

Understanding Anti-consumption through a Virtual Community of No-poo and Low-poo Adherents

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ABSTRACT

Objective: this study aimed to understand how the processes of anti-consumption are configured in a community that brings together adherents of no-poo and low-poo techniques. **Method:** characterized as a qualitative approach, netnographic data were collected, followed by semi-structured interviews with the subjects. **Results:** anti-consumption occurs from the beginning of adherence to these techniques, and it is practiced against some types of shampoos or the entire category of these cosmetic products. However, being against consumption did not cancel the relationship with the market. Due to the characteristics of this community and its history, it was characterized as a place of anti-consumption and resistance that has become a consumption environment. **Conclusions:** this study identified anti-consumption as the initial phase of a transformative process following the adoption of no-poo and low-poo hair-washing techniques. This individual process introduces a reframing of consumption, potentially leading to behaviors of reduction or consumerism. In this way, recording the particularities of consumption carried out by those who use washing techniques in the virtual community allows this segment of consumers to be known and recognized by society.

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INTRODUCTION

On the internet, consumers have been empowered to voice their opinions more assertively concerning the market and consumption. Virtual spaces, such as social media, promote self-expression and socialization, potentially reducing loneliness (Brooks et al., 2020). These environments foster the creation of virtual communities (Rheingold, 1993), where individuals engage in discussions around shared interests (Levy, 1999).

The virtual community serves as a space where individuals can explore dimensions of consumption beyond mere emotions, fostering collective actions and resistance toward brands and products. Through interactions, community members gain insights into information sharing and the geographically independent nature of their connections, allowing for a deeper observation of consumer culture and its daily practices. These communities nurture strong relationships among like-minded individuals, creating a supportive environment for anti-consumption behaviors, which are defined by the rejection, restriction, or voicing of complaints against consumption (Lee et al., 2009; 2011).

Advocates of the no-poo and low-poo hair-washing techniques discussed in this study are primarily found within virtual communities, where they gather to share their support for these methods. No-poo and low-poo denote no shampoo and minimal shampoo, respectively (Mendes, 2017). By embracing these washing practices and endeavoring to abstain from certain, if not all, commercially available hair products, consumers are engaging in anti-consumption — in other words, the avoidance of specific products or brands, and is influenced by behaviors, personality, and experiences (Lee et al., 2009).

Concerning no-poo and low-poo, several inquiries have arisen: What motivates the adoption of anti-consumption practices like these techniques, and how does such commitment materialize? What alterations in consumption follow the decision to forgo shampoos? What is the impact of group dynamics on members' consumption habits? The exploration of these questions promises to enrich our comprehension of these practices in anti-consumption behaviors, as well as our understanding of their collective dynamics. Hence, the objective of this study is to understand how the processes of anti-consumption are configured in a community that brings together adherents of no-poo and low-poo techniques.

The motivations underpinning anti-consumption practices, alongside the alterations in consumption stemming from the decision to abstain from certain products, were examined to comprehend not only the rationale for rejecting shampoos and other hair products but also the resultant behaviors and their collective configuration. Recognizing habits such as the rejection of specific prod-

ucts and the reduction or substitution of consumptive items is significant, as these insights can enrich consumer literature and inform market practices, thereby facilitating smoother consumption experiences within these communities.

Understanding the opposition to cosmetic products enables marketing professionals to adapt their strategies effectively, grasping the nature of these claims and the mechanisms driving the development and construction of these movements. By accessing anti-consumption communities in the cosmetic segment through virtual spaces, particularly social media platforms, marketing can engage with these groups as essential tools. Within these virtual spaces, consumers possess the capacity to influence a culture of consumption and interact with the market in transformative ways, allowing for tailored marketing actions that meet the individual and social needs of community members.

Furthermore, examining the roles that consumers occupy within these groups yields valuable insights, facilitating a deeper understanding of the dynamics, cultural values, and consumption patterns that characterize these communities. As consumption is depicted as a process of social structuring and reproduction (Alonso, 2009), highlighting the importance of documenting the specificities of consumption practices among adherents to the no-poo and low-poo techniques serves to confer visibility and recognition upon this consumer segment within society, thereby enriching the dialogue surrounding anti-consumption and informing broader marketing strategies that resonate with evolving consumer perspectives and preferences.

This paper is structured as follows. First, we present the anti-consumption concept, bringing the definition that base this study. Then, we contextualize virtual communities as anti-consumption place. In sequence, we explain the methodological approach, following by the results and discussions. Finally, we conclude this work evidencing our findings and arguments, as well as the limitations of the research and suggestions for future research.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Anti-consumption

To refer to the act of non-consumption of some products or even to total non-consumption events, we often use the concept of anti-consumption (Dalmoro et al., 2014). The main focus of this concept is on consumer behavior and the reasons why consumers avoid specific products and/or brands. According to Lee et al. (2011), anti-consumption can be categorized as rejection, restriction, and complaint behaviors.

The concept of anti-consumption is also considered a generic term for many types of consumption resistance

activities (Leipämaa-Leskinen et al., 2016). Conceptually, resistance entails opposition to the culture of consumption and mass-produced marketing practices (Cherrier, 2009; Penaloza & Price, 1993). Thus, anti-consumption is characterized by the deliberate reduction of consumption behaviors, which often entails cognitive control and the establishment of intentions (Makri et al., 2020).

Motivations for opposition to consumption may include seeking to influence the ideology and culture of consumerism, as well as to modify specific institutional practices (Scaraboto & Fischer, 2012). This decision to refrain from consumption can be driven by a variety of factors, such as a desire to oppose corporations (Kozinets & Handelman, 1998), government entities (Trindade et al., 2016), the prevailing culture of consumption (Black & Cherrier, 2010), or specific products. Consequently, product opposition may be directed either towards the product itself or the location and circumstances of its production (Egea & Frutos, 2016).

Although abstaining from purchases and reducing the acquisition of desired goods can prompt specific negative emotional responses (Makri et al., 2020), consumers who demonstrate a tendency toward consumption avoidance often share a primary objective: to foster attitudes that challenge or impact the prevalent culture of consumption (Cherrier, 2009). Additionally, they seek to preserve a sense of autonomy over their lifestyles and consumption choices (Banikema & Bhatli, 2016).

Although non-consumption behaviors are primarily influenced by personal experiences, they can also be shaped by communal environments as they seek similar people to share their objectives, resulting in new interpretations that contribute to collective identities (Trindade et al., 2016). According to Cova and Dalli (2008), researchers found a strong link between communal dimensions and criticisms of consumption. In collective environments, individuals can reflect on their consumption habits and interact with others who are also open to deviating from traditional markets (Kraemer et al., 2012) and social logic (Kozinets, 2002). In this way, anti-consumption behaviors stem from a combination of personal motivations and societal or ideological influences. While some scholars contend that ideological orientation significantly impacts one's self-identity, research consistently distinguishes between individual and collective themes (Lee et al., 2009).

Acts of anti-consumption could be influenced by the consumer's personality, experiences, and self-perception (Lee et al., 2009). However, there is a significant gap in the literature concerning consumer behavior following the decision-making process, so additional research is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of anti-consumption behaviors. This gap includes various dimensions,

such as product usage, life extension, and disposal practices, which are critical to reducing overall consumption.

While additional research is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations driving anti-consumption behaviors, there exists a significant gap in the literature concerning consumer behavior following the decision-making process. This gap includes various dimensions such as product usage, life extension, and disposal practices, all of which are critical to achieving a reduction in overall consumption (Makri et al., 2020).

For instance, individuals purposefully and meaningfully engage in activities such as cultivating their own vegetables or undertaking DIY projects as a form of resistance against mass production and consumption. This behavior serves as a means to reclaim their identity, authenticity, self-efficacy, agency, and autonomy. In this context, the act of reclaiming consumption can also be interpreted as a manifestation of anti-consumption (Lee, 2022). Furthermore, consumers frequently opt for alternatives when faced with products that are out of stock, unavailable, excessively unhealthy, or prohibitively expensive (Arens & Hamilton, 2016). Consequently, the understanding of anti-consumption motivations should encompass not only the initial rejection or limitation of material possessions but also the intricate dynamics of anti-consumption behaviors.

The current body of literature on anti-consumption primarily adopts a consumer-centric perspective. However, significant multilevel considerations arise when analyzing the factors driving anti-consumption behaviors, encompassing not only micro-level individual concerns but also macro-level issues related to environmental, corporate, and societal contexts (Makri et al., 2020).

Some types of anti-consumption, including prosocial sustainable consumption, can provide consumers with symbolic status benefits, as these actions frequently entail personal sacrifices for the welfare of others, society, or the environment (Makri et al., 2020). Nonetheless, these changes in consumption patterns can potentially lead to challenges in individuals' social lives, such as encountering bias or familial pressure from peers, relatives, or the broader context to engage in consumption practices they have chosen to oppose (Moreira & Acevedo, 2015).

According to Iyer and Muncy (2009), anti-consumption behavior can be divided into four non-mutually exclusive categories, meaning that consumption could be reduced for one or more reasons associated with each category. These are: general-societal, which includes those who believe that modern consumption in current times is causing irreparable damage to the Earth's ecosystem or that the excessive consumption of wealthier nations/classes is contributing to the rise in poverty in poorer nations/classes; general-personal, represented by simplifiers, that is,

those who adopt a simpler lifestyle with less emphasis on consumption; brand-societal, which encompasses activists; and brand-personal, which includes consumers who are not loyal to brands.

However, “as long as people ‘approach’ consumption, they will also ‘avoid’ consumption” (Lee, 2022, p. 4). This means that anti-consumption behavior can go beyond this categorization, especially when considering what can result from the opposition to consumption.

Virtual communities as places to anti-consumption

Communities have a significant influence on consumer behavior compared to external elements and individuals. The communities consist of diverse members, bonded by a common passion or emotion, who utilize these spaces to express various facets of their identity (Etzioni, 1996). Members of such communities uphold their values and can act collectively. Through online activities, community members assemble, interact, and evaluate consumption offerings (Kozinets, 1999).

Hence, virtual communities can be defined as a collective of individuals utilizing computer-mediated communication tools to engage in discussions related to mutual interests. These communities are established through collaboration among their members and the dissemination of information concerning their common interests, expertise, and undertakings (Levy, 1999).

When focused on consumption, virtual communities are composed of highly active consumers deeply engaged in consumption-related activities (Kozinets, 1999). These groups facilitate varying levels of consumption involvement (Dutot, 2020), enabling participants to gain knowledge about the language, concepts, norms, values, preferences, and the identities of expert members within the group (Kozinets, 1999; Kozinets, 2014). Moreover, they provide opportunities for social connection without spatial limitations and offer guidance through group activities, fostering stimuli for consumption (Cronshaw, 2022).

There are different types of members within virtual communities, which also influence their levels of engagement with consumption activities (Kozinets, 1999). The types of members are as follows (Martineau & Arsel, 2017): aspirants, who focus on developing skills and maintaining the community’s orientation; communals, who seek to preserve the community-oriented approach; tourists, who prioritize building the community; and utilizers, who are conservative regarding the community’s orientation and focus on its unlimited potential.

The entry and involvement of consumer in virtual communities is largely initiated by consumers’ need for information. This process is highly interactive and experiential, and is typically based on subprocesses such as learning, information sharing, advocacy, socialization, and

co-creation of values and/or products (Brodie et al, 2013; Kozinets, 1999; 2014).

As virtual communities can stimulate consumption, it is true that these spaces can also become places that foster anti-consumption behavior, as existing interactions enable the discussion of consumption habits among members, the sharing of reflections, and contact with people willing to resist traditional market logics (Kraemer et al., 2012). They can establish a set of practices and a way of life as they serve as breeding grounds for opposition to traditional consumption behaviors, as interactions facilitate discussions about members’ consumption patterns and provide access to like-minded individuals willing to challenge conventional market ideologies.

Negative online comments and/or negative product reviews can discourage consumers from using products they intended to keep (Philp & Nepomuceno, 2020). In this context, virtual communities can influence consumer behavior. Considering that consumption-critical communities offer a platform for individuals to voice their critiques and develop countercultural consumption practices, consumers within these communities may disseminate information regarding market inequalities, share the advantages of a restrained lifestyle, and construct a new collective identity.

METHOD

Research context and background

The washing techniques no-poo and low-poo discussed in this work have evolved and were not originally coined with these names but as the curly girl method, first introduced in the initial version of the book *The Curly Girl Handbook* by Lorraine Massey, released in 2002. In her book, Massey and Bender (2011) shared her experience with curly hair, recounting the prejudice she faced as a child due to her hair type and how it impacted her self-esteem for years. Massey’s development of the curly girl method aimed to care for curly hair gently, including specific hair-cutting techniques and avoiding traditional shampoos with sulfates. Later, Massey developed products under the names No Poo and Low Poo.

It is important to emphasize that, although patented by a specific company, the no-poo and low-poo washing techniques discussed in this research are not associated with any particular brand or product. Instead, they represent the grooming and maintenance practices employed by individuals. This is because these washing techniques have transcended the company’s proprietary influence, owing to their extensive utilization and embrace by consumers.

By engaging with virtual communities focused on these techniques, consumers collectively avoid traditional consumption paradigms. Additionally, these washing

techniques have various applications and are not restricted to a single interpretation. Within the scope of this study, the terms no-poo and low-poo specifically refer to the adapted and practiced hair-washing techniques in Brazil, while alternative methods are explicitly defined when mentioned.

No e low poo iniciantes community

The studied community has been active on Facebook since January 2015, and it is the largest group focused on no-poo and low-poo techniques. Initially, it was managed by a fan page associated with a legal entity known as JuBe, situated in São Paulo, which previously specialized in the sale of cosmetics. It is worth noting that while the community includes promotional content for cosmetic retailers, there is no evident engagement by legal entities in member interactions.

Discussions within the community are facilitated by its administrators, who establish group guidelines, rules, entry permissions, and registration policies (Kim & Jin, 2006). Additionally, the community identifies new members, 'conversation starters and visual narrators' — individuals who primarily facilitate discussions and interactions within the group — based on the hosting social network's attributes.

Individuals typically join the community following a recommendation from an existing member. New members are encouraged to acquaint themselves with group rules, access existing files, and abstain from posting queries or product inquiries until these steps have been completed. Moreover, apart from the community rules, criteria for excluding members were communicated through a post by an administrator.

Membership in the community primarily stems from the necessity for information (Brodie et al, 2013), whether to acquire knowledge about techniques or to clarify product-related inquiries, given the group's focus on beginners, as implied by its name. The primary interactions in the group revolve around requests for information concerning techniques and product consultations, including requests for product recommendations.

The members also become tools for controlling discussions, mediating, and drawing attention to the group's control topics, demonstrating that participants are closely connected to the group's purpose (Kozinets, 1999). They engage in a reciprocal exchange partnership in search of self-improvement, making the community a conducive environment for individual transformation (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006).

Data collection procedures

Ethnographic engagement. The initial stage involved identifying online social spaces, refining specific research questions, and entering the community. The selected virtual community possessed specific characteristics, such as focused and relevant discussion topics, intense message exchanges, a large number of participating members, regular narratives, interactions addressing the research problem, and observable behaviors in a virtual context.

The first author joined the community in August 2015 and devoted a certain time to grasp the characteristics and norms of the group before initiating the research. From an ethical standpoint, permission was obtained from the group's founder and manager (Ana) before conducting the research. After securing permission, the first author formally introduced herself to the community in July 2019, explaining the research processes and ensuring the anonymity of the research subjects.

Netnography. The data from the community archive were collected, including all the information posted in the virtual community without the researchers' involvement (Kozinets, 2015; 2019; Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021). The study involved manually extracting a total of 520 posts and their comments, which resulted in 1,854 screenshots. Additionally, other relevant posts that didn't fit within the collection period were also included. The criterion for extraction was that the posts involved some type of consumption practice or habit and had interactions in the comments. The manual extraction took place between October 2018 and January 2020. The extracted data served as a historical record and formed the basis for subsequent stages of this research.

In addition to the extracted data, elicited data were also collected from the first author's active participation in the community. This included three posts made in the group on the topics of anti-consumption and alternative consumption. The first author also participated as a group moderator, gaining access to non-public information such as bans and reports. Scientific documents and news about washing techniques and/or the studied group were also considered, aiming to help understand the dynamics of the members in the community, totaling 15 additional files.

Interviews. The study involved semi-structured interviews with one male and ten female participants, ranging in age from 21 to 44, who were adherents of both washing techniques. While the group administrator interview was conducted in person, three interviews were carried out via phone call (Carolina, Daniel, and Gabriela) at the subjects' request, and seven interviews were conducted through video calls. In order to maintain confidentiality, we use pseudonyms for interviewees (see Table 1).

Table 1. Interviewees' profile.

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Washing technique adhered	Adherence to the washing technique (in years)	Role in the community	Motivations to adhere to no-poo/low-poo
Ana	37	Self-employed	Low-poo	6 years	Group manager	The interviewee began straightening her hair due to the pressure she felt in the workplace to meet the standards required for her role as a manager. According to her, despite her efforts, there were no changes in the workplace, and the interviewee ended up having health problems due to the chemical products. At the same time, the interviewee's daughter was bullied because of her hair type. Seeking to resolve the health issue and support and strengthen her daughter's self-esteem, the interviewee decided to do the hair transition and began using the techniques to care for her hair.
Beatriz	31	Pedagogue	Low-poo	4 years	Member	The interviewee reported that she had her hair straightened permanently, and when she stopped, she noticed that her hair did not return to the way it was before the process. She started the low-poo technique to help with the hair transition process. She also reported that she had used prohibited products after adopting it, but according to her, when this happened, her hair became "extremely resentful."
Carolina	21	Unemployed	Low-poo/no-poo	3 years	Member	The interviewee reported having undergone a major hormonal change due to health problems, which changed her hair from straight to curly due to damage. Because she didn't know how to care for her hair, had identified hair problems and was allergic to some shampoos, she started researching ways to care for her hair on YouTube and came across stories from curly-haired women who used the no-poo and low-poo techniques. By purchasing and using products designed for both techniques, she began to notice good differences in her hair.
Elisa	24	Journalist	Low-poo	4 years	Member	After enrolling in a Journalism degree course, she received a recommendation from a classmate and friend about the techniques and decided to try them out. Up until then, the interviewee had been using straightening treatments for six years and had not yet started the hair transition. Then, the interviewee joined the Facebook group, where she had more contact with other followers and access to product information. Joining the group and hearing stories from members undergoing hair transition helped her decide to face the process and abandon straightening treatments.
Daniel	25	Self-employed	No-poo	2 years	Member	He received a recommendation from a friend who had been doing low-poo for a while, and after that, he adopted the no-poo because he thought it was healthier and had more benefits.
Fernanda	44	Doctor	No-poo	1 year	Visual narrator	After 20 years of straightening her hair, 14 of which were using chemical processes, the interviewee experienced hair loss problems and decided to stop straightening and start the hair transition. Before, the decision to buy was influenced by the smell and packaging of the product. After adopting the low-poo technique, the decision began to be based on the list of components in the product.
Gabriela	40	Housewife	Low-poo	11 months	Member	Seeking to reduce the amount of chemical products used on her body, the interviewee was looking for homemade products for facial treatments and found information about the techniques on a YouTuber's channel, which led her to start low-poo immediately.
Helena	25	Lawyer	Low-poo	5 years	Member	The adoption of the technique occurred after the decision to undergo hair transition and embrace her curls. For the interviewee, the hair transition was a very difficult beginning because she was worried about her hair due to it having two textures, and also because she did not want to cut the strands that had been chemically treated. Getting used to the technique and finding the ideal products were also mentioned as difficulties in the initial process, but she reported that she has now managed to achieve the result she wanted.
Isabela	33	Sociologist	Low-poo	3 years	Member	The interviewee used to straighten her hair, but she felt uncomfortable about having to rely on a hair salon to maintain the straightening process. She said that she started researching on the internet how to care for curly hair. First she found the original practices, and soon after she found the group. Then she started using the technique.
Juliana	42	Civil engineer	No-poo	1 year	Member	The interviewee discovered the techniques after discovering that her hair was curly, as she previously thought she had "bad straight hair," and then started researching on the internet about the necessary care and exchanging information in a WhatsApp group she is part of. She started using little shampoo, as she thought she would not be able to give up shampoo easily, but after two-three months of practicing low-poo, she switched to no-poo.
Larissa	35	Journalist	Low-poo	6 years	Member	The interviewee reported that she had been straightening her hair since she was 13 years old and had undergone two chemical haircuts. Even so, she continued to straighten her hair until she could no longer bear to undergo the procedure and go to salons (due to the noise of the procedure and the noise of the conversations that take place in these environments). She reported that she was afraid to cut her hair short, and because her father-in-law was sick and needed care, she postponed the decision to transition her hair. When she decided to stop straightening her hair and told her hairdresser, she noticed a difference in the service and decided to stop going to salons and do the treatments at home. Later, she discovered the technique on a YouTube channel and only after starting low-poo did she join the community.

The interviews took place between October and December 2019. A total of 4 hours, 3 minutes, and 56 seconds of audio were recorded, resulting in 52 pages of transcriptions typed in Calibri font, size 11, and single-spaced. The interview scripts focused on the characterization of the studied community, the significance of the washing techniques, and the concepts outlined in the theoretical framework of the study, such as changes in consumption, roles played in the community, influences, and relationship with the cosmetic market. Prior to the interviews, all participants were fully briefed on the procedures.

Data analysis and interpretation. Certain stages of the analysis were conducted concurrently with the data collection process. The initial phase encompassed selection, predicated on the thematic underpinning of this study by the authors. The netnographic data helped the authors understand the dynamics of the community, the language norms and structures used by members, and how the washing techniques work.

The netnographic data analysis followed [Kozinets' \(2015\)](#) steps recommendations and delved into the participation structure, participant characteristics, group purpose, communal activities, subjects of discourse, interaction themes, organizational norms, and social propriety. Subsequently, latent characteristics inherent in the interactions were scrutinized, encompassing explicit and implicit communication cues, leading to the categorization process. The categorization phase encompassed the dimensions utilized in formulating interview scripts, group discussions, and the insights gleaned from post and interview analyses (Table 2).

All methodological procedures, from the selection of the studied group to data collection, adhered to predetermined criteria to monitor interactions pertinent to the themes of anti-consumption and comprehend the underlying motives and contextual factors of this behavior.

Table 2. Analytical categories.

First-order	Second-order	Synthesis
Hair-washing techniques	Low-poo	The washing techniques not only differ from each other but also yield diverse interpretations among their practitioners. Following their adoption, these techniques undergo a redefinition that encompasses more than just hair care, extending to encompass body and health care, and possibly even signifying a particular lifestyle.
	No-poo	
Consumption	Changes in the consumption	The adoption of no-poo and low-poo techniques has resulted in significant shifts in consumer purchasing behavior and aesthetic care practices compared to the pre-adoption period.
	Influences on cosmetic product consumption	Following adoption, consumption can be affected by both social groups and digital influencers who disseminate information about the washing techniques.
	Anti-consumption	The deliberate refusal to use particular hair products, or even all such products, can be characterized as an act of anti-consumption. This act of non-consumption has resulted in distinct consumption behaviors among those who practice it.
Group characteristics	Group history	The configurations of the studied community have enabled opposition to consumption acts. Nonetheless, the dynamics of the interactions have evolved compared to the initial phase.
	Types of posts	
	Group organization	
	Discussions about supply and communication of cosmetic market	The availability of specific products within the market for professional use elicits varying perspectives among the members, thereby shaping the discussion on product consumption.

FINDINGS

Hair-washing techniques as an anti-consumption act: What products adherents want to avoid?

Present in both no-poo and low-poo techniques, the term poo is a reduction of the word shampoo. The techniques do not only refer to the use of shampoo but also to other products used in hair care. 'Low-poo' can be translated as 'low shampoo' but is also referred to as 'little shampoo' by practitioners. This technique prohibits the use of shampoos containing sulfates considered aggressive and harmful to the hair structure. Sulfate is a type of salt added to shampoos to intensify hair cleaning, and one of the main signs of its presence is the production of foam when the product is used. However, products with the following components are allowed for low-poo practitioners, even though some are surfactants, as they are not considered aggressive, being generally classified as 'mild sulfates'.

Regarding other components, a conflict of information about the use of products containing silicones in their formula was observed within the community. Silicones are considered components that form a protective film on the hair and facilitate detangling. In the Brazilian adaptation of the techniques, the use of silicones that can be washed out with shampoos approved by the technique is allowed in low-poo, while no-poo only permits the use of products with water-soluble silicones. Thus, the use or non-use of silicone products depends on the practitioner's choice and how they perceive the benefits or drawbacks of their use.

Another conflicting point observed was the approval or disapproval of products with parabens in their composition, as some group files allowed these components for both washing techniques. Parabens are present in cosmetic products to preserve them. However, due to various reports from members claiming to have had allergic reactions to this type of component, parabens are often avoided by practitioners of the washing techniques discussed in this study.

The common point of the no-poo and low-poo techniques is the non-use of products containing mineral oils, petrolatum, paraffin, and other petroleum derivatives in their formulas. These types of components are considered 'maskers' of the hair's actual condition

by practitioners because they accumulate in the hair, and their use is therefore prohibited.

Regarding the no-poo technique specifically, practitioners avoid using shampoos altogether, seeking alternatives for cleaning their hair. Some alternatives identified in posts include conditioners, provided they are free of water-insoluble silicones and petrolatum, and cleaning products specifically made for the technique available on the market. There is also a more radical branch of no-poo, called 'water only' (WO). As the name suggests, WO practitioners use only water to clean their hair or natural water-based products, such as teas and natural sprays. By understanding the consumption choices of the adherents, it becomes possible to discuss the behaviors following the adoption of the techniques, and configuring it as an anti-consumption act, to address the gap identified by [Makri et al. \(2020\)](#).

Due to the numerous rules and prohibited products for the techniques, practitioners report reading product labels after adopting the method and trying to memorize the names of banned components. However, there is difficulty in identifying these components due to the technical terms used on the packaging. Thus, groups dedicated to these techniques become a crucial source of consultation ([Rheingold, 1993](#)).

There are so many names that we need to read the labels, right? I used to think, "Oh my God, I can't remember..." I won't say I know all the chemically prohibited names, but when I'm buying a product, I first check either in the group or online. I also have that app, Cabelo Poo (Helena, personal interview).

The rejection of traditional hair-washing methods was often linked to the use of specific types of shampoos (containing sulfates), particular brands, or the complete abandonment of using shampoo altogether. It became evident that non-consumption does not necessarily translate to reduced consumption or disengagement from the market. Instead, some adherents who reject specific types of shampoo or all hair care products considered prohibited in the washing techniques might also exhibit behaviors of excessive consumption, as described in the following discussion.

The no-poo and low-poo techniques allow the use of vegetable oils and recommend practices like

oiling (humectation) to nourish the hair. These techniques are often complemented by a hair care schedule, involving regulated routines and homemade treatments. The spread of knowledge about these techniques occurs through network communication,

where practitioners recommend them and conduct online research. Bloggers and digital influencers also play a significant role in promoting these methods. A summary of the netnographic data from the research is presented for further discussion (Table 3).

Table 3. Netnography findings.

Posts	Quantity of comments	Some of the comments	Observations
"I've been on WO for 10 months and I want to occasionally use a co-wash to clean [the hair]. I already understand this part: which ones can I use that are approved for No Poo. Now I'm lost when it comes to styling: it seems like I can't use the same Co-Wash products when I want to style, right? ..." (December, 2018).	6	"The finishing cream is different. Choose light and released creams, vegetable oils and linseed gel, these are perfect. Use as much natural as possible ..."	The post shows the anti-consumption action against products not approved in the no-poo practice, but this action does not necessarily exclude the consumption of products, and even encourage the consumption of alternative products.
"Does anyone use the following Muriel products: <i>PROGRESSIVA CASEIRA</i> , <i>DEITA CABELO</i> and <i>ALISENA</i> ? Are they low poo? Are they good or can damage the hair? What do you think about them? Is it worth [buying]?" (November, 2018).	14	"All hair masks are liberated to no poo and co wash. All of them have more or less the same formula and are 'quite reconstructive, leaving your hair hard.' I suggest using it once a month." "The Alisena made my hair fall a lot. They suggest to use in the 'hair root.' I'm still with hair damage and with a lot of baby hair"	The community is a place to consult about products and ask for suggestions. The interaction among members can change the purchasing decision and consumer behavior with cosmetic products.
"How long does it take for your hair to adapt to low poo? I'm doing it for 7 months already and my hair is getting worse. It's horrible, a lot of frizzes, without definition and tangled more than the normal. I'm thinking about give up" (November, 2018).	81	"I never did low [poo], I always did no poo and I'll explain: even before to know the [washing] techniques, my hair wasn't working with shampoo. What did I do? I had used the kanechanon cream massage with a bit of water, and normal vinegar as shampoo. When I knew the techniques, I searched one without shampoo e start doing the no [poo]. I followed the types from Gabi Vasconcellos and Mari Morena's old videos."	The interactions among members can help them motivate the techniques continuation. Also, social media influencers' content is used as a reference to know more about the practices.
"Homemade shampoo — Hi people! I started making homemade shampoo with dove a year ago and it improved my hair by 500%. I made it with glycerin, coconut oil and castor oil (intercalated). But, as nothing is perfect and this soap has a strong smell, I got really sick and cannot use it anymore. ... Do you know another soap that I can use to make homemade shampoo?" (November, 2018).	201	"How do you make this shampoo?" "Wow, I love the recipe! I'll make it today with aloe vera ..." "There are some organic solid shampoos, from Cativa Natureza, Natural do Barbosa, and if you search on the internet you will find other brands..." "I've been using this homemade shampoo for over 2 years; low poo has changed my hair 100%. It's great that something so simple, cheap and long-lasting takes your hair to another level of hydration."	Within group discussions, members share homemade cosmetic recipes and suggest alternative products.
"Guys, do you also talk about 'low poo' and hairdressers don't know about it? Almost everyone I talk to doesn't know what the technique is, especially those who work in salons. I find this very strange. Is it the same for you?" (November, 2018).	44	"Or they pretend they don't know, who knows? Because prohibited products are usually cheaper." "Yesterday I went to the salon and to finish off [the hair treatment] I took my leave-in conditioner from home so as not to run the risk of getting anything forbidden on my head and to my disappointment the hairdresser mixed my conditioner with a few drops of a somewhat suspicious split-end repair product..." "They call me crazy for not using shampoo, they even feel disgusted. People without education, especially those in the hair [professional] area."	Discussions about everyday situations that cause discomfort are shared within the groups.
"Hi guys! I just put together my low poo kit, I'd like to know what you think. Give me tips on cheap products to try after these, hahahah" (December, 2018; there are nine different products in the posted picture).	20	"I just started and put together a smaller kit. Shampoo (yamasterol), Conditioner (Salon Line), Mask (Bio Extratus) and Leave-in Cream (Seda). What else is needed? ..."	The display of owning multiple products can be seen as a status symbol within the group, particularly among beginners in the no- and low-poo techniques. However, critiques of consumerism may also come from members aiming to raise awareness on the issue.
"Friends, all [the products in the photo] are no poo approved. I'm waiting for more [products] from Skala to arrive" (May, 2019; in the image of the post, there are 11 jars of different creams, 1 L each).	37	"But why? So all of them reach the expiration without you using 10%? Is it because of consumerism or because of the waste generated?" "Today I thought when I saw the prices of Skala here that it is exactly this crazy consumerism by the people [adherents] of no poo and low that makes the prices skyrocket. The price of fame."	

(continue)

Table 3. Netnography findings. (continued)

Posts	Quantity of comments	Some of the comments	Observations
<p>"... pay attention guys [highlighted excerpt from the posted print — (the hairdresser) said the following: if a client arrives, you will not let her leave without her Brazilian blow-dry, I do the following in my salon: I take a defrizzer and fill half of the bottle with progressive and the other half with defrizzer or heat protectant and I do the blow-dry (the procedure) normally. And this makes her (the client) come back to me because not even a salon can do a perfect blow-dry process that lasts like I do]" (May, 2019).</p>	291	<p>"I have a degree in hairdressing and this is actually taught in the workshops, but I've never done it. I think it's unprofessional."</p> <p>"I once heard a hairdresser say this, that he knew many colleagues who did this kind of thing. I'm a bit paranoid and since I stopped straightening my hair, I've never set foot in a salon. It's been almost 6 years since I've been to one. I cut and style my own hair."</p> <p>"This post is the story of my life. It's been years since I went to a salon, I do everything at home. It's sad because after such damage it takes a long time for the hair to recover."</p>	The monitoring of market practices and product changes is carried out among members and discussed within the community.
<p>"[LOLA NEW FORMULAS] Has anyone had problems buying Dream Cream and not liking the 'new formula'? What differences did you notice?" (January 2019).</p>	85	<p>"I didn't like it. I noticed differences in the smell, texture and result."</p> <p>"From which batch does the new formula come? How can we see the difference?"</p> <p>"Well, I didn't know that the 'dream cream' had changed its formula too... but in the last bottle I realized that it no longer has the same effect on my hair. Another thing that changed and I didn't like either was the 'comigo ninguém pode' [product name]. Before, you could just use it and it worked great and it untangled my hair all by itself... now with the new one I always need to apply something afterward for it to look good :(The 'creoula' [product name] is also leaving a lot to be desired in the new formula."</p> <p>"Lola is just making a mistake with these formula changes ONLY DISAPPOINTMENT."</p> <p>"I'm changing from Lola to Soul Power, I've been using Lola since 2011 and I've been following their releases and getting more and more disappointed with each change in composition they made."</p>	
<p>"Can someone tell me if at the beginning of the low pow technique there was excessive itching on the scalp? I started a month or so ago and my scalp is itchy and allergic and I have to wash my hair at least 3 times a week, can someone help me?" (January, 2019).</p>	30	<p>"Check if the products you are using contain parabens. I have an allergy. It even itches inside my ears."</p> <p>"It went away when I cut out parabens and did an olive oil and brown sugar exfoliation."</p> <p>"Be careful, it's best to consult a dermatologist... And I see in the group a lot of absurd recommendations for using products... like castor oil, which can cause allergies because it's a purgative... And industrialized kitchen products... People, don't fall for this, not everything is good for your health... I follow the technique but I don't use only paraben-free products, because I think it dries out my hair a lot and I prefer to diversify and also who guarantees that these factories don't mix products and say on the packaging that they don't have them... I don't trust it..."</p> <p>"I had a lot of itching for about 30 days. I changed products and nothing worked, I almost gave up. But since I'm persistent, I didn't stop and today I think it was a period of adaptation. After that, everything went back to normal and the itching only comes back if I use parabens."</p>	Members of the group are seen as experts to be consulted whenever needed.
<p>"[SUSTAINABILITY] Hi guys, I've been bothered for a while now by the amount of plastic used in hair products. One of the reasons I decided to embrace my natural hair was for the environment and health, because I didn't think it was fair to put so many chemicals on myself and in the water just so I could have straight hair. Then out of nowhere I found myself buying so much plastic that I don't even know where it's going. It's estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish, SOS. I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW MUCH PLASTIC I'VE USED IN MY LIFE. That's why I started looking for more sustainable ways to have beautiful hair and: I FOUND IT. I started using 100% vegetable soap to wash my hair and bar conditioner (WHICH LAST A LONG TIME) to condition it ..." (January, 2019).</p>	98	<p>"When I don't reuse the pots [of products], I put them in the recycling bin. Everything really clean."</p> <p>"Awesome! I think reusing is really good! The problem with recycling is that there is only downcycling, that is, they recycle into a lower quality plastic, so one day the cycle ends. But you are already awesome at reusing and recycling!! Congratulations!!!"</p> <p>"I mean, I'll research what they [a cosmetic brand] do with these packages first and, if everything is correct, I'll share it too :) thanks for the contribution."</p>	Although rare, discussions about sustainability do occur, particularly regarding product packaging.

(continue)

Table 3. Netnography findings. (continued)

Posts	Quantity of comments	Some of the comments	Observations
"I would like a recommendation for a moisturizing leave-in conditioner that is approved for no poo. If possible, up to \$15" (February, 2019).	37	"The passion fruit mask from Skala! It can be used as a moisturizing mask (it's included in the nutrition and reconstruction schedule) and as a leave-in conditioner! I love it for styling, it gives me so many 'day afters.' Here where I live I paid R\$5.99 for the 1000ml one."	Members often inform the group when they find cheap products or special promotion sales.
"Girls from RJ!!! Skala cream for 5.99 at Atacadão!" (March, 2019).	105	"I wanted to know where to find it in Tijuca. I've never seen it around here."	

Why the community members start no- and low-poo techniques?

The interest in adopting these techniques mainly arises from individuals with naturally curly or coily hair who are transitioning from chemical treatments to embrace their natural hair. The transition process often involves a specific haircut known as the 'big chop' (BC) and is associated with challenges and low self-esteem as individuals adjust to their natural hair and its care needs.

Seeing my hair looking different, interacting, and talking with many girls in transition — there were a lot of girls in the group discussing and seeing that having two textures in the hair while growing it out was normal, and the girls who did the 'big chop' (which I never had the courage to do) — I got really tired of constantly using chemicals. Nobody liked it, the smell was awful, and the chemical would stink when it got wet and was constantly applied. People became dependent on flat irons. So I thought, "You know what? I'm going to try. I'll try not to use chemicals anymore." That's when I started my hair transition as well (Elisa, personal interview).

At this point, group participation has been cited as a source of comfort, with members focusing on encouraging natural hair, boosting self-esteem, and maintaining hair care through washing techniques. Members share stories and comment on posts, highlighting similar situations they have faced and how they managed them. Going against the mainstream culture (Cherrier, 2009) through the avoidance of products and seeking to share experiences with the group (Lee et al., 2009; Trindade et al., 2016) demonstrates behaviors associated with anti-consumption.

The second identified interest in joining the group comes from those who have not undergone hair straightening but seek to care for their hair more naturally. In this case, the techniques are viewed as a way to reduce the use of products considered harmful to health, as occurred in Arens and Hamilton's (2016) studies.

I use it to avoid chemicals on myself. Some people use it because they say that the shampoo has chemicals that go down the drain and end up in the ocean. And then, that's another topic. For me, unfortunately, it's more about not having a lot of chemicals on my body, specifically on my scalp (Gabriela, personal interview).

Before commencing the techniques, specific procedures must be followed to ensure proper initiation. The initial step involves washing the hair with a shampoo considered prohibited to remove product buildup that may impede the effectiveness of the techniques and to clean the tools used on the hair. The subsequent period involves adaptation, during which individuals assess their hair's condition, experiment with products, and choose what to use based on the desired benefits.

This initial phase is perceived as a period of self-discovery. Efforts to understand hair post-chemicals for those who have undergone hair transition, or to accept aspects of their hair they previously disliked, lead practitioners to perceive themselves differently. Selecting the right products requires an understanding of the specific needs of their hair, which may result in different behaviors compared to those before adopting the techniques and can also impact their self-esteem while reinforcing their autonomy in consumption choices (Banikema & Bhatli, 2016).

It was a... a liberation for me because I no longer needed to use chemicals, but it was also another point of self-acceptance (Beatriz, personal interview).

Over time, practitioners' comprehension of the techniques evolves beyond the practices themselves. The washing techniques come to be seen not just as daily routines but expand into a broader perspective that no longer relies solely on the products. They begin to be viewed as a lifestyle, which aligns with Banikema and Bhatli (2016) studies.

Anti-consumption behaviors among the community members

The washing techniques are categorized as forms of anti-consumption, as per the concept put forth by Lee et al. (2009). In this context, refraining from using shampoos with certain ingredients or entirely discontinuing the use of shampoos constitutes an individual act by the practitioner, as occurred in Makri's et al. (2020) work. While external influences may play a role in purchasing decisions, the decision to adopt these techniques is personal and is influenced by the individual's requirements and previous experiences with their hair.

Inspired by the work of Leipämaa-Leskinen et al. (2016), it is possible to understand that, upon adopting these techniques, individual anti-consumption practices can manifest at three levels, contingent on the chosen washing technique, and are not entirely mutually exclusive. The first level entails rejecting a specific type of product, such as shampoos with sulfates considered harsh in low-poo, while still utilizing products within the same category. The second level might entail rejecting specific brands of hair products, possibly driven by perceived product quality, price, and more. Finally, the third level involves forsaking an entire product category, primarily applicable to no-poo practitioners, who completely cease using shampoos and explore alternative ways to utilize available products that align with the techniques. This suggests that altering the type of product consumed does not eradicate consumption (Kraemer et al., 2012).

The most prevalent product used by no-poo adherents as a substitute for shampoo is conditioner, employed for hair cleansing, provided it does not contain insoluble silicones and petroleum derivatives. This practice of using conditioner for hair cleaning is termed co-wash and demands a substantial amount of time for the process, as proponents recommend massaging the scalp for ten to twenty minutes per wash to ensure thorough cleaning. They might also utilize alternative products such as baking soda and soaps for hair washing, vinegar for conditioning the hair, as well as coconut oil, olive oil, or castor oil for other hair care purposes, despite their non-cosmetic intent. Seeking alternative ways of consumption can also be described as anti-consumption behavior (Arens & Hamilton, 2016; Lee, 2022).

In the examined context, the practice of anti-consumption emerges as a pivotal driver for the transformation and redefinition of consumption practices. Electing not to consume does not entail eschewing the market for hair products (Lee et al., 2009); instead,

it catalyzes a redefinition of consumption (Moreira & Acevedo, 2015). Seeking to understand the behavior that follows the decision not to consume (Makri et al., 2020), two primary behavioral patterns were identified as subsequent manifestations of the adoption of the washing techniques: consumerism and reduced consumption. These behaviors stem from a paradigm shift in the consumption mindset.

Consumerism was also observed during the initial phase of technique adoption and is perceived as normative by certain practitioners. This conduct is primarily steered by the pursuit of owning multiple endorsed products and/or the quest for items better suited to individual needs. Consumerism may also be fueled by the aspiration for possession or the necessity to stay abreast of market trends, which have ushered in a plethora of products tailored to this demographic. Within the group, ownership of a varied array of products may also be construed as a status symbol, especially when the products are classified as high-value items. In such scenarios, group members begin to venerate this conduct, potentially leading to heightened consumption of luxury items.

... I say that nowadays we are much more consumerist, those who follow no-poo and low-poo, than before. ... Now, a no-poo follower can't see a conditioner, a conditioner that's approved, without buying it. So I can say that I've become much more consumerist now. I buy when there's a new product from the brand I like the most, which is Skala. When there are new releases, I look for them to try them out (Juliana, personal interview).

The threat of a particular product being unavailable in the market or the difficulty in acquiring it also stimulates consumerism among adherents. This is because the feeling of scarcity leads to excessive purchasing and stocking of that product. This behavior was perceived by the practitioners themselves as a motivating factor for increased spending on products due to their price (Moreira & Acevedo, 2015).

The discourse can shift when there is an awareness of excessive consumption among the members. The reduction in this initial consumerism occurs once the practitioner gains a solid understanding of the techniques and/or finds products that meet their needs. Consequently, practitioners demonstrate a prioritization of these products, which can also lead to an emotional attachment to them. This attachment may result in a rejection of other products with the same purpose,

leading to the second observed consumption behavior: reduced consumption (Black & Cherrier, 2010).

Leave-in conditioner, for example, I found one that works for my hair, and I only want to use the same one because I don't have to worry. If I use it, I know it will work (Elisa, personal interview).

... I can't go without it, I just can't. I think I even have an emotional attachment to it. Because I think about buying another, another nutrition mask, but then I get scared that it won't give the same result (Isabela, personal interview).

The process of reducing consumption can occur either at the onset of adopting the techniques or develop over time. At this juncture, the reduction in the consumption is not driven by opposition to something but rather occurs as a result of achieving individual satisfaction. Practitioners who engage in reduced consumption can be categorized as simplifiers, aligning with the general-personal category of Iyer and Muncy (2009), and aspire to lead a simpler lifestyle.

The changes in consumption are not merely restricted to the aforementioned categories. Other discernible transformations are now regarded not as individual occurrences but rather as bearing collective significance, as occurs in the study of Trindade et al. (2016). The collective interactions engender opposition against the prevailing culture (Cherrier, 2009). Group deliberations fortify the practice of rejecting products, contributing to the wider proliferation of opposition discourse.

The findings in this study imply that the oppositional actions can be interpreted as micropolitical demonstrations that challenge the dominant culture and the commercial hair product and service industry. The underlying motives for these actions were revealed in group reports and will be further elucidated in the subsequent paragraphs.

The motivation for abstention is linked to personal care and health. Adherents of no-poo and low-poo became averse to products that had caused health concerns or that were anticipated to do so, transitioning to products endorsed by the techniques. Therefore, the rejection of products containing prohibited components extends beyond hair care to encompass skincare, including items such as soaps, creams, and others. In certain instances, apprehensions about product composition extend beyond beauty care, infiltrating other domains such as food consumption and cleaning products.

The washing techniques also enable practitioners to challenge societal norms (Black & Cherrier, 2010), particularly the prevailing aesthetic standards. This is because the no-poo and low-poo methods are closely linked in the practitioners' minds with the process of transitioning to natural curly and coily hair, which entails discontinuing hair straightening treatments. Aesthetic norms are perceived as oppressive, prompting members to eschew straightening and utilize these techniques as a form of liberation.

Opposition may manifest not only toward products but also toward services directly associated with chemical hair straightening procedures, particularly when actions reinforcing the resisted norms are identified.

... For me, in the beginning, it was the rebirth of that woman who spent years straightening her hair to be accepted at work, to have a husband who thought she was beautiful because she had super straight and long hair, and for that mother who frowned because she would pull her daughter's hair with the flat iron since she was little (Ana, personal interview).

... when I got tired of straightening my hair, of burning my scalp, of hurting it, of having chemical cuts, I unconsciously affirmed myself as having curly or coily hair. So it was a way of identifying myself and embracing who I am, and it was very good for me because it wasn't just about the hair, it wasn't about fashion ... it was about accepting who I am, as I am (Larissa, personal interview).

Adopting these techniques is regarded as an act of rejuvenation and liberation, embodying an active discourse of empowerment, which offers a means to reinforce and express one's self-identity (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011).

Another motivation is associated with environmental concerns, sustainability (Kraemer et al., 2012), or animal welfare. The discourse reflects opposition to the conventional consumption system (Moreira & Acevedo, 2015), as well as apprehensions about waste disposal and the environmental impact of consumed products and their packaging. Adherents begin to perceive their purchases as investments in companies that resonate with their values and reject brands (Black & Cherrier, 2010) that do not share these values as a form of protest.

Consumer preferences shift toward brands with distinctive manufacturing processes (Egea & Frutos, 2016), particularly those employing vegan ingredients and abstaining from animal testing. In this context, the aim

is to exercise control over consumption (Banikema & Bhatli, 2016) and align it with ideological positioning. However, as the preference for certain brands declared as sustainable grows, these brands come under close scrutiny and are susceptible to criticism.

The discourse on environmental motivation was notably robust among adherents of the WO method. This more radical practice of no-poo is perceived by the members as a more sustainable option, primarily driven by the desire to mitigate water contamination and reduce waste, among other factors.

I think it's a more natural form of hair care that doesn't harm the environment as much and brings more benefits to the hair (Helena, personal interview).

As individuals joined the virtual community and engaged in collective interactions, their non-consumption actions were initially construed as acts of opposition to consumption. This avoidance was not perceived as an initial factor in a transformation process but rather as an outcome of it. Actions of opposition to cosmetic products were primarily driven by concerns related to health, opposition to consumer culture and aesthetic standards, environmental consciousness, and resistance to the hair care industry.

The final identified motivation for opposition relates to the cosmetics industry. In this case, adherents seek to avoid the use of industrialized cosmetic products in favor of being as natural as possible. However, due to the need for alternative consumption options, it is not possible to completely avoid using products in general, but only in certain categories, specifically cosmetics. This practice is more prevalent among no-poo adherents who practice WO.

Opposition to the use of hair products arises from interactions within the community. However, it is noteworthy that the actions of those who oppose the use of these products extend beyond the communal sphere. This was discernible from the narratives presented by two participants during the interview phase, as well as from the community posts. Consequently, members actively seek alternative strategies to circumvent what they perceive as problematic situations.

Fernanda, after adopting the techniques and joining the studied community, created a WhatsApp group with other friends to promote and encourage the adoption of these washing techniques on a local scale. The participants began including others, and by December 2019, there were 40 participants in total. Ana reported having created a product exchange group, motivated by a member who exhibited consumerist behavior. The

goal was to allow members to dispose of products they had and no longer used.

Anti-consumption behaviors, as observed within the community, reflect a rejection of conventional consumer practices and arise from multiple motivations such as health concerns, environmental awareness, and a rejection of societal beauty standards. The opposition to cosmetic products often involves a rejection of chemical-laden products and a shift toward more natural, self-empowering alternatives.

The most significant overlap is in the motivation of rejecting certain hair care products due to perceived harmful ingredients or environmental concerns. According to Lee et al. (2011), anti-consumption behaviors can stem from the desire to influence corporate practices or promote sustainability. Participants like Gabriela and Elisa reject chemical-laden products due to personal health concerns or their adverse effects on the environment. This rejection resonates with the 'general-societal' and 'general-personal' categories (Iyer & Muncy, 2009). Similarly, environmental concerns about product waste and water contamination, particularly among WO practitioners, reflect a broader societal concern about excessive consumption and its environmental impact, aligning with societal motivations (Makri et al., 2020).

Community members support each other through their transition to natural hair care, fostering a sense of shared identity and ideological alignment as individuals interact with others who share similar opposition to traditional consumption patterns (Cova & Dall'i, 2008). The communal aspect not only provides emotional support but also reinforces a collective identity, where opposition to mainstream consumption practices becomes a means of asserting personal identity and collective solidarity.

The anti-consumption practices also reflect the concept of 'reduced consumption', as practitioners refine their use of products and adopt simpler, more deliberate consumption patterns. Participants, such as Elisa and Isabela, express emotional attachments to a limited set of products, demonstrating how the adoption of no-poo and low-poo techniques shifts consumption from excessive to selective. This aligns with the concept of 'brand-personal' anti-consumption from Iyer and Muncy (2009), where individuals may reduce their loyalty to brands but still consume with a heightened sense of selectivity and purpose.

The practitioners' rejection of chemical hair treatments and mainstream beauty standards echoes Cherrier's (2009) notion of anti-consumption as a resistance to dominant cultural norms. The adoption

of natural hair is described as a form of liberation and self-empowerment, challenging societal beauty standards and promoting an alternative narrative around self-acceptance. This aligns with the idea of anti-consumption as a form of resistance not only to consumer culture but also to prevailing social norms, as noted by [Black and Cherrier \(2010\)](#).

Anti-consumption practice versus the cosmetic market practices

The community in question initially emerged as a political response to established aesthetic norms, extending beyond the domain of hair. Its genesis can be attributed to the convergence of a personal experience of prejudice encountered by Ana and another instance observed by the same individual.

The day the group was born was a very hard day. A girl who didn't fit the standard posted a picture of herself [in another group] feeling wonderful, and they started tearing her down at two in the morning. ... I sent a message to the group saying that I wasn't going to accept that, and I knew there were many more people who also wouldn't accept it... Because I'm a fat woman and I wasn't going to allow a space where a person couldn't be happy because she was outside the standard, and I invited everyone who wanted to start from the principle as a beginner, as a normal person, to join a group... it didn't even have a name yet (Ana, personal interview).

The initial assembly of members in reaction to the aforementioned incidents serves as a display of opposition not only to specific products, but also to the prevailing conditions within the virtual sphere.

The behavioral manifestations of the community members encompassed dialogues concerning products, critiques of the market at large ([Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006](#)), and the advantages linked to hair-washing practices. The cultivation of a collective identity emanated from a shared purpose among the members, which also resonates with broader societal concerns beyond the realm of aesthetic standards.

... they [the community members] are people who want to understand the technique more, right? We notice that there are people who are just joining now, just getting to know it, so just like me a few years ago, they are there to clear up their doubts, to understand. It revolves around that, in my view. I don't see much of a marketing aspect there, like someone offering products. I see a group of people who have a common goal: some who are just

getting to know the technique and are seeking help, others who have been there for a longer time, who already use the technique and share their knowledge with these other people, but all revolve around the common issue of the techniques (Larissa, personal interview).

Analogous to the fashionista movement ([Scaraboto & Fischer, 2012](#)), the adoption of these practices garnered attention from digital influencers, particularly bloggers with curly hair, who commenced advocating for the incorporation of no-poo and low-poo methodologies among their followers. This advocacy not only facilitated the expansion of the studied group but also attracted adherents more broadly. At this juncture, blogs and YouTube channels emerged as influential platforms shaping the consumption behaviors of members, alongside the community's internal discourse space.

What was remarkable about the group is that we went beyond just talking about hair. There were endless debates about racism, fatphobia, transphobia, and all sorts of human-related issues. We moved beyond hair topics to try to help and support each other. Nowadays, there are many groups, many people, many things, but it doesn't have the same essence as it did in the beginning (Ana, personal interview).

The original emphasis of the community was to be opposed to consumption, but over time it evolved into a focus on anti-consumption, specifically centered around the rejection of products and expression of complaints ([Lee et al., 2011](#)). This shift in discourse within the community was observed through interviews and a review of archived posts. Also, the virtual community experienced rapid and spontaneous growth as a resistance movement on the internet, but this growth was accompanied by a decrease in acts of resistance as the number of members increased.

So for me, at first, it was this rebirth of that woman who spent years straightening her hair to be accepted at a job, to have a husband by her side who thought she was beautiful because she had super straight and long hair, of that mother who turned up her nose because she had been pulling her daughter's hair with an iron since she was little. And nowadays, no. Nowadays, what they really want is to have, to consume. It's a frenetic, unbridled consumption, where you see twelve launches from the same brand in a month, twelve products

that do the same thing, but each one has a catchy name, you know? So it's the business of... of catchiness. Nowadays, like, I still help a lot of people, but I don't see the engagement I used to have anymore. Nowadays, it's more commercial than personal (Ana, personal interview).

Analysis of the main types of posts revealed a shift toward focusing on encouraging and maintaining techniques rather than protesting consumption or standards, which was the group's initial intent. Furthermore, the community experienced a decline in membership over time. In January 2018, the group boasted 305,000 participants; two years later, the number had decreased to 285,000. By July 2024, the group had 267,900 members.

In terms of market offerings, the research subjects demonstrated two types of positions due to the wide variety of these products: the diversity of products offered by the market was considered favorable because it met the needs of different hair types, and the increase in the number of suitable products facilitated the washing techniques; from another perspective, there was criticism of the market's encouragement of consumerism, which began to employ strategies such as frequent product launches, more engaging packaging communications, social media, and influencers to persuade its audience to consume more.

It's much more democratic now, right? Because today we can choose products that fit more with what we want for ourselves. Like, there are products nowadays that are... I don't know how to say ... 100% free of a range of ingredients that people think cause harm to their health (Carolina, personal interview).

You sell a very cool discourse, but then you start to realize that you're actually buying into a discourse that the brand doesn't genuinely believe in; it's just because it sells. So this started to bother me, seeing this hegemony of products. I think they will continue making a ton of money from this ... you end up feeling like a puppet, you know? The sensation I have is that everything now has to have girl power, everything has to be this way, and it's not because they believe in it, it's just because it sells. The brand owner can still be a sexist jerk, a son of a b****. So... that bothers me a bit, this hegemony of having to establish this standard. It's even becoming a standard to be out of the standard (Isabela, personal interview).

Brands started using washing technique terminology in their product communications, sparking community concern about product credibility and trust.

Discrepancies between product labeling and actual components led to reduced consumption among followers and complaints within the community. Despite available approved products, the retail sector faced resentment for not meeting consumer demands, particularly due to a lack of knowledge or prejudice among cosmetic store sellers.

Indeed, we have more products now, because in the past it was quite difficult to find them, but there are still challenges with publicity. Sometimes when you enter a beauty store or shop, the person asks if you need anything or any help and doesn't know what the technique is, so they end up recommending a bunch of products to you (Helena, personal interview).

Despite the criticisms of the market and retail sector, the Brazilian market for cosmetic products stands out for its attentiveness to consumers adhering to no-poo and low-poo techniques, especially when compared to other countries. This observation was made based on accounts of community members residing in other countries who actively participated in the discussion group.

... here [Erfstadt, Germany] there's only one store where we can find it, and it only has one [product] that we can buy. And I also know that even with low-poo, our hair gets used to it, and it's good to occasionally switch things up (Gabriela, personal interview).

In the realm of social behaviors, practitioners reported encountering prejudice associated with their routines (Moreira & Acevedo, 2015), largely stemming from the prevalent notion that abstaining from shampooing is deemed unhygienic. These instances were observed even within the community's own interactions and can be considered a significant factor in why most members opted for low-poo practices.

Irrespective of the practice, interviews unveiled an underlying desire among community members to assert themselves and garner increased recognition from retailers. In this context, vegans were perceived as allies in the pursuit of acknowledgment. Additionally, the interactions and coexistence within the virtual community setting also contribute to fortifying and legitimizing these practices.

Hence, as discussed in extant research, it was noted that the community examined remains closely intertwined with the market (Kraemer et al., 2012). The compiled data demonstrated a shift in the community's consumption patterns, thereby influencing its behavioral tendencies. These changes are delineated not only by the impact on consumption due to the adoption of the

techniques but also by the fundamental essence of the community, which has transitioned from a stance of resistance, as in its nascent phase, to a process of reinterpretation over time.

It is intriguing to observe the transformation of the community's focus from resisting consumption to advocating for and promoting consumption practices over time. Initially, the community emerged as a counter-cultural force opposing the consumption of cosmetic products due to a misalignment with the specific needs arising from the community's adherence to no-poo and low-poo techniques. However, with the introduction of new products and concerted efforts to sustain and disseminate the hair-washing practices, the community transitioned toward acts of anti-consumption. WO adherents are notably the participants that predominantly carry political expressions in their posts, which it is not common among most of the members.

This evolution exemplifies the temporary avoidance of the market through non-consumption, as outlined by Kozinets (2002), culminating in the community's shift from resistance to acceptance and active promotion of consumption to nurture and propagate their established practices. It is noteworthy that the current configuration of the community predominantly influences the consumption of specific products within its membership, particularly those products related to the no-poo and low-poo techniques.

A comprehensive assessment of the community's evolution in terms of consumption practices delineates three discernible phases: initially, the community emerged as a countercultural force, resisting the prevalent consumption ethos surrounding the cosmetics sector and establishing its consumption norms; subsequently, as the market began offering products aligned with the community's practices, there was a marked departure from resistance, and the community largely eschewed certain options while simultaneously incentivizing the market to adapt to their demands; finally, as the market increasingly conformed to the community's demands, the community transformed into a platform that actively promotes consumption, with members mutually reinforcing adherence to established norms and practices while consuming products that align with these criteria.

The examined virtual community demonstrates a tendency to reject brands that contradict their values or display inconsistencies between marketing messages and actions. The shift over time from individual anti-consumption actions toward resistance has not significantly affected the majority of recent interactions, which continue to be motivated by anti-consumption. As a result, the community has transformed into an en-

vironment that promotes consumption, diverging from its initial stance against consumption and resistance.

Hence, the anti-consumption approach provides a lens through which to understand the community's evolution. Anti-consumption behaviors in the no-poo and low-poo community can be categorized into rejection, restriction, and complaint, where participants progressively reject specific ingredients, products, and ultimately entire product categories. This process mirrors the three levels of anticonsumption described by Lee et al. (2011) and Leipämaa-Leskinen et al. (2016).

Furthermore, although initially established in response to a cultural resistance situation, the community's motivation evolved as the market began to offer products for washing techniques, accompanied by a reduction in membership. Presently, the community primarily engages in maintaining these techniques, coupled with observable acts of promoting consumption. The community's evolution delineates three significant modifications in consumption: opposition to consumption; rejection and critique of products (anti-consumption); and preservation and dissemination of practices (promotion of consumption).

FINAL REMARKS

This study aimed to investigate anti-consumption within a virtual community, focusing on a group dedicated to no-poo and low-poo hair-washing techniques. These techniques are considered anti-consumption from the moment of adoption by the community members, with the rejection of traditional hair-washing methods linked to specific shampoos or the complete abandonment of shampoo use. In this way, we recognize people who adhered to no-poo and low-poo as a unique consumer segment.

Opposition to consumption was primarily driven by health concerns, avoidance of consumer culture and beauty standards, environmental consciousness, and resistance to the hair care industry, with some members completely abandoning shampoos and conditioners. However, it is important to consider that non-consumption does not equate to reduced consumption, as some adherents also exhibit behaviors of excessive consumption. The virtual community members have transitioned from anti-consumption behavior to promoting consumption over time. This shift has led to a deeper understanding of extreme consumption behaviors within the community. Previous studies have primarily focused on the motivation and practice of anti-consumption acts. Our research goes further by showing the outcomes of these practices and how they are structured within a virtual community.

The examination of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes that lead to anti-consumption outcomes is essential for marketers aiming to strategically navigate consumer behavior. By understanding these dynamics, companies can proactively implement strategies to preemptively avoid, influence, or reactively mitigate adverse consumer reactions (Lee et al., 2009). Furthermore, the study of product avoidance not only elucidates the motivations underlying consumer choices but also informs managerial decision-making regarding whether to address these motivations directly. Armed with this knowledge, companies can innovate and effectively position themselves as viable alternatives for anti-consumers, thereby enhancing their market relevance.

It is pertinent to highlight the researchers' role as an interpreter and acknowledge the potential influence of personal views, experiences, and beliefs on discursive interpretations, thus rendering these interpretations unique and subjective. However, the interpretations may not accurately represent the broader population or the phenomenon being studied, and this is a limitation of this study. Additionally, the researcher's role as an interpreter may introduce the potential for interpretation errors or misrepresentations of the data.

Lastly, it was noted during data collection that subjects tended to personify or separate their hair from themselves in situations involving image disruption, such as during hair transition processes. Although this aspect was not explored in this research due to its scope, studies of self-related cosmetic habits could be considered in future studies.

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