

The role of emotions on consumer responses to preferential treatment.

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# The role of emotions on consumer responses to preferential treatment.

## **Abstract**

This research examines the role of perceived harm to others as an antecedent of consumers response to preferential treatment. In three experiments, we show that harm associated with preferential treatment may elicit either shame, embarrassment, or guilt depending on context. In study 1, we show that feelings of shame, not embarrassment or guilt, mediates the effect of harm on behavioural intentions. Conversely, study 2 provides support that embarrassment, not shame or guilt, mediates the effect of harm on consumer judgments in an unearned preferential treatment context. In study 3, we examine the role of attribution of harm and moral identity centrality as moderators of moral emotion's mediation effect on consumer judgments. In particular, we demonstrate that advantaged consumers feel guilt, rather than shame or embarrassment, more intensely when harm to others is attributed to the self than when it is attributed to others, particularly for consumer high in moral identity centrality.

**Keywords:** *Preferential treatment; Harm to others; Moral emotions*

**Track:** Services Marketing