disruption. For businesses, it underscores the importance of tools and offerings that address consumers' evolving priorities, such as products and services that combine convenience, personalization, and emotional well-being. The emphasis on learning and experimentation presents opportunities for organizations to invest in technologies like virtual try-on tools and personalized recommendation systems, aligning offerings with emerging consumption dynamics in disrupted contexts.

For policymakers, this study highlights the need to consider the emotional and social dimensions of consumption when designing crisis support mechanisms, ensuring interventions address consumers' evolving practices. At a societal level, the findings shed light on the broader implications of digital consumption for well-being, community building, and resilience. By illustrating how consumers creatively adapt their practices, this research offers lessons on fostering adaptive capacities that could benefit society during future crises. Additionally, it raises critical questions about the role of digital environments in reshaping social norms, creating opportunities for further academic inquiry.

Managerially, this study illuminates shifts in consumer behavior, particularly the rise of new routines and increased reliance on digital platforms. For instance, the perception of free time and the focus on skill acquisition suggest opportunities for businesses to develop educational content, such as instructional videos and search functionalities. Similarly, the use of online platforms like Zoom for self-presentation highlights opportunities for brands to design personalized, interactive experiences catering to consumers' needs for social exhibition. With consumers increasingly engaging in self-care and DIY routines, digital marketing strategies could benefit from

offering products and services that support these individualized approaches.

This study opens avenues for further investigation. Future research could explore the intersection of gender and beauty practices, examining how gendered expectations shape adaptations during crises. Another promising area is the professionalization of prosuming behavior observed during the pandemic, as consumers transitioned from personal practices to providing alternatives for traditional beauty services, such as salons. Finally, while this study captures transformations during the peak of social isolation, longitudinal research could revisit these practices in a post-pandemic context to assess their evolution and lasting impacts.

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Authors

Isabela Carvalho de Morais (iD)
Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto, Escola de Minas
Campus Morro do Cruzeiro, s/n, Pilar, CEP 35400-000, Ouro Preto, MG, Brazil
isabela.morais@ufop.edu.br

Thaysa Costa do Nascimento (iD)
Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Instituto COPPEAD de Administração
Rua Pascoal Lemme, n. 355, Cidade Universitária, CEP 21941-918, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil
thaysa.nascimento@coppead.ufrj.br

Débora Bogea da Costa Tayt-son (iD)
Universidade Federal Fluminense, Faculdade de Administração e Ciências Contábeis
Rua Mário Santos Braga, n. 30, Centro, CEP 24020140, Niterói, RJ, Brazil
debora.bogea@gmail.com

Authors' contributions (CRT)

1st author: conceptualization (equal), data curation (equal), investigation (equal), methodology (equal), project administration (equal), supervision (equal), validation (equal), visualization (equal), writing - original draft (equal), writing - review & editing (equal).

2nd author: conceptualization (equal), data curation (equal), investigation (equal), methodology (equal), project administration (equal), supervision (equal), validation (equal), visualization (equal), writing - original draft (equal), writing - review & editing (equal).

3rd author: conceptualization (equal), formal analysis (equal), investigation (equal), project administration (equal), validation (equal), visualization (equal), writing - original draft (equal).