

EMBARRASSMENT BEHIND THE CURTAIN: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED EMBARRASSMENT AND SOCIAL NORMS IN SHAPING SEX TOY PURCHASE INTENTIONS

JAMILLE ANDRADE

UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DO CEARÁ (UECE)

NATASHA SOUZA

UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DO CEARÁ (UECE)

MARCIO DE OLIVEIRA MOTA

UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DO CEARÁ (UECE)

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Introdução

Sex toys contribute to sexual well-being by enhancing autonomy, pleasure, and health. Despite market growth, their consumption is hindered by symbolic barriers and social judgment. Embarrassment, a self-conscious emotion triggered by perceived social evaluation, may reduce purchase intention, particularly in contexts where conservative norms prevail (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Krishna, 2019).

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

This study investigates how perceived embarrassment mediates the relationship between social norms and the intention to purchase sex toys. The objective is to understand how normative influence translates into behavior through emotional mechanisms, especially in stigmatized consumption contexts involving public exposure and reputational concerns.

Fundamentação Teórica

Based on Social Evaluation Theory (Leary & Kowalski, 1990), the study conceptualizes embarrassment as a self-conscious emotion arising from social judgment, which may mediate the influence of injunctive and descriptive norms on behavior. Prior experience with sex toys is proposed as a moderator that can attenuate emotional discomfort and normative sensitivity (Krishna, 2019).

Metodologia

A quantitative, descriptive study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey with 211 participants. Scales for social norms, embarrassment, and purchase intention were adapted from previous research. Data were analyzed using multigroup Structural Equation Modeling to examine the mediating role of embarrassment and the moderating effect of purchase experience.

Análise dos Resultados

Embarrassment negatively influenced purchase intention. Injunctive norms positively predicted intention, while descriptive norms had weaker effects. Among inexperienced consumers, embarrassment partially mediated the relationship between norms and intention. For experienced consumers, this mediation was not significant, suggesting desensitization through prior behavior.

Conclusão

Social norms positively influence purchase intention, but perceived embarrassment partially mediates this effect among first-time consumers. Prior experience reduces embarrassment's impact, enabling more consistent behavioral responses. These findings reinforce the emotional dimension of normative influence in stigmatized consumption contexts.

Contribuição / Impacto

The study contributes to understanding emotional mediation in consumer behavior, particularly regarding stigmatized products. It suggests strategies to reduce embarrassment, such as promoting positive injunctive norms and ensuring consumer privacy. These insights may guide communication efforts and retail environments to encourage stigma-free consumption.

Referências Bibliográficas

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