The Influence of Online Revenge

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The Influence of Online Revenge acts on consumers psychological and emotional states: Does Revenge Taste Sweet?

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Abstract

With a strong emphasis in the literature on the behavioural outcomes of consumer revenge, this paper aimed to examine the influence of online consumer revenge acts on consumers’ emotional and psychological states. Based on a survey of (N=354) Jordanian customers who had committed acts of online revenge, this study proposed and tested a cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and emotional-psychological model of the online consumer revenge process based on the theory of cognitive appraisal. Measurement validation showed that the model has a good fit. Generally, the findings show a positive influence for helplessness and failure severity on consumers’ emotional reactions as well as a mediating influence for the internet experience on the path between the desire for revenge and online revenge. Moreover, the analysis of the data showed that online consumer revenge influenced three main sensations in the consumer: arousal, autonomy, and an enhanced self-esteem. Implications for marketing managers are also discussed.

Keywords: Revenge, Social media, Consumer, Misbehavior
1-Introduction:

Online consumer revenge refers to consumer actions that intend to damage and cause harm to firms after a service failure using online platforms in both legal and illegal ways (Obeidat et al. 2017). Such vengeance choices are more and more used by consumers as an “e-weapon” against businesses deemed to be immoral or misbehaving. Nowadays, the Internet and its social media platforms have provided angry consumers with a riskless and high-reach medium to get back at misbehaving firms, thus widening the scope of their actions from only a small number of people to millions of people across the world with minimum effort and without any costs (Trip and Gregoire, 2011; Obeidat, 2014). A recent survey showed that almost 60% of Americans reveal negative details about their bad service encounters on social media (Gregoire et al. 2018). However, despite the apparent influence of the Internet on consumers’ revenge behaviors, limited attention has been paid by the literature to consumer revenge activities in the online context and how they affect consumers’ psychological and emotional responses (Obeidat et al. 2018).

Research relating to the outcomes of online revenge is of practical importance because of its potential consequences on service providers performance, image, and reputation (Funches, Markley, and Davis, 2009) with direct impacts on companies’ share price and capital value (e.g., Tripp and Gregoire, 2011; Ward and Ostrom 2006). However, despite a growing interest in the area of consumer revenge, much of this research interest was centred around examining the forms and antecedents of this behaviour rather than its emotional and psychological outcomes on the consumer avenger himself (Obeidat et al. 2018). More importantly, aside from scarce attempts to examine the behavioral acts that occur after consumer revenge such as the need for avoidance and switching (Joriman et al. 2013), limited attention has been given to the emotional component that occurs after committing online revenge (Obeidat et al. 2017; Obeidat et al. 2018). Thus, the purpose of this article is to examine how consumer online revenge behaviour affects three main sensations (i.e. arousal, autonomy, and self-esteem) and how the internet experience influence consumers desire for revenge and actual online revenge act.

Despite emotions playing an important role in consumer evaluations during a service failure and recovery (Bagozzi et al. 1999). Usually, there has been comparatively little attention in their role in relation to post consumer revenge emotions in the online context. This is maybe unexpected for two reasons. First, there is a growing recognition that the key two behavioral outcomes of consumer revenge (i.e. need for avoidance coping and confrontational coping) often have emotional as well as a cognitive antecedents (Joriman et al. 2013; Smith, Bolton, & Wagner 1999). Second, consumers often feel strong emotional reactions in response to service failures and recovery encounters which often leads to acts for complaining and even revenge (Gregoire et al. 2010). In addition, studies in psychology has highlighted that people who get revenge on their offenders often feel conflicting emotions (Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa, 2004). As a result, demonstrating the influence of service failures and online revenge actions consumers’ emotional states post online revenge will lead to a better understanding of the suitable recovery systems that could be implemented to minimize these acts (Bhandari, 2010). Moreover, effective recovery using social media thus requires not only handling complaints but also an understanding of the effects of the virtual presence other consumers have on those who commit acts of online revenge.

In this manuscript, we firstly examine the previous literature on consumer revenge. Afterwards, we present our own model of online consumer revenge which extends the previous literature and theoretical models of consumer revenge in a number of ways, specifically: based on the theory of cognitive appraisal, the online consumer revenge model (1) incorporates personal factors as triggers of the online revenge process, (2) examines the cognitive appraisal process a consumer goes through after experiencing a desire for revenge, and (3) identifies the influence of online revenge on the sensations a customer feels after committing online revenge. Afterwards, the methodology and findings of this study are provided followed by a discussion of the findings, their implications and future research suggestions.
2-Previous Literature on Consumer Revenge:

A number of theories clearly addressed that when customers perceive a violation of fairness in a service encounter, their negative emotions lead them to consider a number of coping options, including revenge and retaliation (e.g. Gregoire, Laufer, & Tripp, 2010; Gregoire and Fisher, 2008). When looking at the consumer revenge literature, two main themes emerge, focusing on the forms and the antecedents of customer revenge.

The first stream of research focused on examining the many ways consumers takerevengeon firms. Moreover, these studies identified a number of activities such as creating loss for the store, vandalism, trashing the store, stealing, boycotting, negative word of mouth, and personal physical attacks (Huefner and Hunt, 2000) in addition to making a less optimal choice than the offender’s brand or service (e.g. Bechwati and Morrin, 2003). An additional form was identified by Funches et al. (2009), and labelled as “voice, exist, and betrayal” in which the customer vindictively complains to the firm, stops doing business with it, and switches to its direct competitor. Later on, revenge behaviors were classified as direct or indirect behaviors, with direct acts of revenge occurring during encounters with the firm and its employees and indirect acts of revenge occurring behind the firm’s back (Gregoire et al. 2010). Consequently, online revenge was thus classified as a form of indirect revenge, particularly as a creation of “third party complaining for negative publicity” (e.g. Gregoire et al. 2010; Ward and Ostrom, 2006). Regarding the online context, Obeidat et al. (2018) identified three main ways consumers use to get back at misbehaving firms including social media revenge, third party revenge, and online aggression where the angry consumer will use illegal ways such as hacking and spamming to get back at the misbehaving firm.

The second theme of the consumer revenge literature has focused on examining the internal and external causes of this behaviour. Generally, revenge acts usually follow a double deviation that is a service failure and a failed recovery action (Tripp and Gregoire, 2011; Joireman et al. 2013). With regards to the internal factors, most studies identified the violations of the fairness perceptions (e.g. procedural, distributive and interactional justice), blame attributions (e.g. Bechwati and Morrin, 2003; Gregoire and Fisher, 2008) and Power perceptions (Nepomuceno, Rohani, & Grégoire, 2017) as the main triggers of revenge acts. Moreover, regarding emotions, anger, regret, frustration, and betrayal were the main emotional factors that lead to consumer revenge activities (e.g. Gregoire et al. 2010; Bonifield and Cole, 2007; Huefner and Hunt, 2000). Additionally, investigations on the external factors have recognized the severity of service failures, their types, and failed recovery efforts as the key external factors resulting in the consumer’s desire for revenge (e.g., Shteynberg, 2005; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011; Obeidat et al. 2017). In addition, other identified variables included the perceived firm greed (e.g. Gregoire et al. 2010), dissatisfaction (Li and Stacks, 2017), and customer compassion (Antonetti and Maklan, 2017). Consequently, the process of consumer revenge in this literature follows a cognition-emotion-actions sequence, where the violations of fairness and blame attributions after a service failure lead to negative emotions and a desire for revenge and consequently to acts of revenge.

The findings of these studies are promising, yet it remains a loosely affiliated body of research that has yet to systematically track the outcomes of revenge and online revenge behavior (Funches et al. 2009; Obeidat et al. 2018). The authors therefore seek to redress this shortcoming by examining how consumer online revenge affects the customer’s emotional outcomes. The main aim of this study is to develop a model of online consumer revenge that explains the cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes a consumer goes through after a service failure and until he/she commits online revenge, and extends the previous models of consumer revenge by identifying the emotional and psychological processes a consumer goes through after committing online revenge.

Consequently, our online consumer revenge model first posits that after a severe service failure consumers will feel helpless. This perception will lead consumers to an emotional elicitation state in which they will feel a number of negative emotions, including betrayal and a desire for revenge (Gregoire et al, 2010). Afterwards, in contrast to previous models of consumer revenge that go directly from a desire for revenge to actual revenge, the online consumer revenge model suggests that
consumers will enter a secondary appraisal state in which they will evaluate their online coping options based on their internet experience. Finally, our online revenge model posits that after consumers commit online revenge, this behavior will influence three main sensations: a sense of restored self-esteem, autonomy, and arousal.

3-Online Consumer Revenge: Conceptual Framework:

3.1: Service Failure Severity
The theory of cognitive appraisal states that personal beliefs regarding marketplace exchanges soften lead to cognitive appraisals of the situation (Dalakas, 2005; Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). The severity of the service failure refers to “the magnitude of loss that customers experience due to the failure” (Hess, Ganesan & Klein, 2003, p.132). Generally, consumers establish standards based on which service encounters are measured (Aldweeri et al. 2017; Alshurideh et al. 2016). As a result, any extreme deviation from these standards will constitute a severe service failure and will result in dissatisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Therefore, any stressful encounter such as a service failure will trigger a cognitive appraisal process that will likely lead to an emotional elicitation state (Grégoire et al. 2010; Surachartkumtonkun et al. 2013; Zourrig et al. 2009). In the service marketing literature, the severity of the service failure was found to influence customer satisfaction and to produce negative emotional responses (Smith et al. 1999; Hess, Ganesan, & Klein, 2003). In addition, it was found that the higher the magnitude of the service failure, the higher the negative emotional responses and the lower the satisfaction (Gilly and Gelb, 1982; Hoffman, Kelly, & Rotalsky, 1995). Consequently, since the greater perceived severity of the service failure is linked to greater economic or social losses, this factor was found to influence consumer revenge behaviors and mainly indirect revenge, which in this study includes online revenge (Gregoire et al. 2010), in addition to negative consumer emotions such as anger and betrayal (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008). This led Surachartkumtonkun et al. (2013) to cite that the failure severity is a key driver of revenge and rage intentions. We therefore hypothesize that:

**H1**: The severity of service failure will positively influence the consumer’s perceived helplessness.

3.2: The Role of Helplessness
After the stressful encounter and the failure of the recovery actions consumers normally will enter a state of primary cognitive appraisal and in this study we posit that they will first experience a sense of helplessness (Gelbrich, 2010; 2009). Helplessness occurs when consumers recognize a low potential to deal with a goal-incongruent event such as a service failure (Gelbrich, 2010). Additionally, this happens if consumers feel after a service failure that they can’t change the situation to their advantage or fix it. This sense of helplessness usually leads to negative emotions such as betrayal (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008; Wiggin and Yalch, 2015) due to the fact that helpless consumers can also believe they are less empowered to deal with the misbehaving firm directly, they are more likely to feel extremely betrayed (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al. 2010). Consequently, these consumers are more likely to engage in confrontational coping strategies (Fridja, 1987; Singh and Pandya, 1991; Gelbrich, 2010; Balaji, Jha, & Royne, 2015; Xu, Yap & Hyde, 2016). In addition, this sense of helplessness to honestly tackle the misbehaving service provider was found to arise after severe service failures leading the customer to engage in vindictive negative wordofmouth (Gelbrich, 2010; Xu, Yap & Hyde, 2016). Moreover, Gregoire and Fisher (2008) cite that the perception of being betrayed is one of the factors triggering consumer revenge acts in the online context. Additionally, it's been suggested that what drives customers to create web pages and reviews against misbehaving firms is the perception of betrayal (Ward and Ostrom, 2006). In addition, the theory of appraisal also cites that negative states like helplessness can produce a need to redirect blame to the offensive party and employ retributive behaviors (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008, Ward & Ostrom, 2006; Wiggin and Yalch, 2015). We therefore hypothesize that:

**H2**: Helplessness will positively influence the negative emotion of betrayal.
3.3: Emotional Elicitation

Generally, the outcomes of the cognitive appraisal process are negative emotions (Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). Across the revenge literature the role of emotions in triggering consumer revenge acts is well established, with anger (Gregoire et al. 2010) and perceived betrayal (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008) being identified as key factors in the consumer revenge process. In this study, we propose that the stressful appraisal process will lead consumers to feel a sense of betrayal, which will in turn lead to a desire for revenge or, in other words, a need to exert harm after a perceived wrongdoing (Gregoire et al. 2010). Perceived betrayal refers to a “customer’s belief that a firm has intentionally violated what is normative in the context of their relationship” (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008, p.250). The reason we choose to incorporate betrayal in our model is that betrayal was found to be the driving force behind acts of third-party vindictive complaining in online contexts and the reason some angry customers create websites for venting and revenge (Obeidat et al. 2018; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011; Ward and Ostrom, 2006). Thus, it’s a more suitable emotion for the online context because consumers who feel betrayed feel more motivated to seek revenge online (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008; Ward and Ostrom, 2006; Zeelenberg and Pieters, 2004). In addition, these feelings of betrayal will be more extreme when the firm’s violation is perceived to be severe (Grégoire and Fisher, 2008; Smith et al. 1999). Support for this link can be found across the revenge literature. Linkages for this emotion and the desire for revenge were supported by the findings of Gregoire and Fisher (2008) and Obeidat et al. (2017). Therefore, in concurrence with previous studies:

H3: The feelings of betrayal will lead the consumer to feel a desire for revenge.

3.4: The Secondary Cognitive Appraisal

The secondary cognitive appraisal process refers to the consumers’ evaluation of his/her ability to cope with the stressful encounter (e.g. Lazarus, 1991). Furthermore, the focus of the literature on the concept of desire for revenge is due to the fact it leaves a way for introducing mediating or moderating factors that could help explain the transition of the desire state to actual revenge (Gregoire et al. 2010). However, despite this heavy emphasis, limited attention was given to the cognitive process a consumer goes through while evaluating the decision on whether or not he will actually commit online revenge. In the online consumer revenge model, we propose that a secondary cognitive appraisal occurs after consumers enter a state of desire for revenge. At this stage we propose that the internet experience of the customer will encourage the customer to get revenge. In other words, the customer’s expertise with the internet will transform his desire to get revenge into actual behavior. Generally, the customer’s knowledge and experience of the internet and its various social media platforms is one of the most crucial concepts in e-commerce and m-commerce literature (Balabanis and Vassileiou, 1999; Hoffman et al. 1996; Liao and Cheung, 2001; Maignan and Lukas, 1997; Montoya-Weis et al. 2003). Moreover, moderating and mediating effects were found for the internet experience on a number of behaviors such as website revisit intentions, repurchase intentions, and trust (Bart et al. 2005; Montoya-Weis et al. 2003). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a: The consumer’s desire for revenge will positively influence online consumer revenge.
H4b: The consumer’s internet expertise will mediate the path between the desire for revenge and online consumer revenge.

3.5: Online Revenge and What Comes After:

As previously mentioned, online revenge refers to the use of online social platforms in legal and illegal ways to get back at a misbehaving firm after a negative service experience (Obeidat, 2014). Similar to third-party online complaining for negative publicity that was previously identified by Gregoire et al. (2010), it is a type of indirect revenge behavior and refers to the use of online applications to complain to third parties and alert the public about the misbehavior of a particular firm. Both behaviors involve this use of the internet to get back at firms. However, online revenge is much broader in concept and includes illegal behavior such as hacking and not merely complaining to
third parties. As seen in the first section of our paper, online acts of revenge are far more destructive to the firm’s image and reputation due to the high reach and riskless nature of the internet and its social media platforms (Obeidat et al. 2018). Furthermore, this study proposes for the first time that a secondary emotional elicitation phase will take place after the customer commits online revenge, this time leading to a number of positive sensations. Previous scholars (e.g. Schumann and Ross, 2010) claim that the act of revenge offers personal, psychological, and social benefits including deterrence against future or further wrongdoings, and nurturing collaboration against taking advantage of the work carried out by other people (McCullough, 2008). Moreover, the act of revenge has been found to restore equity and justice in situations where a lack of fairness has been perceived by the person, as is the case in most customer revenge acts (Gregoire et al. 2010). Although it does not remove the harm caused to the customer, revenge is seen as restoring the balance of suffering by causing harm to the transgressor (Frijda, 1994) and restoring self-worth and a sense of power to the victim (Bies and Tripp, 1998; Obeidat, 2014). In this study, due to the highly interactive nature and reach of social media platforms, we suggest that the act of online revenge will lead to three specific sensations: arousal, autonomy, and a restoration of self-esteem.

Positive arousal refers to the degree of excitement and stimulation a person feels in a certain situation and in this instance after committing online revenge (Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa, 2004). This emotion is related to physiological reactions such as excitement and enjoyment (Kaikkonen, 2012). Generally, high levels of arousal have been found to influence consumer behavior in a number of contexts, including electronic and mobile commerce (e.g. Pelet et al. 2016), advertising (e.g. Belanche, Flavián and Pérez-Rueda, 2014), and impulse buying (Graa and Elkebir, 2012). However, in this study we suggest that getting revenge online after a service failure and in many instances seeing his/her story spread across the internet and shared by other customers will lead the consumer to feel a sense of arousal. A number of findings tend to support this linkage. For example, Harmon-Jones and Sigelman (2001), in addition to Chester and Dewall (2015), cite that people commit acts of revenge and retaliation because enough provocation such as a severe service failure makes aggression and revenge hedonically rewarding. It was also found that direct acts of revenge lower the desire for future acts of revenge, which might suggest that revenge provides positive outcomes (Ghadami, 2015). Similarly, Ramu’rez (2010) found in an experiment that participants were more aroused and felt more pleasure when responding to provoked aggravations rather than unprovoked aggravations. In another experiment, respondents’ enthusiasm for harming disliked members was found to be positively associated with the degree to which they recruited the muscles used for smiling, indicating enjoyment (Cikara and Fiske, 2011). Moreover, evidence from the neuroscience and neuroimaging field also found that financial penalties inflicted upon unjust people were related to activity in two regions of the brain linked with reward processing, the caudate nucleus and ventromedial prefrontal cortex (de Quervain et al. 2004; Lotze et al. 2007). These results also indicate that people tend to experience feelings of arousal and pleasure after exerting justice against people perceived to deserve such revenge.

H5a: The consumer’s act of online revenge will positively influence consumers positive arousal.

The concept of self-esteem has been widely used in a number of research fields as an independent (how it affects behavior) and a dependent variable (how it is affected by behavior). Normally, the term self-esteem has two dimensions: as a personality variable that reflects how people feel about themselves and as a momentary emotional state that arises from positive and negative outcomes such as a service failure (Baumeister, 2013). In this study, we are interested in examining the influence of revenge on self-esteem or identity esteem in respect to its group membership aspect which refers to the “degree to which a person believes him/herself to be a valuable, contributing member of a specified reference group” (Bruner, 2009, p.600). Generally, a number of scholars cite that revenge is seen as a mechanism for restoring fairness and one’s self-esteem (Gregoire et al. 2010; Zourrig et al. 2014). Fitness, (2001) notes that since “humiliation inflicts such a deep and painful injury to a person’s self-esteem and social status, taking revenge might well be regarded as a powerful means of restoring dignity” (p.12). Moreover, Solomon, (1994) also cites that the importance of revenge for the self-esteem and integrity of the victim is often underestimated, despite self-esteem threats being one of the main triggers of consumer revenge (Zourrig et al. 2014). Self-esteem and the person’s image in front of others was also found to be one of the most common benefits of getting revenge, according to a number of Dutch university students who cited that self-esteem restoration was their main reason...
for getting revenge against their transgressor (Crombag et al. 2003). This study also found that only a limited number of respondents felt shame or regret after revenge. Consequently, in this study, we propose that the act of online revenge will come in response to the low levels of self-esteem reflected in the helplessness they feel after the service failure and that the act of revenge will act as a mechanism for self-esteem restoration afterwards. In addition, we believe that committing online revenge in front of one’s friends, family, and other customers will restore self-esteem, given the high reach and interactive nature of the internet. Thus, H5b: The consumer’s act of online revenge will positively influence consumers' self-esteem.

With regards to autonomy, it refers to “the degree to which a person feels his/her activities are self-chosen and free to be whatever he/she wishes” (Bruner, 2009, p.132). Consequently, like self-esteem restoration, in this study we propose that in a situation where a person is feeling helpless (i.e. lacking autonomy) he will get revenge online to restore his/her autonomy after the service failure. Furthermore, it has been found that conflict arises when a person feels that his/her perception of autonomy is restricted (Mitchell and Ambrose, 2007). Consequently, autonomy has been found to be one of the causes of customers adopting direct coping actions such as revenge in idiocentric cultures (Zourrig et al. 2014). Similarly, Spector, Fox, and Domagalski, (2005) found that a lack of autonomy leads to a number of behaviors including retaliation and revenge. As a result, we propose that autonomy will be a consequence of getting revenge online, considering that the lack of autonomy is an antecedent for revenge behaviors. Moreover, in organizations, autonomy has often been viewed as a state of tension between a person’s self-interest and the collective interest (Thomson and Perry, 2006). Additionally, Huxham, (1996) cites that “collaboration is voluntary, partners generally need to justify their involvement in it in terms of its contribution to their own aims” (p.15). Drawing from this logic we propose that the act of online revenge will not only help a person restore autonomy, but will serve his collective interest by helping and informing other customers of his negative experience. In other words, we believe that online revenge will help a person achieve autonomy while also appearing as a victim with altruistic motives. Thus, H5c: The consumer’s act of online revenge will positively influence consumers autonomy.

The online revenge model is extended in three main ways, as seen in Figure (1). First, we argue that the online consumer revenge process is triggered by two sets of factors rather than only blame and fairness attributions. These factors relate to personal perceptions of helplessness and the service failure severity. Second, we incorporate the consumer internet expertise as a factor the consumer considers after entering the state of a desire for revenge and before actually committing online revenge.
revenge. Third, our model identifies the main emotional and psychological state a customer feels after committing acts of online revenge.

4-Methodology:
To better comprehend the different emotions resulting from online revenge, a qualitative study was conducted first based on in-depth interviews with 42 consumers who committed acts of online revenge and retaliation against firms. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, online interviews were conducted using Facebook messenger (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). Participants volunteered after online advertisements were posted in three revenge and anti-consumption groups on Facebook. Each interview lasted between 40-45 minutes and consisted of questions relating to the critical incident that triggered their revenge act as recommended by Funches et al. (2009), as well as the factors that encouraged them to do it online, and their emotions after they committed revenge. The findings of the interviews revealed three main themes. In terms of triggers, process, outcome, and severity of the service failure were mentioned by most of the respondents. In terms of emotional outputs, helplessness, betrayal and a desire for revenge were mostly cited. Regarding why respondents choose the online medium for revenge, the majority of respondents cited their familiarity and expertise with the internet as the main reason as well as the internet reach, low risk, and the higher level of perceived control. Most importantly, the findings revealed that participants mainly felt positive emotional outcomes after their online revenge act especially when using social media platforms for revenge when compared to other illegal methods such as hacking or spamming. More specifically, the majority of respondents cited feeling altruistic, free, justice restoration as well as positively aroused especially when other consumers shared their revenge story and showed sympathy towards them on social media.

Based on the qualitative study findings, a survey was designed as noted in the Appendix A. moreover, this online survey was distributed to (N=354) consumers who committed acts of online revenge or vindictive complaining for publicity within the last 3 months prior to completing the survey as suggested by Gregoire et al. (2010). Furthermore, Participants were sampled from a famous Jordanian customer service and review page and were told via an open ended question to remember a critical service failure incident that happened to them and were then asked to answer questions regarding their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral actions in addition to their feelings after committing online revenge.

65% of the participants were females, 98% were under 25 years old, and 94.3% held a bachelor’s degree. Moreover, 35% of the sample used the internet more than nine times a day, 32% used it five to eight times a day, and 25.5% used it one to four times a day. Furthermore, 40.8% of those online avengers, did so using Facebook status updates, 8.2% used vindictive emails, 7.1% vindictively complained to a consumer advocacy website, 6.5% used reviews, 4.5% spammed the firm’s Facebook page with complaints, 4.2% used Twitter, 3.7% created revenge pages on Facebook against the firm, and 3.1% created websites to trash the firm. Additionally, 44% committed online revenge once, 24.4% twice, and 31.6% more than three times.

The survey used established measures and all the scale items that were used in this study are provided in Appendix (A) along with their scores and loadings. The failure severity was measured using the three-item scale developed by Smith, Bolton, and Wagner, (1999) and includes items such as, “The poor recovery caused me: minor aggravation or major aggravation.” For Helplessness, it was measured using the three-item scale developed by Gelbrich, (2009) and it includes items such as, “In this situation, I felt helpless.” For perceived betrayal, a scale developed by Bardi, Price, & Arnould, (2005) that was later modified by Gregoire and Fisher, (2008), was used and included items such as, “I felt betrayed.” For anger and frustration, a scale provided by Gelbrich, (2009) was used and included items such as, “During the incident with the firm, I felt angry.” The desire for revenge was measured using the scale developed by Wade, (1989), and later modified by Gregoire et al. (2010). It includes items like, “I wanted to take actions to get the firm in trouble.” Online revenge was measured using an eight-item scale developed by Obeidat, (2014). It includes items such as, “I committed online revenge through Facebook status updates.” With regards to arousal, it was measured using the scale developed by Faseur and Geuens, (2006) and included items such as, “After committing online revenge, I felt intense physical pleasure and enjoyment.” For autonomy, it was measured by the five-
item scale developed by Thomson and Prottas, (2006), and included items such as, “Getting revenge online made me feel to be who I am.” For internet experience, the seven-item scale of Bécheur and Gollety, (2006) was used to measure this construct. Finally, for self-esteem it was measured using a four-item scale developed by Luhtanen and Crocker, (1992) and included items such as, “After getting revenge online, I felt I am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to.”

5-Results:
5.1: Measurement Model Validation:
To validate the measurement of the constructs, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using Amos 22 was conducted to test the dimensionality of the factors and their reliability, in addition to the convergent and discriminant validity. After ensuring that the data was suitable for exploratory factor analysis, an analysis showed that the squared correlations between the constructs were less than their AVEs, thereby indicating discriminant validity. The model produced a good fit with a comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.95, a root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) of 0.09, and a general fit index of 0.93 (df=20; p=.001) as recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, (2010). Thus, these findings tend to confirm the high construct validity of the independent variables scales. Finally, we tested for common method bias using Harman’s single-factor test (1976). However, no issues were found since the single factor accounted for less than 50% (i.e. 23%) of the variance for all the conditions as suggested by Pallant (2010).

Table 1: Structural Model’ Fit Indices

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<th>Chi sq (df)</th>
<th>Chi sq/df</th>
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<th>CFI</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>IFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
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5.2: Structural Models:
5.2.1: Structural Paths Testing:

Table 2: Findings of Hypothesis Testing

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<th>C.R.</th>
<th>Result</th>
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<td>Helplessness</td>
<td>Betrayal</td>
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<td>Desire for Revenge</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In order to test the rest of the hypotheses, standardized regression weights ($\beta$) of structural paths along with their probability values and critical ratios were considered to report the results of hypothesis testing as recommended by Hair et al (2010). As seen in Table 2, all of the proposed hypotheses were also supported. The severity of service failure positively influenced customer helplessness ($\beta=0.38$, $p=0.000$); helplessness also had a significant positive impact on customer betrayal ($\beta=0.31$, $p=0.000$). Customer betrayal similarly positively influenced the desire for revenge ($\beta=0.65$, $p<0.000$). The desire for revenge was also found to significantly impact online revenge ($\beta=0.53$, $p=0.000$). Moreover, online revenge significantly influenced arousal ($\beta=0.60$, $p=0.000$), autonomy ($\beta=0.38$, $p=0.000$), and self-esteem ($\beta=0.57$, $p=0.000$).

5.2.2: Mediation Effects:

In order to test the mediation effects of the internet experience on the path between the desire for revenge and online revenge (i.e. H4b), Amos 22 software was employed in order to test the mediation effects through the bootstrapping approach as recommended by Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell, (2006). Moreover, this test has greater statistical power as well as directly producing bootstrapped percentile and bias-corrected confidence intervals for indirect effects (Mallinckrodt et al. 2006; Obeidat, 2014). Furthermore, as recommended, for a partial mediation to occur, both the direct path (with mediator) and the indirect path have to be significant; whereas, for a full mediation, the indirect effect is significant, and the direct effect becomes non-significant once the mediating variable is introduced. Finally, for indirect effect mediation, both direct effects have to be insignificant and the indirect has to be significant (Hair et al. 2010). Consequently, a partial mediation effect was found in both conditions for the internet experience on the path between the desire for revenge and online revenge as seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Mediation Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Direct without mediator</th>
<th>Direct with mediator</th>
<th>Indirect</th>
<th>Type of mediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire for revenge to online revenge Internet experience</td>
<td>0.52***</td>
<td>0.50***</td>
<td>0.012***</td>
<td>Partial mediation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6-Discussion & Conclusion:

Based on a sample of (N=354) Jordanian students we proposed and tested a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral model of the online consumer revenge process. Measurement validation of the constructs using confirmatory factor analysis was conducted and the findings confirmed the factor structure and showed that the model has a good fit. Additionally, the findings of the hypotheses testing provided support for the entire hypotheses of the study. We predicted and found three main effects. First, service failure severity and helplessness were predictors of online revenge. Second, the internet experience was found to partially mediate the path between the desire for revenge and online revenge. Third, online consumer revenge was found to influence three positive emotions and psychological states, namely arousal, autonomy, and enhanced self-esteem, thus extending the theory of cognitive appraisal by showing a secondary emotional elicitation and appraisal stage could occur after consumers commit their online coping option. We elaborate more on these results in the next sections.

In the online consumer revenge model we moved away from the perceptions of fairness and blame that dominate the consumer revenge literature to examine first new personal perceptions that trigger the act of revenge. This study found that the severity of the service failure will lead the consumer to an emotional elicitation state where helplessness and betrayal will fuel a desire for revenge. This finding demonstrates that the greater the perceived severity of the service failure, and the greater the
economic or social loss perceived by the customer, the more likely an act of revenge. This is supported by a number of findings in the literature that also found positive links between the service failure severity, negative emotions, and revenge (e.g. Gregoire and Fisher, 2008; Gregoire et al. 2010; Surachartkuntanokun et al. 2013; Obeidat et al. 2017). Moreover, with regards to the helplessness of the customer, it was also found to be a key trigger of online revenge. This finding provides further support to the findings of, for example, Gelbrich (2010, 2009) and Obeidat et al. (2017) who found that helplessness arises after a service failure and leads to negative consumer responses and emotions, including anger and negative word of mouth. Additionally, the role of perceived customer betrayal was found to be critical in the online revenge process. We believe that this sense of betrayal will encourage the customer to go the extra mile to commit an act of revenge online, making it a more relevant emotion for the online context. Nevertheless, previous findings in the literature also support this finding and the link between betrayal, desire for revenge and the online revenge act (e.g. Tripp and Gregoire, 2011; Ward and Ostrom, 2006).

Generally, this study contributes to the literature in two main ways. First, this study findings demonstrate that the user experience with Internet facilitates the transition from a desire to do harm to actually getting revenge online. Consequently, we examine for the first time in the literature the role of a technology based factor other than the Internet reach, low risk, and control (Obeidat et al. 2018). As a result, it could be argued that the more experience a consumer has with the Internet and social media platforms, the more likely he will get revenge or vindictively complain to the masses after a service failure. Second, with regards to the consequences of the online revenge act and resulting emotions, this study findings show that online revenge behaviors tend to positively influence the emotional and psychological outcomes for the customer. In this study, the act of online revenge was found to increase the customer’s self-esteem after the service failure and the feelings of helplessness, causing a positive emotional arousal of feelings, and giving customers a sense of freedom and authority to do whatever they wish. This extends the theory of cognitive appraisal by showing two emotional elicitation stages could occur before and after the behaviour as well as a cognitive reasoning of a restored self-esteem. This finding also shows that positive emotions often accompany acts of revenge in the online medium. Moreover, in contrast to some notions that revenge often leaves the person in a worse state or feeling guilty (McCullough, 2008), these findings display that the nature of the Internet as a medium, and the company’s lack of physical presence in this medium, diminishes any guilt from the equation and leaves the customer with generally positive feelings. Additionally, we believe the highly personalized structure of social media websites further enhances the person’s feeling of freedom and autonomy to do what he/she wants. These findings are supported in a number of findings; for example, it has been found in the consumer misbehavior literature that a lack of firms’ physical presence increases acts of online piracy (Shanahan and Hyman, 2010). Moreover, Schumann and Ross (2010) found that revenge often offers psychological benefits, whereby Bies and Tripp, (1998) found that acts of revenge enhance and restore a person’s self-worth. Furthermore, contrary to traditional channels, the reach and visibility of these platforms to other consumers is much higher (Obeidat et al. 2017). Due to this, genuine users may become involved by supporting a complainer with comments and offering support to offended consumer revenge actions (Schaefers and Schamari, 2016). According to the social influence theory, people are expected to show stronger reactions when others are present (Latane’ 1981). Consequently, this study argues that due to this social support, negative emotions that often accompany acts of revenge such as regret and remorse are turned positive due to the support from other consumers.

Consequently, we recommend as previously suggested by a number of scholars (e.g. Tripp and Gregoire, 2011; Gregoire et al. 2010) that the best way to minimize acts of online revenge is through avoiding double deviations in the service performance and recovery. Managers could also benefit from finding that empowering consumers and making them involved in the service recovery should minimize feelings of helplessness and making them feel that they’ve been heard. Consequently, this could minimize acts of online revenge and reduce the willingness for angry avengers to resort to social media platforms to make their voices heard to the firm and to other consumers. Nevertheless, ensuring that well-trained employees are handling customers’ orders, in addition to ensuring the best delivery of the product or service to customers should eventually minimize online revenge acts. Moreover, the worrying fact to firms is that acts of online revenge in contrast to offline revenge
appear to yield positive not negative emotional outcomes such as guilt or regret. As result, we can only expect the rate of online revenge occurrence to increase. As a result, firms should invest more in their complaint handling processes to handle potential acts of revenge and recovering the situation before it goes viral. Specifically, evidence suggests that public apologies to enraged customers as well as customized responses to their complaints instead of the automated responses should go a long way in reducing the rate of occurrence of these acts. Additionally, with the prevalence of social media web pages and groups on websites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, we argue that these pages could act as customer support centers, handling any customer complaints directly through these pages instead of merely being dedicated to promoting the firm’s offerings.

Although this study will hopefully provide a number of contributions to the literature and a framework for future investigations, as with every piece of research dealing with a social phenomenon, this study is limited by its design. This study concerns the use of a single survey that depends on consumers’ recall of the service failure and their revenge act; consequently, future research could employ more experimental designs using scenarios or experiments to better understand the relationship between the variables and establish causality particularly by comparing the effects of online and offline revenge. Moreover, examining the influence of other social media related features such as its ease of use, interactivity, and community could yield better insights regarding the motivations of using online channels for revenge. Future work could also try examining other emotional outcomes for revenge such as pleasure or dominance. Although this study employed similar constructs, future research could examine the influence of revenge on the PAD model as well as its influence on negative emotions especially when the avenger committed illegal acts for online revenge. Additionally, with most of the existing literature focusing on revenge and retaliation acts against firms, future work could explore this behavior from a different perspective, by examining organizations’ revenge and retaliation acts against their own consumers. Finally, we hope that this study will shed light on this important yet understudied phenomenon.

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Appendix A: Measures and Loadings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>CR Loading ($\lambda$)</th>
<th>ave:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire for revenge (source: Gr´egoire et al., 2010); six items</td>
<td></td>
<td>.88, ave:0.57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to punish ... [type of firm] ... in some way</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to cause inconvenience to the ... [type of firm]</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to make ... [type of firm] ... get what it deserved</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to cause irritation to the ... [type of firm] ...</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to get even with ... [type of firm] ...</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to take action to get ... [type of firm] ... in trouble</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived betrayal (source: Gr´egoire &amp; Fisher, 2008); five items</td>
<td></td>
<td>.86, ave:0.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In that incident I felt lied to</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.806</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In that incident I felt betrayed</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In that incident I felt cheated</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.903</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helplessness (source: Gelbrich, 2009); three items</td>
<td></td>
<td>.82, ave:0.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In that incident I felt helpless</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In that incident I felt defenseless</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In that incident I felt powerless</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of service failure (source: Smith et al., 1999); three items</td>
<td></td>
<td>.85, ave:0.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This event caused me inconvenience</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This event caused me aggravation</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This event caused me problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arousal (source: ); three items</td>
<td></td>
<td>.77, ave:0.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after committing online revenge i felt I am experiencing new sensations and activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after committing online revenge, i felt intense physical pleasure and enjoyment</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after committing online revenge , i felt I have found new sources and types of stimulation for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self esteem (source: Smith et al., 1999); three items</td>
<td></td>
<td>.85, ave:0.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After committing online revenge, i felt am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to.</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After committing online revenge, i felt I don't have much to offer to the social groups I belong to</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After committing online revenge, i felt am a cooperative participant in the social groups I belong to</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.706</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy (source: Smith et al., 1999); three items</td>
<td></td>
<td>.76, ave:0.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting revenge online made me feel controlled and pressured to be certain ways. (r)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Getting revenge online made me feel free to be who I am. | 0.75  
---|---
I felt that my choices expressed my "true" self. | 0.69  

**Internet experience**  
CR Loading .81, ave:0.59  
I have a great deal of experience using the Internet | 0.735  
I have a lot of experience with the Internet | 0.816  
I use the Internet in a variety of ways | 0.752  

**Online revenge**  
CR Loading .78, ave:0.54  
I committed online revenge through Facebook status updates and shares | .69  
I committed online revenge through Vindictive complaining to the firm's page/group on social media | .78  
I committed online revenge through Writing a vindictive review to a consumer website | .74