

# Firms' Induced Consumer Embarrassment: A Systematic Literature Review

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*This article presents a comprehensive and critical review of firms' induced embarrassment in consumers. The author identifies three major firm-based drivers of consumer embarrassment and firm-facilitated consumer coping. Additionally, the article presents a synthesis of the current state of research, including the research methodology used, publication trends, and details about individual studies. The review will help firms and managers to refine and establish policies that help cater to the unfavourable emotion of consumer embarrassment. The review opens up several avenues for future research to help advance the theory.*

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## Introduction

During a product purchase situation in retail space or during consumption of a service, such as fine-dining in restaurants, consumers come in contact with various firms related variables and activities, such as the physical environment of retail stores, the in-store promotions, and advertisements, among others. Several studies demonstrate the effect of firms related factors on consumer encounter experience and future intentions to indulge with the organizations (e.g., Chakraborty, 2017). Many authors argue that the social context during a customer transaction is more important than the financial benefits in determining customer satisfaction and future behaviors (e.g., Matilla & Patterson, 2004). The customer and firms' encounters have the capacity to evoke several affective states in customers (Sharma et al., 2015), including emotions, such as embarrassment (Grace, 2007). The emotion of consumer embarrassment is the phenomenon of interest for this article.

Consumer embarrassment is a common yet unpleasant state experienced by individuals in a wide array of situations. Consumers may feel embarrassed and awkward while buying products, such as pornographic magazines, weight-loss products, bladder control medicines, and more. Consumers may also experience this aversive emotion when a salesperson accidentally violates privacy, falsely accuses the customer of taking products out of the store without billing, or a promotion activity by a firm that suddenly puts the customers in the public limelight.

Consumer embarrassment has many negative implications for firms, including a reduction in customer pleasure, satisfaction, and purchase intentions (Otterbring & Lu, 2018). Ironically, however, in various instances, firms become the drivers of consumer embarrassment through multiple means. Moreover, when firms' activities trigger consumer embarrassment, consequences are extreme, including the future boycott of firms, heightened negative word of mouth, and complaining intentions (e.g., Grace, 2009; Wan, 2013). Despite the adverse implications, evidence shows that organizations can also help customers effectively deal with embarrassment in various ways. For instance, the availability of shopping baskets in a retail store promotes the purchase of condoms (Esmark et al., 2017).

Owing to the importance and wide occurrence of the phenomenon of embarrassment, there is a need to systematically review the extant work on firm-related drivers of consumer embarrass-

ment and the firm-related factors that aid in consumers dealing with embarrassment. Although, Krishna et al. (2019) present a review on consumer embarrassment focusing on public and private nature of embarrassment, no review currently focuses on consumer embarrassment in association with firm-related factors. The study has the following objectives:

- To provide an analysis of the firm caused drivers of consumer embarrassment within various purchase and consumption contexts.
- To discuss firm-related strategies that facilitate customers' coping with embarrassment.
- To review the current state of research with a discussion on the research methodology used, publication trend, and details about individual studies.

### Theoretical Background

*Embarrassment:* Embarrassment is an unpleasant state of chagrin and mortification involving a sense of exposure and awkward self-consciousness (Edelmann, 1987; Modigliani, 1971). Embarrassment is a social emotion that is experienced in situations where people fail to display a desirable public image due to unwanted social or moral predicaments, such as stealing (Goffman, 1963; Miller, 1996). The physical display of embarrassment is easily observable (Miller, 2007) and comprises various physiological responses such as gaze aversion, smiling, face-touching, blushing,

and shaking, among others (Grace, 2007). Embarrassment largely happens in public when others are present and rarely in private contexts (Krishna et al., 2019).

### **Article Selection Methodology**

In this systematic literature review (SLR), we followed a methodical approach to select studies for analysis. SLR undertakes study selection through a robust and multi-stage approach (Gupta & Bhatnagar, 2018). Below is a discussion on the steps undertaken for the selection of studies:

*Step 1:* In the first step, the author collected all relevant articles from three major online databases that matched the searched string. The searched keywords comprise *consumption embarrassment, purchase embarrassment, buyer embarrassment, customer embarrassment, and consumer embarrassment*. The considered online databases are EBSCOhost, Proquest, and Web of Science. The author limits the search to three sections of published peer-reviewed articles: title, abstract, and keywords. In the first step, the search yielded 407 articles after removing the duplicates.

*Step 2:* As a next step, the articles are matched to the inclusion criteria, removing the papers irrelevant to the study objective. The inclusion criteria consist of:

1. The article should be rooted in the purchase or consumption context,
2. The full text of the article should be available in English.

3. The author considered research papers only comprising primary studies, extended abstracts, and reviews.
4. The focus should be based on the interaction of firms (firm-related variables) and customers/consumers.

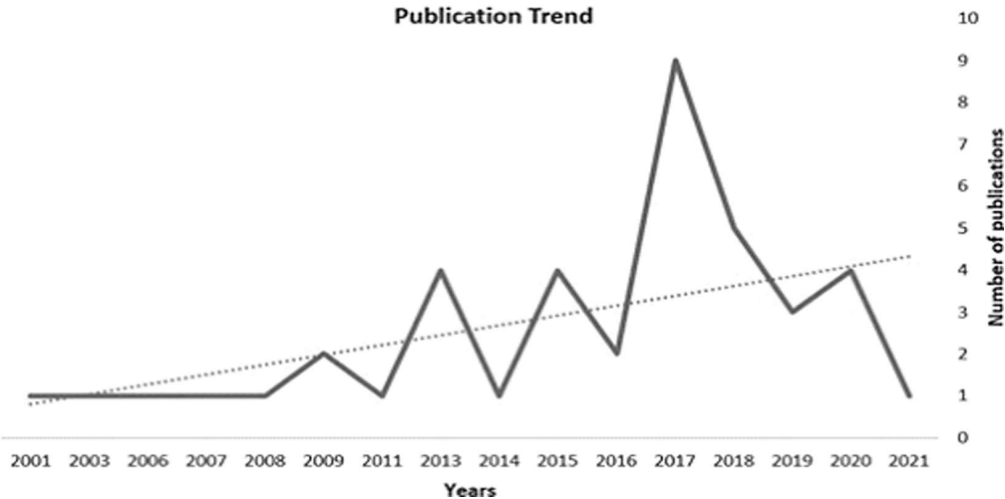
To meet the above-stated criteria, the author did an abstract-based search of the articles and retained the relevant studies.

*Step 3:* Certain articles were excluded from the final list of selected studies due to their unfitness in the consumption or purchase situations. Many studies are from the medical/medicine domain, evoking embarrassment from medical tests and examinations. The articles were excluded from the final analysis. A total of 41 articles are selected for the analysis after a full-text search. The next section presents a discussion of various characteristics of the selected studies.

### **Characteristics of the Selected Studies**

*Publication Trend:* The selected articles reflect research for a span of 20 years, from 2001 to 2021. The increasing interest in marketing discipline toward the adverse emotion is reflected in the growing number of publications year-on-year. The publishing trend is illustrated in fig. 1. The scholarly interest in the phenomenon of consumer embarrassment has seen a steady rise since the 2000s. The number of articles published between 2001 and 2011 is seven; however, in the last decade, the investigations have risen to 34.

**Fig. 1 Publication Trend**



Source: The Author  
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*Source of Publication:* The selected list of studies is published in highly reputable journals. Table 1 presents the journals and the article publication frequency. Considering the role of various firm-based triggers (e.g., salesperson and retail environment) in inducing consumer embarrassment, many studies are pub-

lished in retailing and service-oriented journals, such as *the Journal of Retailing*. Further, many articles are published in journals oriented toward understanding consumer behavior and psychology, including *the Journal of Consumer Research*.

**Table 1 Publication Sources**

Journal Name	Frequency
Journal of Retailing	4
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	4
Journal of Business Research	4
Journal of Consumer Research	3
Psychology & Marketing	3
Journal of Consumer Behaviour	2
Journal of Consumer Marketing	1
European Journal of Marketing	2
International Journal of Hospitality Management	2
International Journal of Research in Marketing	1
Advances in Consumer Research (ACR)	3
International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	2
Journal of Service Marketing	3
Others	5

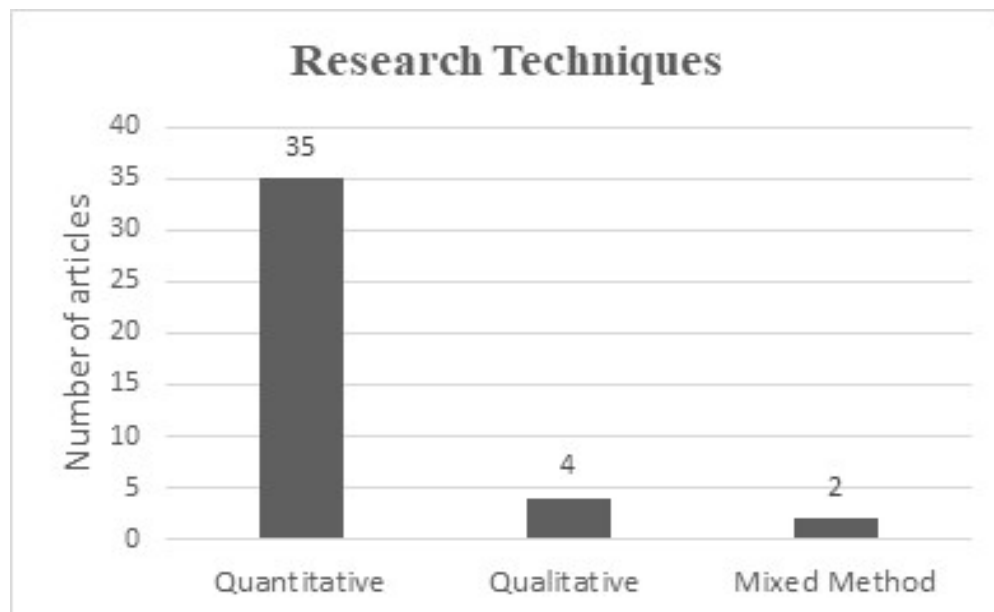
Source: The Author

*Research Techniques:* A vast majority of the studies are quantitative in nature, with a few studies adopting the qualitative and mixed-methods approach. Fig. 2 presents the research orientation of the articles. Among the quantitative studies, most have used experimental techniques to investigate consumer embarrassment. In total, 27 studies use experimental or quasi-experimental methods. The survey technique is utilized by eight studies, whereas one study developed a scale on embarrassment triggered

due to the inability to use advanced products in retail stores, such as self-help technology. As illustrated in fig. 2, four studies investigate the phenomenon through qualitative research techniques, using the critical incident technique, content analysis of in-depth interviews, and focus groups.

*Study Details:* An overview of the selected studies is given in Table 2. The table presents the study objective and major findings.

Fig. 2 Research Techniques



Source: The Author

*Findings:* The conceptual model below presents the major findings, including firm-based drivers that leads to consumer embarrassment and firm-facilitated strategies which addresses consumers' coping with embarrassment.

**Firm-based Drivers of Consumer Embarrassment**

The firm-based drivers are classified into three categories. Firm-activities induced, employee-induced, and servicescape-induced triggers.

Table 2 Study Details

Authors	Study Objective	Major Findings
Addis, Miniero & Soscia (2018)	Investigates the effect of firms' promotional activities on the brand-related attitude.	Consumers' public display of private emotion leads to embarrassment, reduction in favorable attitudes towards the brand and the purchase intentions.
Arndt & Ekebas Turedi (2017)	Examines the effect of gender on coping with embarrassment.	Females prefer to buy condoms from a same-gender salesperson. Males adopt multiple strategies, including buying additional products
Andersson, Wästlund & Kristensson (2016)	Investigates the effect of frontline employee gaze on consumers' affective states while buying embarrassing products.	Direct gaze (vs. averted gaze) reduces customer calmness and excitement while buying condoms.
Blair & Roesse (2013)	Examines the underlying reason to purchase additional products along with the embarrassing product.	Participants buy additional products with embarrassing products to manage the identity information displayed by the entire basket.
Brumbaugh & Rosa (2009)	Investigates the effect of customers' employee-related meta-perceptions and perceived discrimination on coupon usage.	Employees' discrimination & negative meta-perceptions cause embarrassment and lowered intentions to use coupons.
Barney, Jones & Farmer (2020)	Examines the drivers of customers' approach intentions towards employees with and without expertise-signalling apparel.	Customers have higher approach intentions towards employees with formal attire. Embarrassment moderates the relationship such that the relationship is stronger in low embarrassment conditions.
Banik, Gao & Rabbane (2019)	Examines the effect of the demolition of a hierarchical loyalty program on switching intentions.	Status demolition causes social discomfort and frustration, thereby enhancing the switching intentions.
Butori & Bruyn (2013)	Examines the effect of various characteristics of discretionary preferential treatment (DPT) on customers' evaluation of DPT.	Customers feel embarrassed for a visible DPT that imposes on other non-preferred customers.
Dahl et al. (2001)	Investigates the effect of real and imagined social presence on condom purchase behaviors.	Both real and imagined social presence enhances consumer embarrassment. High product purchase familiarity reduces embarrassment.
Esmark et al. (2017)	Investigates the effect of customers' perceptions of being watched by the employee on behavioral intentions.	Perceptions of being watched lead to a decrease in control over privacy, leading to temporary and permanent abandonment of embarrassing products.

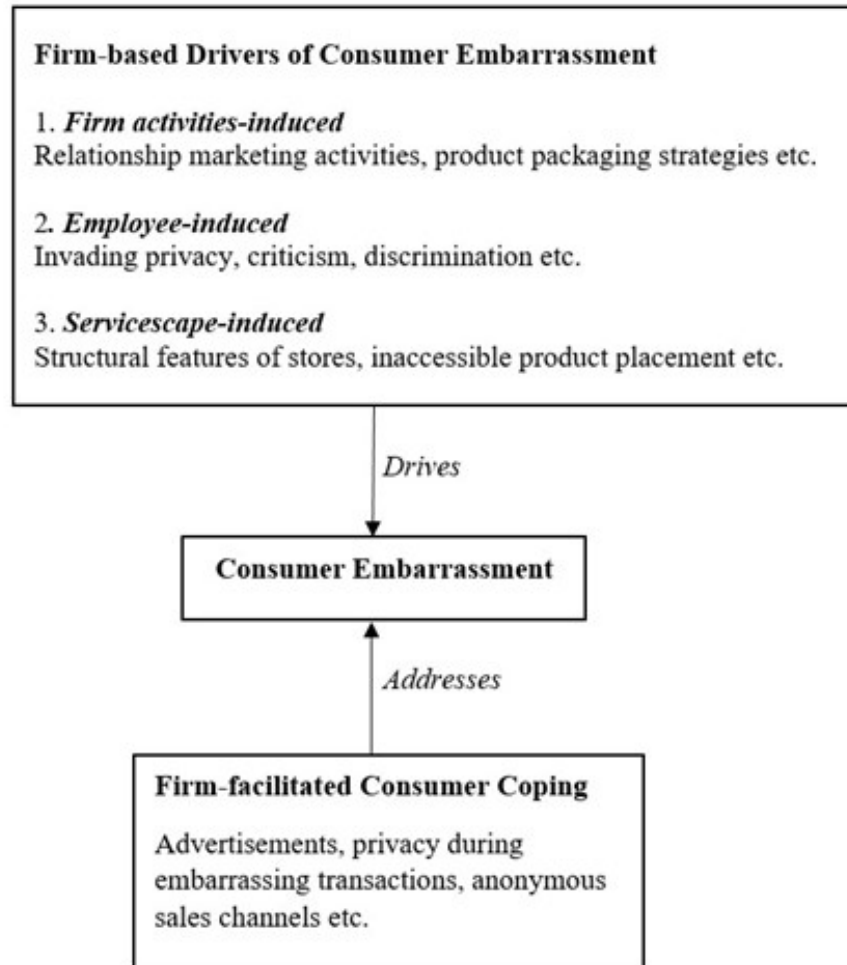
Grace (2009)	Investigates the effect of servicescape stimuli on embarrassment and behavioral intentions.	Criticism and privacy violation by employees trigger embarrassment and heightened negative word-of-mouth (NWOM_ intentions).
Grace (2007)	Investigates the effect of servicescape stimuli on embarrassment and behavioural intentions	Criticism and privacy violations by employees trigger embarrassment in participants leading to NWOM intentions.
Goldfarb et al. (2015)	Investigate the effect of distinct retail formats on purchase decisions.	Assisted (vs. self) checkouts cause embarrassment and alteration in purchase decision consumers.
Hess et al. (2020)	Investigates the effect of in-store advertisements on perceived embarrassment.	Negative ad appeals that display deficient self-aspects trigger embarrassment in the presence of others.
Hamerman, Rudell & Martins (2018)	Examines the drivers and inhibitors of taking leftover food in a restaurant.	Embarrassment inhibits the willingness to take leftover food in case of high impression management concerns. However, results reverse when servers offer to pack food.
Isabella, Barros & Mazzon (2015)	Investigates embarrassment-related coping strategies.	Coping strategies comprise avoidance and quick purchase while buying embarrassing products.
Iacobucci, Calder, Malthouse & Duhachek (2003)	Investigates the effect of advertisements on attitude and purchase intentions toward hearing aids.	Ads help to alter attitudes towards hearing aids, with increased intentions to visit a doctor. Psychological, physical, and social factors influence the relationship.
Jones et al. (2018)	Investigates the effect of product packaging and product placement on behavioral intentions towards embarrassing products.	Warm (vs. cool) colored and tube (vs. box) shaped packaging and aisle (vs. endcap) locations are perceived as less anonymous, causing embarrassment and reduced purchase intentions.
Kilian, Steinmann & Hammes (2018)	Explores vicarious embarrassment in service and retail contexts.	Violation of service and social norms leads to embarrassment with adverse consequences for firms. Relationship closeness, service context, inconvenience of service setting, and individual characteristics moderate the relationship.
Kim et al. (2017)	Investigates the effect of source of help (employees vs. other customers) on satisfaction.	Other customers (vs. employees) as the source of help cause embarrassment, concern for face, and a reduction in satisfaction towards firms.
Lee, Aggarwal, Rafieian &	Examines the effect of service quality on the tipping amount.	Customers anticipate embarrassment in giving lower tips even for poor service quality. The effect is stronger for

Korschun (2020)	Determines the effect of sophisticated payment methods on customer satisfaction.	low-power customers.
Liu, & Mattila (2019)	Examines the effect of store layouts- pop-ups vs. luxury on store evaluations.	Failure to pay from apple pay leads to embarrassment and a reduction in encounter satisfaction.
Lunardo & Mouangue (2019)	Examines the effect of store channels on purchase intentions towards embarrassing products.	Due to their luxurious image, traditional luxury stores trigger embarrassment and reduce positive evaluations towards stores.
Londono, Davies & Elms (2017)	Examine the effect of accidental interpersonal touch on participants' arousal and embarrassment in a retail context.	Customers prefer to buy embarrassing products from internet channels due to anticipated negative emotions. Interpersonal touch trigger embarrassment. High trait anxiety and large social size at the time of touch enhance embarrassment.
Martin & Nuttall (2017)	Investigates coping strategies during an embarrassing purchase.	Customers indulge in behavioral and cognitive coping strategies to tackle embarrassment. Age and gender affect the coping strategies used.
Moore, Dahl, Gorn, Weinberg (2006)	Investigate the effect of buying additional products during an embarrassing transaction on shopping behavior.	Millennials cope by buying additional products during an embarrassing transaction, increasing their shopping basket size and value. Personal susceptibility to embarrassment enhances the effect.
Nichols et al. (2015)	Examines the effect of witnessing aggression and mistreatment of employees and other customers on vicarious embarrassment and intentions towards the firms.	Witnessing employee-employee (vs. customer-customer) aggression leads to vicarious embarrassment. Further, negatively influences intentions toward the service organization.
Okan & Elmadag (2020)	Examines the effect of employee presence and greetings on affective and behavioral measures during embarrassing transactions.	Employee presence and greeting (vs. absence) reduce pleasure, satisfaction, and loyalty intentions.
Otterbring, Lu (2018)	Investigates the drivers of purchase intentions towards second-hand clothing.	Participants have a lower willingness to buy second-hand clothes due to fear of social embarrassment.
Silva, Santos, Duarte, & Vlaeïæ, (2021)	Examine the effect of contextual and personality variables on purchase intentions towards embarrassing products.	Participants anticipate embarrassment in social vs. private contexts. The effect is stronger for anxiously attached individuals.
Sarkar & Sarkar (2017)		

Tomazelli, Broilo, Espartel & Basso (2017)	Explores the impact of other customers' help and interactions on satisfaction.	Store factors such as product placement and floor quality induce the need for help in older customers. Other customers help cause embarrassment in participants.
Tsao & Chan (2011)	Develops product use embarrassment scale.	
Wang, Oppewal & Thomas (2017)	Examines the effect of social presence on purchase intentions towards products featuring lucky charms.	Anticipated embarrassment decreases purchase intentions toward products with lucky charms.
Wan (2013)	Examines the complaining intentions of collectivist vs. individualistic customers for embarrassing (vs. non-embarrassing) service failure.	Collectivist (vs. individualist) customers are more prone to complain and have higher intentions to indulge in NWOM for embarrassing service failure.
Wu & Mattila (2013)	Investigates the effect of service mishaps on intentions to indulge in NWOM.	Embarrassing mishaps trigger NWOM in customers in front of a company.
Wan, Bhatnagar, Qiu (2008)	Investigates the effect of personalized services on behavioral intentions.	Customers anticipate embarrassment when servers remind them of unhealthy past choices in front of a special company, negatively affecting service evaluations and future patronage intentions.
Wan & Wyer Jr (2015)	Examines the effect of service providers' physical attractiveness on behavioral intentions.	Lower willingness to buy embarrassing products from attractive service providers due to self-presentational and social comparison concerns.
Xia & Kukar-Kinney (2014)	Examines the effect of preferential treatment on affective states and behavioral intentions.	Customers receiving preferential treatment in front of non-preferred others experience embarrassment.
Young, Marks, Zaikman & Zeiber (2017)	Examine the effect of purchase scenarios on affective states and purchase intentions.	Customers have a higher willingness to buy condoms from anonymous self-checkout (vs. non-anonymous regular) counters and least willingness to purchase by asking employees from locked displays at counters.
Ziegler, Pelozo & Allen (2016)	Examine the vicarious embarrassment of observers in distinct situations in retail and service contexts.	Observers experience vicarious embarrassment on witnessing the embarrassing actions of others due to social identity congruence with the transgressor. Observers have reduced satisfaction towards firms upon experiencing embarrassment.

Source: The Author

Fig. 3 Conceptual Model



*Firm Activities-induced*: Several firm-related activities, including sales and promotion, relationship marketing activities, and product-related features such as packaging, induce consumer embarrassment.

Personalized advertisement is a tool companies use to offer customized offerings to customers; however, they may cause embarrassment if they reveal sensitive information about customers (Wan

et al., 2008). For instance, Hess et al. (2020) show that product recommendations through personalized advertisements that display deficient aspects of oneself, such as stained teeth, in a retail store may reduce consumer satisfaction and trigger embarrassment. Similarly, organizations use preferential treatment to favor loyal customers. However, individuals may experience embarrassment without any apparent threat to their social identity, for instance, upon receiving

preferential treatment, especially in front of non-preferred customers (Butori & Bruyn, 2013; Xia & Kukar-Kinney, 2014). Apart from status-enhancing programs, firms also demolish customers' status by curtailing the benefits received due to lower past purchases. Naturally, consumers experience embarrassment and have lowered loyalty intentions post downgrading their status (Banik et al., 2019).

Events organized by companies promoting their products can discomfort customers. Addis et al. (2018) show that event that requires participants to display a private emotion, such as romantic love, publicly embarrassed them. Additionally, consumer embarrassment is driven by the color and form of product packaging. Jones et al. (2018) show that customers experience abashment when they purchase products, such as hemorrhoid creams, packed in warm colors (e.g., red) than cool-color packages (e.g., blue), as the warm colors packages are perceived as less anonymous.

### **Employee-induced Consumer Embarrassment**

Frontline employees are in direct contact with customers and may assist customers during transactions. However, certain transactions are personal and aversive, such as purchasing incontinence drugs, and even the presence of employees can elicit consumer embarrassment (Otterbring & Lu, 2018). Consumers even abandon transactions for products such as Viagra and second-hand clothes due to employees' presence

(Esmark et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2021). Moreover, a direct gaze of employees (a direct look in the eyes of customers) versus an averted gaze during condom purchase reduces customer satisfaction and causes embarrassment (Andersson et al., 2016). Likewise, purchasing products with lucky charm exhibits superstitious beliefs that individuals may hold and trigger embarrassment in the presence of an employee (Wang et al., 2017). Customers perceive such employee actions as violating privacy and consequently become abashed (Grace, 2009).

Consumer experience intense embarrassment when employees intentionally embarrass them. Grace (2007, 2009) has found that employees' actions, such as criticism, can cause consumer embarrassment with negative consequences for firms, including negative word of mouth. Brumbaugh and Rosa (2009) demonstrate that employees intentionally discriminate against customers and trigger embarrassment for using coupons. Similarly, Okan and Elmadag (2020) show that aggressive behavior by employees triggers embarrassment in observers and reduces satisfaction with the firms. When employees are unavailable to help customers, they experience embarrassment since their inability to complete transactions remains publicly known (Tomazelli et al., 2017). Similarly, poor service quality, including unfulfillment of customers' prior requests (e.g., non-availability of the prior-booked table, non-clarity of service scripts), enhances customer embarrassment and complaints (Lee et al., 2020; Wan, 2013; Wu & Mattila, 2013).

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### **Servicescape-induced**

By servicescape we mean the physical space in which consumption of products or services occurs. Extant literature has analyzed the influence of the physical environment on consumer embarrassment. Within a product purchase context, Tomazelli et al. (2017) have found that older customers experience embarrassment due to structural features of stores, for instance, the unavailability of ramps for wheelchairs. Moreover, placing products in retail stores can further unease older shoppers as they have difficulty accessing products placed higher on the shelves.

Similarly, the placement of embarrassing products, such as condoms, may contribute to consumer embarrassment. Jones et al. (2018) demonstrate that customers do not prefer to pick condoms from end-cap locations as they are perceived as less anonymous than aisle locations. Similarly, customers experience intense embarrassment when condoms are placed in locked displays, and customers are required to ask about them (Young et al., 2017). Goldfarb et al. (2015) state that customers prefer self-checkouts, through self-help technologies, for embarrassing products to assisted checkouts. However, if customers cannot handle the sophisticated in-store technology, they may get embarrassed publicly (Tsao & Chan, 2011; Liu & Mattila, 2019).

Further, the unavailability of a shopping basket in a retail store hinders customers' privacy and may lead to purchase

abandonment of products such as condoms (Esmark et al. 2017). Kilian et al. (2018) found that an inconvenient service setting, such as a crowded store, further intensifies consumer embarrassment and reduces satisfaction. Moreover, in a crowded or cramped store, there is a high probability of violating customers' personal space, and an accidental interpersonal touch may cause consumer embarrassment (Martin & Nuttall, 2017). However, evidence indicates that even a luxury store environment can facilitate consumer embarrassment. The luxurious image can cause discomfort and embarrassment among customers by raising concerns regarding their socio-economic status (Lunardo & Mouangue, 2019).

### **Firm-facilitated Consumer Coping**

We present here the findings on firms' strategies to handle consumer embarrassment and facilitate customer coping. Iacobucci et al. (2003) show that advertisements help tackle the negative attitude towards hearing aids and enhance the willingness of participants to visit doctors for hearing disabilities. Moreover, not assisting customers during embarrassing transactions (e.g., condoms) reduces the perceived embarrassment and enhances transaction satisfaction (e.g., Moore et al., 2006). Accordingly, Londono et al. (2017) demonstrate that customers have higher purchase intentions towards hair-regain products from the online (vs. physical) retail channels. Even for relatively inconspicuous channels, such as condom-vending machines (CVMs), Dahl et al. (2001) find that participants feel embarrassed when CVMs are placed in

a public area, even without the presence of people. Hence they suggest placing CVMs in areas with low public activity.

**Customers are more willing to buy embarrassing products from same-gender salespeople.**

Customers do not prefer to try the embarrassing product (e.g., a weight-reducing thermal waist belt) in front of an attractive opposite-gender salesperson. Accordingly, Arndt and Ekebas Turedi (2017) demonstrate that customers are more willing to buy embarrassing products from same-gender salespeople. Customers cope with embarrassment by buying additional products along with embarrassing products. Consequently, Blair and Roese (2013) suggest making appropriate product bundles and placement strategies to facilitate the purchase of counterbalancing additional products (e.g., placement of face creams with anti-diarrheal medicine than placing the anti-diarrheal medicine with undergarments). In a fine-dining setup, customers may anticipate embarrassment while asking to pack the leftovers. Instead, Hamerman et al. (2018) find that customer embarrassment is eased when waiters approach customers to pack the leftover food.

### **Conclusion**

This study systematically reviews the extant literature on firms-evoked consumer embarrassment and firms-enabled consumer coping. Given the adversity of the ubiquitous emotion of embarrassment,

there is a significant increase in the investigations across various consumption and purchase contexts. The reviewed studies represent broad situations, including product purchases in retail environments, luxury stores, and customer service in restaurants, among others.

The study reveals that consumers come in contact with various firm-related touchpoints, including salesperson, sales and promotion, and relationship management activities of the firms and the retail environment, which due to various underlying consumer concerns, evoke embarrassment in consumers. As discussed, embarrassment entails severe consequences for firms. Situations in which the intentional actions of employees trigger embarrassment are particularly damaging for the firms. We discuss a host of triggers, including the display of aggressive behavior, criticism, discrimination against customers, and poor service quality, such as incompleteness of prior consumer requests, that motivate customers to indulge in severe action, such as boycotting the firms. However, many situations of consumer embarrassment are addressable to a large extent. Firms can effectively manage embarrassment and facilitate customer coping. The paper discusses various actions that firms may undertake to reduce consumer embarrassment in the subsequent section on managerial implications.

### **Implications for Managers & Firms**

Since consumer embarrassment is undesirable for firms, managers can help arrest the emotion and the resulting con-

sequences. Firms can provide in-store privacy to customers for situations where consumers purchase products recognized as ‘embarrassing,’ such as sexual wellness items. Employees can be present at some distance from the customers with only customers’ need based assistance. Firms can place embarrassing products in low footfall areas to enhance anonymity during product selection. Additionally, firms may home-deliver products that are sensitive in nature.

Due to high impression management concerns, customers are more prone to embarrassment in front of a company, including colleagues and dates. Waiters and salespersons may take a cue from such occasions and try to avoid any embarrassment-inducing triggers. Although the relationship management activities of the firms, including personalized treatments or giving customers public attention are motivated by a desire to strengthen customer loyalty, the author observes that a host of such activities are detrimental to customers’ social image, and can elicit discomfort and embarrassment in individuals.

**Embarrassment is an addressable phenomenon if the managers keep customers’ motivation to protect their public esteem in light.**

The servicescape has the capacity to unease the customers and impact service quality perceptions. Retail layout, available facilities, such as ramps, and installed technology, such as self-checkout counters, may sometimes highlight the in-

competence of customers to others present. The availability of employees to assist customers, especially those with special needs, will reduce or eliminate their public struggle. Quick and discrete resolutions will help not to attract unwanted attention. In a nutshell, embarrassment is an addressable phenomenon if the managers keep customers’ motivation to protect their public esteem in light.

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