

Social Media Revenge: A Typology of Online Consumer Revenge

Abstract:

The main purpose of this study is to present a detailed typology of online revenge behaviors that identifies the differential factors affecting this behavior in terms of triggers, channels, and emotional outcomes across two countries: Jordan and Britain. Based on a qualitative approach from a sample of Jordanian and British customers who had previously committed acts of online revenge (N=73), this study identified four main types of online avengers: materialistic, ego-defending, aggressive, and rebellious. The findings show that British consumers were motivated by core service malfunction failures and employee failures. In contrast, Jordanian consumers' acts of revenge were triggered by waste service failures and contract breach failures. Moreover, Jordanian consumers tended to employ more aggressive and sometimes illegal ways to get revenge, whereas British consumers often used social media platforms and review websites. The findings have implications for the prevalence of online consumer revenge acts and for extending theoretical understanding of why and how consumers employ the Internet for revenge after a service failure in addition to how to respond to each avenger.

Revenge, Social media, Cross-cultural, Consumer

1. Introduction

After purchasing a broadband flash drive that was maxed out and then failing to receive a satisfactory response from the company, a young Jordanian consumer hacked the web domain of the largest broadband and mobile firm in the country, automatically redirecting anyone who visited the firm's website to a web page he had created for the purpose of insulting and vilifying the firm (Tech-wd.com, 2011). Another young customer in Britain, after a store refused to compensate her for a newly bought hairdryer that was broken, even though she had a warranty for the product, unleashed a Twitter campaign with her friends to damage the store's reputation (Obeidat, 2014). Indeed, such widespread online revenge activities are worldwide phenomena that cause different levels of damage to businesses.

With the prevalence of the Internet and social media platforms, scholarly findings show that consumers around the globe have adapted to the technological advancements, and now commit online acts of revenge after a service failure rather than simply complaining or exiting the relationship with the misbehaving firm (Joriman *et al.*, 2013; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). With firms now increasing their social media presence as a way of promoting their offerings, more and more angry customers are using these platforms to strike back at firms that have wronged them (Gregoire, Legoux, Tripp, Hlta, Joireman, and Rotman, 2018). As a result, the rate of occurrence of such acts of consumer revenge is increasing at a disturbing rate (e.g., Funches *et al.*, 2009; Zourrig *et al.*, 2009; Gregoire and Fisher, 2008). A survey conducted by NewVoiceMedia revealed that 60% of Americans share their service failure stories on social media (Gutbezahl, 2014). Consumers normally engage in these acts to restore fairness when they feel that firms have treated them unfairly (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008). Daily, new acts of online consumer revenge appear on social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) and consumer advocacy websites (e.g., consumeraffairs.org). The Internet and its social media platforms provides angry consumers with a riskless and high-reach medium for getting back at misbehaving firms. These mechanisms widen the scope of consumers' actions from a limited audience to an international audience of millions, while requiring minimal effort and no significant cost (Obeidat *et al.*, 2017).

Despite increased research interest in consumer revenge behavior (Joireman *et al.*, 2013; Gregoire *et al.*, 2010; Funches *et al.*, 2009), the majority of the literature has focused on the forms (e.g., Huefner and Hunt, 2000; Funches *et al.*, 2009) and the process models (e.g., Gregoire *et al.*, 2010) of consumer revenge. Therefore, limited scholarly attention has been given to exploring this subject in detail in the online context (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010; Funches *et al.*, 2009). Regarding the forms of consumer revenge, the majority of the literature has focused on examining the forms of revenge behavior in the traditional market context (e.g., Huefner and Hunt, 2000; Funches *et al.*, 2009). A few attempts, however, have examined the forms of revenge actions in the online context, although they have only identified methods such as the creation of revenge websites (Ward and Ostrom, 2006), third-party complaining for publicity (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010), and complaining to consumer platforms and complaint websites (Gregoire *et al.*, 2018). Responding to the theoretical and managerial importance of the subject, this study aims to identify and develop a more detailed typology of online consumer revenge that answers significant and previously unexamined concerns. The research investigates what motivates consumers to commit revenge and why they choose to do so online, how they carry out online revenge, and how it makes them feel to have taken revenge in this way. The question

of what types of differences there are in consumers' responses to service failures is also central to the study. Although some previous studies suggest that cultural differences influence consumers' approach to and avoidance of revenge, the understanding of what and how country differences influence consumer revenge patterns and their motives, in particular via online platforms, is still far from complete (Zourrig, Chebat, and Toffoli, 2009). This study confirms the existence of four main types of online avengers: materialistic, ego-defending, aggressive, and rebellious. Consequently, this study presents a detailed typology of four prototypical online avengers who are motivated by different types of service failures, have different reasons for choosing the Internet for revenge, select different online channels, and have different emotional reactions to the online revenge act. In addition, drawing from the service recovery literature, we propose a suitable recovery strategy to deal with each type of online avenger.

This paper is structured as follows. The next section will provide an examination of the literature related to online consumer revenge. Next, the methodology and rationale for collecting the data are explained, before the research findings are presented. Finally, there is a discussion of the findings and their managerial implications.

2. Literature Review on Consumer Revenge

2.1. Revenge Behavior

Generally, revenge is a “basic human impulse and a powerful motivator of social behaviour” (Bradfield and Aquino, 1999, p. 2). Consumer revenge, specifically, is an action taken in response to a harm or offense inflicted by a firm on the consumer (Funches *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, revenge is not a spontaneous act; rather, it is often the result of a cognitive appraisal process (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010). Through the various literatures, revenge is seen as a coping instrument for restoring justice and fairness (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010; Aquino *et al.*, 2006). While studies have found significant links between acts of revenge and the concept of negative reciprocity (Friedman and Singh, 1999), revenge acts are distinguished from acts of negative reciprocity by the greater emotional and behavioral intensity affiliated with acts of revenge (Aquino *et al.*, 2006).

Because online platforms are now so prevalent and accessible, online revenge acts are increasingly used by angry consumers as an “e-weapon” against misbehaving firms (Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). Consequently, the term “online consumer revenge” refers to online actions (both legal and illegal) of consumers who wish to get back at a firm after a service failure (Obeidat *et al.*, 2017). Two primary research themes appear in the consumer revenge literature. The first is concerned with identifying the antecedents and the processes of consumer revenge, while the second focuses on exploring the forms and types of consumer revenge actions. Though both approaches provide significant insights into consumer revenge behavior, the studies address behaviors in the traditional brick-and-mortar context and very broadly in the online context (Funches *et al.*, 2009), and therefore do not provide a sufficient basis for our study.

2.2. Antecedents of Consumer Revenge

The first emerging set of studies examines the process of consumer revenge acts more directly. This literature, generally referred to as “antecedents of consumer revenge,” focuses on motivational, emotional, and behavioral aspects of revenge in the brick-and-mortar context (e.g., Zourrig *et al.*, 2014; Joriman *et al.*, 2013; Gregoire *et al.*, 2010; Gregoire and Fisher, 2008; Bechwati and Morrin, 2003). This body of research views the act of revenge as one that is more complex than a simple response to an act of injustice (i.e., a service failure). Moreover, although this stream of research focuses on the triggers of consumer revenge as seen in Table (1), it also examines the emotional aspects and the various influences affecting the revenge decision, such as power and greed perceptions (e.g., Gregoire *et al.*, 2010), relationship quality (e.g., Mdakane *et al.*, 2012), and allocentrism–idiocentrism culture (e.g., Zourrig *et al.*, 2014). The angry customer is viewed as playing a number of roles when getting revenge, such as that of altruist, avenger, and even victim (Funches *et al.*, 2009). Regardless, this stream of research identifies a number of external factors as revenge triggers, such as double deviations (i.e., a failed service encounter and recovery action) (e.g., Joriman *et al.*, 2013), service failure severity (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008), dissatisfaction (Bonifield and Cole, 2007), and lack of procedural, distributional, and interactional justice (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010; Funches *et al.*, 2009). In terms of personal and psychological antecedents, anger, frustration, and betrayal are found to be the main emotional factors that lead customers to form a desire for revenge and, consequently, to carry out the act itself (e.g., Gregoire *et al.*, 2010).

Moreover, based on the theory of justice and fairness, the previous work on consumer revenge tends to focus first on the motivational and cognitive aspects of consumer revenge. This focus of the literature assumes that a violation of the fairness dimensions will often lead consumers to seek ways to restore fairness, either by demanding compensation or by seeking retaliation or revenge (Gregoire and Fisher, 2008; Walster *et al.*, 1973). These dimensions relate to three aspects of the service encounter: procedural (i.e., a firm’s processes, guidelines, and methods to address customers’ complaints), distributive (i.e., the outcomes or the compensation received by customers), and interactional (i.e., the ways in which employees treat customers) (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010). Another approach by the literature (e.g., Zourrig *et al.*, 2009) is based on the theory of cognitive appraisal by Lazarus (1991) and aims to emphasize the individual’s interaction with his/her environment and the emotional component, which was often neglected in previous models of revenge (Zourrig *et al.*, 2009).

Consequently, the most recent conceptual models in the literature aim to unify these two perspectives by developing theoretical models that follow a cognition, emotion, and behavior sequence (e.g., Jorimant *et al.*, 2013; Gregoire *et al.*, 2010). In these efforts, a double deviation often leads the customer to feel a violation of fairness (Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). This perception will cause the customer to experience a number of negative emotions, including anger, frustration, and betrayal (e.g., Gregoire *et al.*, 2010; Gregoire and Fisher, 2008). This emotional elicitation often leads to a desire for revenge or vengeance and, consequently, to acts of revenge (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010).

Table 1: Definitions of Key Constructs in the Consumer Revenge Literature

Constructs & Definitions	Common Aliases	Representative Papers
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Triggers

Service failure severity: The perception of the seriousness and intensity of the service failure	The degree of problems, inconvenience, and losses caused by the company	Weun <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Obeidat <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Zourrig, Hedhil, and Chebat, 2014; Gregorie and Fisher, 2008
Double deviation: Refers to company failures after first service failure and recovery	Two continuous incidents	Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Joriman <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011
Dissatisfaction: Customer dissatisfied with the service provided by a company	Dissatisfaction	Bonifield and Cole, 2007; Huefner and Hunt, 2000

Antecedents

Procedural justice: Refers to the fairness that is provided by companies when dealing with customers' complaints	Fairness is reflected by how firms address customers' complaints in terms of their procedures, policies, and methods	Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Gregorie and Fisher, 2008
Interactional justice: Refers to the fairness that frontline employees provide to customers	The treatment and attitudes that frontline employees show to customers	Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Gregorie and Fisher, 2008
Distributive justice: Refers to the outcome fairness that is provided by companies when dealing with servers	Outcome and compensation received by complaint customer	Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Gregorie and Fisher, 2008
Blame attribution: Refers to how much the company should be accountable for the causation of failed recovery		Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Negative emotion: Negative emotion that is caused by the service failure recovery	Consumers' feelings of anger, irritation, perceived betrayal, helplessness; desire for revenge; the desire to exert some harm on the firm	Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Grégoire and Fisher, 2008; Obeidat <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Bechwati and Morrin, 2003
Perceived power: Refers to customers' perceptions of their own ability to influence the firm's activities	Leverage over the decision; a firmly held belief that the company has done something wrong	Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Obeidat <i>et al.</i> , 2017
Perceived firm greed: Consumer believes the firm has taken advantage of the situation	Take advantage, avoid taking responsibility	Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010
Allocentrism–idiocentrism trait: Allocentrism refers to personal level of collectivism; idiocentrism refers to personal level of individualism	How people react to the service failure	Zourrig, Hedhil, and Chebat, 2014

These research efforts culminated in the integrated model of consumer revenge developed by Gregoire *et al.* (2010), which brings all the previous work on consumer revenge together in

one central model where acts of revenge begin with an appraisal of the process, interaction, and distributive fairness of the service failure, in addition to attributions of blame. This appraisal leads to an emotional elicitation of negative emotions and a desire for vengeance and revenge, which, based on the customer’s perception of power, can lead them to commit either a direct revenge behavior (i.e., high power perception) or an indirect one (i.e., low power perception). Direct acts of revenge include marketplace aggression and vindictive complaining, and indirect acts include negative online complaining for publicity.

As mentioned, these theoretical models tend to adopt a cognition–emotion–action sequence whereby, after a negative incident, appraisal of the incident leads to negative emotions and, ultimately, to an act of revenge. While the findings of these studies provide useful constructs, they say little regarding the role of online media and the interactivity these media allow for online consumer revenge acts in different cultures. This study addresses their research limitations by examining the process of consumer revenge in the online context.

2.3. Forms of Consumer Revenge

In the second main theme in the literature, research exploring the forms of consumer revenge suggests a number of methods that consumers traditionally use to get back at firms that offended them, as seen in Table (2). For example, Huefner and Hunt (2000) found that angry customers employ six main ways to get revenge against misbehaving service providers. Within this typology, some revenge acts take place inside the store, such as creating loss for the store. Huefner and Hunt (2000) also identified a number of indirect revenge behaviors, such as placing false orders, calling for boycotts, and instigating negative word of mouth (WOM). Bechwati and Morrin (2007) identified a new form of consumer revenge in which the customer deliberately switches to a lower-quality option. Funches *et al.* (2009) expanded on Huefner and Hunt’s (2000) work by identifying a new typology in which revenge acts are classified as forms of consumption prevention acts (e.g., boycotting and negative WOM) and forms of aggression and power (e.g., physical and verbal attacks), in addition to creation of cost or loss for the firm (e.g., theft, trashing). Gregoire *et al.* (2010) further classified acts of consumer revenge as either direct or indirect. Direct acts of vengeance happen during face-to-face transactions with the service provider, and indirect acts happen outside the view of the firm. Their classification identifies a form of online revenge labeled “third-party complaining for negative publicity,” in which an angry customer will vindictively complain to third parties in order to generate negative “buzz” about an offending firm. In a study by Obeidat *et al.* (2017), three online revenge activities were identified based on emotional management of the negative experience. Immediate online revenge focuses on instant emotion via a social media platform such as Twitter. Third-party online revenge centers around posting a vindictive review through third parties to avoid direct contact with the company. When consumers have extreme negative emotions caused by a company, they often create their own website to get even with the company.

Table 2: Current Identified Customer Revenge Activities

Customer revenge activity and definition	Channels	Representative papers
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Trashing: Making a mess by dumping, throwing, or breaking merchandise in store	(In person, in physical stores, restaurants, hotels)	(Huefner <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009)
Stealing: Taking merchandise without paying or obtaining merchandise for nothing	(In person, in physical stores)	(Huefner <i>et al.</i> , 2000)
Negative word of mouth, voice, boycotting: Spreading and exaggerating their dissatisfaction and negative experience to others	(In person between people)	(Huefner <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010)
Personal attack and aggression: Abusive language and/or physical aggression toward a manager, sales person, supervisor, or service employees; aggression, expression of hostility, obstructionism, or overt	(In person, in store, on the spot)	(Huefner <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010)
Vandalism: Destroying and damaging merchandise and companies' property or facilities	(In person, in store or company)	(Huefner <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010)
Create cost/loss: Creating extra cost (i.e., work, false order, spoiling) for the company	(In store)	(Huefner <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010)
Consumption prevention: Preventing other consumers from purchasing merchandise or services from the company		(Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009)
Switching: Exiting, avoiding, and ending the relationship with the company; switching to other companies	(Physical store)	(Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Zourrig, Chebat, and Hedhil, 2009; Bechwati and Morrin, 2007)
Direct revenge behavior: Direct contact, action, and retaliation against companies and their employees, including vindictive complaining, aggression, and damaging or violating companies' employees, property, and facilities	(Face-to-face direct contact with the firm)	(Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Huefner <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009)
Indirect revenge behavior: Indirect approach to company outside the firm's control, including negative WOM, sharing negative experience with family and friends, online complaining for publicity	(Outside firm's border)	(Grégoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Huefner <i>et al.</i> , 2000; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009)
Immediate online revenge: Posting negative experience immediately to release their negative emotions via social media	(Social media platforms)	(Obeidat <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
Third-party online revenge: Posting vindictive reviews and complaints on consumer advocacy platforms	(Complaint website, company's website)	(Obeidat <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2018)
Venting online revenge: Creating a website, Facebook pages, and videos with the hope of going viral to punish the company	(Self-created website)	(Obeidat <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
Reparation schema: With the intention of repairing/fixing the damage, problems, and losses caused by the company through the Internet to alter other customers' experiences	(Online Consumer agency)	(Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Obeidat <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
Vigilante schema: With the intention of punishing the firm for the problems caused by the company through a complaint website	(Complaint website)	(Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Obeidat <i>et al.</i> , 2017)

These three types of online revenge activities shed light on the online platforms. More recently, Gregoire *et al.* (2018), while adopting a mental-schemas approach, classified online complainers into two main schemas: a vigilante schema and a preparation schema, with the former schema mainly using complaint websites for revenge and the latter using online consumer agencies. Based on the previous work of Ringberg *et al.* (2007), this study found that online complainers adopt either a utilitarian approach (i.e., preparation schema) or an oppositional approach (i.e., vigilante schema). Later on, Beverland *et al.* (2010) recognized two closely related schemas consumers use after a service failure, which were labeled task-based and personal-based frames.

Overall, while these studies do indeed examine the forms and methods of consumer revenge, the main channels in which consumers commit acts of revenge online remain largely uncovered. Given the current prevalence of the Internet and its social media applications (Funches *et al.*, 2009), angry customers are able to use these mediums in various ways to get back at misbehaving companies and not just by vindictively complaining to third parties or consumer websites. Based on the previous typologies, this study will propose a set of theoretically similar schemas or cycles that will reflect the justice model (Tax and Brown, 1998). Generally, evidence from the literature suggests that consumer behavior in the online context will differ in certain aspects from the offline context (Diaz, Gomez, and Molina, 2017). For example, Li (2015) found that social networking sites have increased consumer engagement with firms and empowered consumers to take collective action (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2003). Evidence also shows that the Internet and social media has enhanced consumers' sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Barak *et al.*, 2008). In addition, these empowered word-of-mouth actions will spread to a larger consumer segment because of the Internet (Li, 2015). User-generated content on social media was also found to give consumers more control over their posts (McKenna and Bargh, 1999). Furthermore, with the widespread use of online social networks, consumers have broader choices of communication online compared to the offline context (Li, 2015). This allows consumers to better express themselves with greater anonymity (Postmes *et al.*, 2001). Additionally, with the greater access to information and brand substitutes online, factors restricting exit behaviors offline (e.g., location, efficiency) are no longer restrictions (Kucuk, 2008). Finally, negative word-of-mouth behavior in the offline context was often conceptualized as voice rather than revenge considering that it's not often aimed at a mass audience for negative publicity, as in the case of online revenge acts (Li, 2015).

Moreover, evidence confirms that the consumer revenge phenomenon is universal and on the rise globally, but the motivations and responses to service failure tend to vary according to countries and cultures (Zourrig, Chebat, and Hedhil, 2009; Zourrig, Hedhil, and Chebat, 2014). In their conceptual work, Zourrig *et al.* (2009) suggested that idiocentric (individualistic) versus allocentric (collectivistic) value has different effects on how consumers cognitively appraise and cope with the service failure at an individual level. Allocentric consumers prefer non-confrontational revenge, whereas idiocentrics tend to adopt direct revenge action. However, cross-cultural differences are not necessarily cross-country differences. There is little research to show the differences across countries as advocated by Zourrig, Chebat, and Toffoli (2009). Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions provide indices grouped by country, which can be seen as country difference. In the context of rage and revenge, Patterson *et al.* (2016) contended that collectivistic Eastern countries are more likely to exhibit rancorous and retaliatory rage emotions than consumers in individualistic Western countries. What is less known is that the

cross-country differences in consumer motivation, triggers, and cognitive processes may lead to better management of conflict and service failure. In this research, the nation of Jordan exhibits characteristics of Eastern countries, and the United Kingdom is a typical example of a Western country (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1996). Consequently, this study builds on the premise that, due to the nature of online media, revenge, facilitators, channels, and emotional outputs will differ from those in the traditional brick-and-mortar setting. While the types of occurrences that trigger revenge behavior are known, relevant theory has yet to identify how consumers respond to each incident, or how and why they select particular acts of online revenge. In order to pursue these issues, this study sets up four research questions (RQs) as a framework:

RQ1: What are the motivations and triggers of online consumer revenge?

RQ2: What are the main online channels used by angry customers to get revenge and why?

RQ3: What are the emotional consequences of online revenge?

RQ4: What are the differences in consumers' response to service failures that lead to online revenge between Jordanian and British consumers?

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and Method

The ultimate goal of this research is to examine the area of consumer online revenge behavior and to extend existing research into the online context. The preliminary study reported here uses a qualitative approach to better understand the unexplored phenomenon of online revenge behavior and its dynamic processes (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). Despite the presence of a number of theoretical foundations examining the topic of consumer revenge, we adopted a qualitative approach for three main reasons. First, considering that the aim of this paper is to provide a typology of online consumer revenge actions that include its cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components, a qualitative approach seemed more suitable to provide the rich amount of information needed to categorize the online revenge triggers and behaviors (Sekaran, 2003).

Second, we adopted this approach considering that almost all the studies in the literature that attempted to provide a typology of certain consumption behaviors (Beverland *et al.*, 2010) adopted a qualitative approach. Third, since the aim of this study is to uncover the new online methods consumers use to get back at misbehaving firms and the triggers that move away from the common and broad process-and-outcome service-failure categorizations (e.g., Obeidat *et al.*, 2017) or the procedural, interactional, and distributive dimensions (e.g., Gregoire *et al.*, 2010), a qualitative approach seemed more suitable to provide a detailed account of the triggers and the channels consumers use to get revenge online. As a result, two main studies were undertaken to examine this phenomenon. In the primary pilot study, the authors conducted 15 in-depth interviews with customers in Jordan who had previously committed acts of online revenge. The aim was to uncover the underlining motivations behind these acts and to understand the main methods that customers use to get back at misbehaving firms. The purpose of this study was to obtain inductive information from the respondents and to identify the general themes that would be the focus of a second study. Although the pilot study yielded promising insights, the formal data collection began with the second study. The authors coded the original interview transcripts, which were then used to develop the interview manual for the second study.

The findings from the first study also served as the basis for developing the questions for Study Two (Appendix A). The authors chose an online student context for Study Two because it would serve as an “extreme case,” which would simplify the process of theory building and increase visibility of the issue (Pettigrew, 1990). Due to the sensitivity of the topic, semi-structured online interviews were conducted with a purposive sample. Semi-structured interviews are suitable for the exploratory nature of the topic, both for theory development and to generate rich and detailed data (e.g., Saunders *et al.*, 2007). It is also an appropriate method for uncovering the patterns and motivation behind revenge, and for situations where a large number of open-ended questions are to be answered (e.g., Saunders *et al.*, 2007; Sekaran, 2003). Additionally, according to Saunders *et al.* (2007), conducting online interviews facilitates data gathering from a group of respondents who would have been difficult to contact otherwise. Finally, using online interviews also increases the respondents’ anonymity, which increases the chances that they will communicate more openly (Opdenakker, 2006). Since our aim was to build theory in the area of consumer revenge and to extend work previously done into the online context, using an online survey of students provided a purposive sample of participants who have greater experience with the Internet than earlier generations (Obeidat *et al.*, 2017; Prensky, 2001), and therefore are more likely to have carried out consumer revenge behaviors online. This participant group increased the possibility of investigating the phenomenon, thereby allowing for more accurate results.

To ensure a knowledgeable sample (e.g., Saunders *et al.*, 2007; Sekaran, 2003), participants were identified through Facebook ads that were placed in a number of student communities and groups related to the University of Jordan and Durham University in the UK. Students who responded and volunteered to be interviewed then provided their email addresses. They were sent two emails detailing the purposes of the study and assuring that all answers would be anonymous. On average, each online interview lasted between 50 and 60 minutes. The semi-structured online interviews were conducted using online chat applications such as Facebook Messenger and Skype, and with the participants’ consent all transcripts were automatically recorded. Due to the somewhat biasing nature of giving participants incentives to participate in studies in some contexts (Saunders *et al.*, 2007), no type of incentive or compensation was provided for participants as they were told that their involvement was voluntary. However, participants were initially encouraged to participate in this study due to being told that the findings will help firms improve their services and provide better recovery actions to consumers who suffer similar service failures.

All interviews consisted of a first section of questions regarding (1) the participants’ views on online revenge as a behavior, (2) the service failure, (3) their emotions afterward, (4) their acts of online revenge, (5) their reasons for choosing the online medium to commit revenge, and (6) their emotional reactions to actually committing online revenge. This sequence allowed us to uncover the logical process that respondents went through from the point of the service failure to their emotions after the act of revenge. A second section included questions regarding the respondents’ demographic information. Despite some difficulties in finding participants who would agree to be interviewed because of the sensitive nature of the topic, and realizing the better customer service proficiency in the UK compared to Jordan, 73 respondents agreed to participate, of whom 28 were from the UK and 45 were from Jordan. 63% of the respondents were male and the average age was less than 29 with 75% of respondents. 54% of the

participants were currently completing their bachelor's degrees, 40% were doing an MBA, and 6% were completing their PhDs.

As recommended by Saunders *et al.* (2007), back translation was used to translate the transcripts from Arabic to English and vice versa, to eliminate any bias in translation and to ensure the best-possible match between the different versions. All authors translated the interview transcripts before they were given to an independent interpreter (a management professor at the University of Jordan) who translated the transcripts back from English to Arabic. The authors met to compare the transcripts and no issues were found in the translation.

To support the findings of the second study, we gathered archival data from a number of sources, including news reports about online revenge and published interviews with people who had committed acts of online revenge. An archival document analysis was applied, using personal and official documents as source material (Obeidat, 2014), in order to increase the validity and reliability of the study and to decrease any bias associated with the use of a single method (e.g., Saunders *et al.*, 2007). This method provided valuable data for analyzing the participant group by creating a richer context for understanding participant responses, and improved the potential for more accurate answers to research questions (e.g., Saunders *et al.*, 2007). The documentary analysis followed a constructed process, beginning with gathering archival data from multiple online and offline sources.

Two famous revenge cases were chosen from the research: the Dave Carroll story and SearsKilledmydog.com. These two cases were chosen specifically because they match the criterion of online revenge, and because they were expected to support the objectives of the study, including investigating the research questions. Following case allocation, the suitability of the obtained data was evaluated through three measures suggested by Saunders *et al.* (2007). First, the overall suitability of the data was assessed with reference to the study objectives. To determine the suitability of the data, the researchers focused on the data's ability to provide the information needed to answer the research questions, as well as its ability to represent the population under examination. Second, the precise suitability of the data was assessed by evaluating the authority and reputation of the data sources. Third, in relation to acquiring the documentary evidence, accessibility, cost of acquiring the documents, and suitability for answering the research questions were evaluated. The final step of the documentary analysis process was to provide a summary of each case, which included reference to the case, the source, and the way in which data provided by each case could be linked to the study's research questions (e.g., Witkin and Altschuld, 1995). Overall, these secondary sources offered a richer background for analysis of the participants' responses, and suggested new questions for the interview process. However, the data gathered here were not included in the data analysis. Instead, by revealing the process that consumers went through to get revenge, the data were used to determine the central themes and questions of the interviews.

3.2. Data Analysis

After concluding the data collection phase, the first author coded the interview transcripts and then identified the key themes of the study. For the data analysis, three major steps common to the grounded theory approach were used (Pratt *et al.*, 2006). **Step 1: Creating provisional**

categories and first-order codes. Data analysis began by using open coding to identify statements regarding the participants' stories about the service failure (Pratt *et al.*, 2006). Afterward, we used similar statements to form provisional categories and first-order codes. After creating the categories, the authors revisited the data to confirm that the data fitted each category. Additionally, a contact summary form was used to record the interview categories, as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). After the codes and categories were created and titled, another review was done to assure fit for the respective categories. **Step 2: Integrating first-order codes and creating theoretical categories.** Codes from each theme were associated for each group. Specifically, the contact forms compiled from all collected data were summarized to articulate a number of main themes (e.g., types of service failures, emotions, facilitating factors, or channels for revenge), as seen in appendix B. This allowed the differences between the categories to be compared, and the developmental variations in the online revenge process to be determined (e.g., type of service failure and resulting emotion). After combining categories, the analysis moved to axial coding to look for relationships between the categories, such as coding statements about participant questions regarding choice of revenge channel and why they used it. We used the category "facilitating factors" to capture these elements and link them together. **Step 3: Delimiting theory by aggregating theoretical dimensions.** After creating the theoretical categories, selective coding was used to further refine the categories and develop a grounded theory (e.g., Saunders *et al.*, 2007; Sekaran, 2003). At this stage, we aimed to understand how the different groups fitted together in a comprehensive picture. We looked at conceptual models and theoretical frameworks that could help describe how these trends related to each other. After identifying a possible framework, we revisited the data's fit (or lack of fit) with our emergent theoretical understanding (e.g., Pratt *et al.*, 2006). Further, in order to test the validity and reliability of the findings, another researcher with no previous knowledge of the topic was asked to code the transcripts according to the coding protocols. The researchers' findings achieved a concordance rate of 100% after two rounds of discussions.

The next section provides an overview of our main findings. This is followed by a discussion of the findings and implications of the study, and then an evaluation of the limitations of the study, with avenues for future research.

4. Findings

After an extensive examination of the data, three main findings became apparent. First, considering that the sample consisted of respondents who had committed acts of revenge, the majority of respondents indicated that their behavioral intent was revenge. Only a few respondents stated that while they wanted to get back at the misbehaving service provider, they also had altruistic motives, which is a trait that often accompanies acts of consumer revenge (Funches *et al.*, 2009). Second, with regard to the customers' time frame for getting revenge online, the majority of respondents committed online revenge the same day as the service failure. Nevertheless, a number of respondents revealed that it took almost a week before they sought online revenge. Third, every service failure incident consisted of a failure in the initial service and a failure in the recovery action (Tripp and Gregoire, 2011). This observation is supported by previous findings (e.g., Joireman *et al.*, 2013; Tripp and Gregoire, 2011) that acts of consumer revenge follow a double deviation. In other words, not only does the firm fail in performing the basic utility the consumer expects, but it also fails in recovering and fixing the situation. As one participant explained:

I was traveling by plane, and the airline lost my luggage—they sent my luggage to another country on another continent. My luggage contained valuable items and

gifts from people I know for their relatives. I called the airline, but they kept on making excuses and didn't want to pay the compensation they usually pay for lost luggage. I had to buy the same valuable gifts that I'd taken with me. When the luggage arrived back in my country after more than one month, I was surprised to find all the valuables were stolen. I was never compensated. (Male, 30, Jordan, airline employee)

4.1. The Routes of Online Revenge

A consumer's planning for a revenge event shows that online revenge is the result of a thoughtful reasoning process and not a spontaneous act (Funches *et al.*, 2009). Even when a consumer feels that his/her goals were not met, the online revenge efforts aim to cause negative publicity that impedes the misbehaving firm's ability to make a profit. Overall, four main types of revenge processes appeared to occur, committed by four main types of avengers. Typically, after consumers suffer a service failure and evaluate the dimensions relating to interactional, procedural, and distributive fairness, their negative emotions lead to a desire for revenge.

For the revenge act itself, data analysis showed that, depending on the type of service failure suffered, consumers use a number of methods to gain retribution in the online context, ranging from posting a simple status update or a "tweet," to more aggressive actions and even illegal methods such as hacking. However, regardless of the various methods, online revenge behavior was found to range along two key axes: legal behaviors and illegal behaviors.

Based on the type of channel and the time/effort that respondents spent on revenge, the researchers were able to identify three distinct forms of online revenge: using social media, third-party platforms, and online aggression. Moreover, the choice of revenge channel appeared to be highly influenced by three factors relating to the nature of the Internet as a communication medium: reach, control, and risklessness. In general, although the following typology is not conclusive and some methods besides these four were mentioned, we looked at the main recurring themes reported by participants. Table (3) further illustrates the main findings of the developed typology.

Table 3: A Typology of Online Consumer Revenge

Process	Types of Avenger			
Materialistic avenger	Ego-defending avenger	Aggressive avenger	Rebellious avenger	
Consumers who commit acts of	Consumers who commit acts of	Consumers who employ	Consumers who commit acts of	

	online revenge against a firm after suffering a material loss	online revenge as a tool for regaining and defending their ego and image	aggressive means online to get back at the misbehaving firm	online revenge in order to expose and rebel against social norms
Type of service failure trigger	Core service malfunction (Distributive fairness violation)	Employee failure (Interactional fairness violation)	Contract breach (Procedural fairness violation)	Wasta (Distributive, interactional, and procedural fairness violation)
Resulting emotional and psychological state	Anger, dissatisfaction, desire for revenge	Anger, humiliation, desire for revenge	Betrayal, desire for revenge	Anger, unfairness, desire for revenge
Facilitating factors	Expectancy of reach	Perceived control and altruism	Risklessness of the Internet	Risklessness and reach
Methods of online revenge	Social media platforms	Third-party revenge	Online aggression via creating websites, SEO manipulators, web creators	Social media platforms, online aggression via spammers, shot-callers, and hackers
Post-revenge emotional states	Positive	Positive	Mixed	Mixed
Recovery action	(Utilitarian approach) Compensation and refunds	(Symbolic approach) Apology in front of other consumers, showing respect, compensation	(Symbolic approach) Sincere apology, explanation of the service failure, exchange or refund	(Mixed approach) Sincere apology, compensation
Sample specific	UK and Jordan	UK and Jordan	Jordan mainly	Jordan only
Frequency	40%	22%	4%	27%
Sample size	(N=28), (N=45)	(N=28), (N=45)	(N=45)	(N=45)

4.1.1.1. Materialistic Avengers

The term “materialistic avengers” refers to those consumers who commit acts of online revenge against a firm after suffering a material loss. In general, the triggers for acts of revenge relate to unfairness and injustice perceptions (i.e., distributive, interactional, and procedural), in addition to failure of recovery action by the firm (Joireman *et al.*, 2013). The findings of this study suggest that the first trigger for consumers to commit acts of online revenge—as reported by the majority of respondents—is a belief that a transaction’s desired outcome was absent, delayed, inferior, or dysfunctional. The time and money wasted due to the transaction relates

to the distributive aspect of a service encounter (Funches *et al.*, 2009). The trigger of online revenge for materialistic avengers is identified as a “core service malfunction.” Four main service failures relating to distributive unfairness were reported by the materialistic avengers, including “product malfunction,” “wrong order malfunction,” “inferior order malfunction,” and “late/no order malfunction” (please refer to Appendix A). This category refers to flaws in the core product and service performance and delivery, as explained by one of the study participants:

I bought a shirt from a clothing store. Before I did, I asked the merchant about the quality of the fabric, which he assured me was excellent, saying that if anything happened to it I could return it. After I went home and washed the shirt, it shrank, so I went back to the store and told him what had happened. He said, “Sorry, but it’s not my problem. You must have washed it in the wrong way and you cannot return it.” So I threw it back in his face and said, “Keep it. It won’t even fit my younger brother.” (Male, 23, Jordan, clothing retailer)

With regard to the elicited emotions and psychological states after the core service malfunction for materialistic avengers, analysis showed that respondents mainly felt dissatisfaction, frustration, and anger. The role of emotions in the consumer revenge literature has largely been established (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010). For example, in the literature, anger and, to a lesser extent, frustration and dissatisfaction were established as some of the key antecedents of revenge acts (e.g., Gregoire *et al.*, 2010; Gregoire and Fisher, 2008; Huefner and Hunt, 2000). Nevertheless, these negative states appear to move the consumer into a state of desire for revenge, which refers to a need to inflict harm on the misbehaving firm (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010), as explained by one participant:

I was really angry about their treatment, because you expect a place so heavily advertised to be good and professional. We were disrespected and I wanted to make them pay for it. (Female, 24, Jordan, hospitality sector)

Following mainly core service malfunction failure, the data analysis shows that the majority of materialistic avengers resorted to using specific social media platforms to get back at misbehaving service providers. Generally, due to the ease of use and accessibility of social media platforms, consumers hoping to get back at a firm used the platforms easily, and almost instantly after the critical incident. Four main types of channels were used in the category labeled “social media revenge”: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and videos (*please refer to appendix B*). The most-used form of social media revenge relates to Facebook. This form of online retribution has four main subcategories based on the level of aggressiveness, and two are related to the materialistic avengers. First, “rabble-rousers” are individuals who speak with the intention of inflaming the emotions of a crowd of people, typically for political reasons. As the name suggests, this category of online avengers uses status updates to tell their service failure story and to trash the misbehaving firm. In addition to directly posting warnings for their Facebook friends instructing them not to deal with the firm, rabble-rousers also use discussions and comments, and sharing of the original post. The second type of Facebook avengers is the “Facebook review avengers.” As the name suggests, these are customers who seek retribution through writing reviews on the service provider’s Facebook page or by using ranking systems set up by the service provider in a vindictive way.

To get back at them, I updated my status on Facebook describing what they did to me and I urged my contacts to share this post so that other people would know. I got a lot of likes and shares from my friends on this post, it really went viral. [The company] tried to contact me afterward, but the situation was irreconcilable for me by then. (Female, 26, Jordan, hospitality sector)

Their page gives you the chance to review them, so I and my friends gave them a horrible review. (Female, 25, Jordan, hospitality sector)

The majority of materialistic avengers cited the Internet's expectancy of reach as their main reason for choosing online platforms for revenge after core service malfunction failures. In advertising literature, reach refers to the number of different people exposed to an ad (Rouse, 2005). Here it refers to the number of people exposed to the avenger's message through the various online media, and the ability of the Internet to spread the message virally. This feature of the Internet allows any customer to broadcast his/her message to hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people at a minimal cost. Customers who would normally share with a small number of family and friends can transcend geographical boundaries and take a story to a very large number of people and, as a result, damage the service provider even more. As one of our participants stated:

I wanted to share my experience with my family and friends on the Internet, who can also share it and spread it. Because in the end, the only things these firms care about are their reputation and their profits. So I thought creating negative publicity about their actions is the only way to hurt them and get even. (Female, 27, UK, telecommunications sector)

With regard to the emotional reactions for the materialistic avengers and social media revenge, the act of revenge elicits positive emotions and enhances the consumer's sense of worth, especially when they gather support from their online communities. In other words, the act of revenge appears to serve also as a method of enhancing consumer esteem and self-image when observing that the firm suffers from the negative consequences of the materialistic avenger's post. As one participant stated:

After my post, I was happy, and when I saw how other consumers and my friends and family responded, I felt a great deal of pleasure and a sense of dignity back. Their efforts to recover the situation and begging me to delete my post only made me happier. (Female, 24, UK, Online retailer)

For firms wishing to recover from an act of revenge by a materialistic avenger, an outcome-related strategy (i.e., utilitarian strategy) that includes money, goods, and time is often what works best (Chou, Hsu, and Goo, 2009). In these types of service failures, consumers often place greater value on the economic loss they have suffered. Similar to the distributive justice aspect, this approach emphasizes the role of equity in the service encounter (Blodgett *et al.*, 1997). Consequently, firms could employ two main tactics. First, knowing that they are mainly motivated to get revenge due to their anger and dissatisfaction as a consequence of their materialistic loss, this could imply that by offering some sort of compensation, firms could reestablish their ties with the materialistic avenger (Ringberg *et al.*, 2007). In addition, repairs,

refunds, and discounts could also help in minimizing the materialistic avenger's desire for revenge (Ringberg *et al.*, 2007). Second, considering that these avengers make their issues heard through social media platforms almost immediately after the service failure using mainly status updates on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube, quick recovery actions by their social media pages could also help diffuse the situation. In general, managers should clinch the opportunity to negotiate with the materialistic avenger and offer them some sort of compensation, which could be done discreetly (Gregoire *et al.*, 2018).

4.1.2. Ego-defending Avengers

The second category of online avengers, labeled "ego-defending avengers," refers to consumers who commit acts of online revenge as a tool for regaining and defending their ego and image. Ego-defending avengers take action when they perceive injustice on the part of the service provider, due to their own feelings of being unimportant, stepped over, disrespected, and disregarded as customers. Consistent with interactional justice evaluations (Funches *et al.*, 2009), the main trigger of online revenge for ego-defending avengers, and the third cited by all respondents, is labeled "employee failure." In this type of service failure, the service provider is either unresponsive or unwilling to comply with consumer demands, or responds to the consumer request in an unconventional, rude, or sarcastic manner. This is seen in the comment below:

Me and my friends were at a coffee shop having dinner and they had a buffet. One of my friends asked the waiter responsible for the drinks, "Can you please fill me another glass of juice?", to which he sarcastically replied: "Fill another one yourself!" We then complained to the manager but got no response. (Female, 22, Jordan, restaurant)

The results show that threats to the consumer's ego as a result of an interaction with the service provider elicit anger and a feeling of humiliation; as a result, the two main emotions leading to the desire for revenge were anger and humiliation. Previous findings also show a link between humiliation and acts of vindictive complaining and revenge, as revenge here would serve as a means of restoring a person's self-esteem (Gelbrich, 2009), as suggested by the participant response below:

I was angry because I felt humiliated. I felt that the waiters are stupid or acting stupid. I felt that they didn't really care or respect if I had a good experience or not. I felt that they are cold and smug, so I wanted to get even and I thought doing it online would achieve that. (Male, 32, UK, hospitality sector)

Respondents who are categorized as ego-defending avengers committed online revenge by targeting their message to a third-party platform in order to vindictively complain about their negative experiences. This form of revenge, labeled "third-party revenge," is similar to the third-party complaining for negative publicity identified by Gregoire *et al.* (2010). Generally, the majority of acts relating to their third-party revenge were triggered by employee service failures, followed by core service malfunction failures. Moreover, the data suggests three sub-groups to third-party revenge: nitpickers, generic nitpickers, and scribes (please refer to appendix 3). One participant further explains this behavior:

To get back at them I sent a very bad but fair complaint to a consumer advocacy website that we have here. They even published my complaint on the main page. (Male, 24, Jordan, local retailer)

Although it is quite easy to perform such actions (i.e., third-party revenge), it requires more time and effort from customers than social media revenge does, though less time and effort than the more aggressive online acts reported in the sections that follow. Also, while the expectancy of reach is frequently mentioned, most participants who committed third-party revenge cited the stronger perception of control online as the reason they chose the online medium. Perceived control often refers to “the individual’s perception of how easy or difficult performance of the behavior is likely to be” (Tonglet, 2000, p. 338). In this study, the majority of the ego-defending avengers cited greater control as their main reason for using the Internet for revenge. A logical conclusion is that the Internet offers angry customers the chance to articulate their opinions more effectively, and thereby empowers them to commit the revenge behavior. Previous findings in the e-marketing literature found that perceived control plays an important role in adopting new technologies, online shopping, and acts of consumer misbehavior such as online piracy and shoplifting (e.g., Huang *et al.*, 2011; Shim *et al.*, 2001; Tonglet, 2000). Consequently, based on these findings we conclude that perceived control also encourages customers to actually commit revenge. As one participant stressed:

It was easily accessible and it’s the only way I think I can do it. Also, it takes less time to type something to post on the Internet than it does to write out and post a formal letter. (Male, 25, Jordan, local retailer)

As far as ego-defending avengers’ post-revenge emotions were concerned, most respondents felt that their online revenge behaviors provided a sense of satisfaction and comfort. Moreover, the majority of third-party avengers felt that their online revenge acts were justified and were actually helpful to other consumers. Previous findings in the literature tend to support the notion that revenge is sometimes rationalized as being motivated by altruistic notions whereby the revenge-seeking customer takes on an altruistic persona (Funches *et al.*, 2009). As a result, positive emotions can arise, as the customer achieves a sense of vindication while also thinking that his/her revenge action has also helped other consumers. This notion is pointed out by one participant:

If they didn’t feel bad about treating me badly, why should I? While I admit getting my review out made me feel good and content, it also made me feel good to know that others would benefit from my experience with them. (Female, 26, Jordan, hospitality sector)

For the ego-defending avengers, considering they dealt with a lack of interactional justice (i.e., process failure) and that the service failure represented a threat to their ego, they cared less about their materialistic loss than about the negative feelings they had endured as a result of their ego getting hurt (Obeidat *et al.*, 2017). Generally, the symbolic recovery approach is more suitable here (Ringberg *et al.*, 2007). Consequently, the acceptance of blame and offering an apology should go a long way in minimizing the desire for revenge for these types of consumers (Bies and Shapiro, 1987). Moreover, these consumers will likely commit their online revenge activities on third-party platforms that ensure that their story will reach other consumers. As a result, managers should first and foremost offer a sincere apology that should

be highly personalized and should not be an automated response like the ones their social media pages often present. Also, firms should demonstrate that they actually care and respect the offended consumer in order to restore his/her sense of validation and self-respect (Ringberg *et al.*, 2007). In addition, offering some sort of compensation or VIP treatment would go a long way toward minimizing the negative influence the service failure had on them. In this case, a public apology should also minimize the negative feelings the ego-defending avenger has and could restore his/her self-esteem, especially if it's done during or right after the service failure. Additionally, to reduce these avengers' sense of altruism and protection of others, which is common in acts of revenge (Funches *et al.*, 2009), a public apology and a statement of how the firm could improve its procedures and services could help to minimize the ego-defending avenger's desire for revenge and could even generate some positive buzz about the firm.

4.1.3. Aggressive Avengers

The “aggressive avengers” category refers to consumers who are willing to expend time and effort to get revenge, and who employ aggressive means online to get back at the misbehaving firm. Aggressive avengers are primarily motivated by issues related to procedural aspects of service. Hence, the third main trigger of online revenge is labeled a “contract breach.” Although the influence of procedural fairness on revenge acts has been seen as weak (Funches *et al.*, 2009), contract breach failure was reported by a small number of respondents (mainly in the Jordanian sample). In this type of service failure, the service provider backs out of the initial agreement with the customer by changing the procedures and the legal documents initially signed by the customer, as explained by one respondent:

My issue was with an Internet company (Internet service provider). The company transferred their customers to another company. The Internet company contracts forbade them from transferring clients and most of the customers paid one year up front. The company breached the contracts and forced the clients to get a lower offer at the other company. The new company they transferred us to requested all transferred customers to sign new contracts for a lower offer or the service would be stopped. (Male, 35, Jordan, telecommunications sector)

Understandably, the aggressive avengers identify betrayal as the key emotion triggering a desire for revenge—and particularly for acts of revenge after a contract breach service failure. In this type of service failure, because the service provider has broken a promise to the consumer by changing the initial agreed-upon arrangement, the feeling of betrayal becomes the motivation for consumers to go online to seek revenge (Tripp and Gregoire, 2011), as explained by one participant:

I honestly felt that they betrayed me, they were dishonest with me. There should be rules that prevent companies from taking advantage of their customers in such a way, so I wanted to find a way to get back at them and show everyone what they did. (Male, 27, Jordan, telecommunications sector)

After a contract breach failure, aggressive avengers employ perhaps the only method of online revenge that includes illegal means and misuse of the Internet, which is labeled “online aggression revenge.” Generally, this form of online revenge requires more “tech savviness” and

effort from the customer. The time frame is also extended—all respondents who committed this behavior took more than a week to carry out their revenge. In this category of aggressive online revenge behavior, five main forms were identified (i.e., hackers, SEO manipulators, web creators, spammers, and shot-callers), and they appear to occur only after a contract breach failure (or a wasta service failure, which is discussed in the next section). However, only two forms were reported after a contract breach failure. The first form is the SEO manipulator, which includes angry customers who manipulate the order of search results on Google and other search engines so that the misbehaving firm appears lower in the results of the search engine, especially with non-paid results on Google. One participant describes this process:

I posted a number of scam ads on their website. What they don't know is that my ads will reduce the rank and the number of people who visit their website, because when their website appears scandalous, the number of visitors will decline and so will their rank in the organic results on any search engine. (Male, 25, Jordan, online local retailer)

The second category of online aggression revenge is that of “web creators.” In this form of online revenge, the angry customer creates a website focused on insults aimed at the misbehaving firm, as a means of getting back at them. This form of revenge has previously been examined by Ward and Ostrom (2006), who found that betrayed consumers tend to create websites to damage companies that have wronged them. Similar to the SEO manipulators category, this form of online revenge also requires technical expertise and greater effort from the customer than other online revenge forms, as described by one participant:

I created a web page full of insults aimed at this company. They tried to contact me to shut it down and even threatened me with legal action, but I wanted people to know their true face. Nevertheless, to avoid a lawsuit I changed the nature of the web page, and it is now a customer service review page. (Male, 21, Jordan, telecommunications sector)

Furthermore, considering that aggressive avengers employ aggressive and illegal means of getting revenge, the majority of respondents who employed these measures cited Internet risklessness as their main reason for choosing the Internet as a medium for revenge, rather than marketplace aggression. This factor is the opposite side of perceived risk, which reflects the undesirable consequences of behaviors (Featherman and Pavlou, 2003). Data analysis shows that some respondents preferred to commit revenge on the Internet because of its risklessness, compared to traditional means of revenge such as vandalism or physical attacks. Evidence from the consumer misbehavior literature supports this finding. For example, a link exists between risklessness and shoplifting—noting that shoplifting is considered a form of revenge (Tonglet, 2000). Moreover, the increase in online piracy levels is also linked to the lack of risk, as seen in a lowered fear of penalty involved in committing online piracy (Shanahan and Hyman, 2010). Consequently, the nature of Internet risklessness appears to provide a safe haven for angry customers who seek revenge. This participant’s statement supports this finding:

It's the only way to get my revenge without going to jail!! Because I seriously considered pulling the worker from his desk and smashing him. We don't have laws here to stop these sorts of things and I doubt they can catch me!! (Male, 26, Jordan, shopping mall)

Regarding aggressive avengers' emotions following their act of revenge, the act of online revenge appears to elicit mixed emotional reactions. While the respondent is happy to feel a sense of vindication and pleasure from the revenge act, a degree of both resentment toward the firm and guilt remain, due to the service failure itself and the consumer's knowledge that the use of illegal methods was inconsistent with the self-image intended when choosing to get back at a firm. One participant elaborated on this point:

It makes you feel good, but after that the hard feelings toward them didn't go away because I am not an aggressive person who likes to break some laws to do these sorts of things. (Male, 21, Jordan, telecommunications sector)

For the aggressive avengers, however, finding a suitable recovery is more difficult due to the severity of the service failures they suffered and their stronger desire to get back at the firm. Nevertheless, since they were mainly agitated by a contract breach, and thus a lack of procedural fairness, these consumers often adopt an oppositional approach toward firms (Ringberg *et al.*, 2007). As a result, a symbolic recovery approach is also suitable here (Chou, Hsu, and Goo, 2009). Firms should apologize and admit fault. In addition, offering a refund for the consumer's troubles should minimize the negative consequences of the service failure. However, managers should act quickly to recover the situation to reduce the chances of escalation considering that these types of avengers often take their time plotting their revenge. Furthermore, seeing that these consumers mainly employ illegal means to get back at firms, managers should employ legal measures that protect their firm's image and reputation. If the firm is not responsible for the service failure, offering a response to the aggressive avenger's claims and an explanation of the firm's point of view could reduce the negative effects of the aggressive avenger's claim on other consumers of the firm (Gregoire *et al.*, 2018).

4.1.4. Rebellious Avengers

The "rebellious avengers" category, which refers to consumers who commit acts of online revenge in order to expose and rebel against social norms, is seen in this study predominantly in the Jordanian service context. While a wide range of service failure types were found to encourage online revenge, the second most common, and the most important for the Jordanian sample, is a phenomenon labeled "wasta." Wasta is related to nepotism and favoritism, and is a prevalent phenomenon in Jordan. More specifically, wasta often refers to a practice in which one party favors another because of a social or personal connection, and can include favoritism for non-family members such as close friends or favored customers (Barnett *et al.*, 2013). Despite this subject being heavily studied in organizational contexts (Ali *et al.*, 2013), there has been little examination of it in the service context. Moreover, while the previous three types related to distributive, interactional, and procedural dimensions of the service encounter, the wasta service failure appears to relate to all three dimensions simultaneously.

In the study results, three types of wasta acts relating to each type of justice violation motivated rebellious avengers to get revenge (Tax and Brown, 1998). The first is labeled "distributive wasta." This type relates to unfairness in the outcomes provided to customers by the firm. In this situation, the firm and its employees unfairly distribute their services to customers based on the favored customers' previous social links to the service provider. In the second type of wasta, procedural wasta, the unfairness occurs at the levels of service delivery

process and service policy, and demonstrates favored delivery and processes for some consumers at the expense of others, based on social connections and gender. The third type, interactional wasta, relates to the social aspect—the direct treatment of the customer by the service provider—in the interaction between service provider and customer (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010). The preferred customers receive better treatment than others due to their gender or to previous social links to the service provider. The following example provided by study respondents demonstrates an act of distributive wasta (*please refer to appendix A for procedural and interactional wasta*):

I took a course in marketing with a real close friend of mine, which was taught by a doctor ... I got 27 in the mid-term exam and she (my friend) got 18. In the project and participation I also got higher marks than her. Despite that, when the grades came out she got an A and I got a B+ despite doing very well in the exam. After a while I found out that she got a higher mark because the doctor was from the same city my friend was from ... So I really trashed the doctor on Facebook and received a lot of likes and shares of my story. I also filed a complaint against her with the university, but nothing was done to her. However, after my post the students are very wary of taking classes with this doctor.
(Female, 23, Jordan, educational sector)

In addition to anger, the major emotion reported as a result of wasta is a sense of suffering based on unfairness. This is understandable, considering that the consumer feels stepped over by the service provider in terms of treatment, outcomes provided, and laws and regulations that favor other consumers. One participant further stresses this point:

I felt a huge sense of unfairness. What is the point of having rules and queues if you as a service provider won't respect them? (Male, 31, Jordan, governmental sector)

Rebellious avengers are related to social media avengers in general. However, three main methods of the online aggression category of revenge were mentioned: spammers, shot-callers, and hackers. As described by several participants, spammers are the group of customers who get revenge on firms by spamming their Facebook pages with continuous threats and vindictive complaints, often posting the same complaint every time it is deleted just to annoy the firm and create negative publicity.

I really drove them mad, I kept posting the same text every day just to expose and annoy them until eventually they blocked me, but then I told all of my friends to post the same message on their page. (Male, 24, Jordan, hospitality sector)

The second method reported in this category is that of the “shot-callers.” As the name suggests, this group of consumers function as gang leaders. Shot-callers are customers who, after an unsatisfactory experience with a service provider, create a Facebook group to publicly criticize the firm and its actions in order to create negative publicity that will damage the firm. This is described by one of the participants:

I created a Facebook group called “S...buy sucks,” detailing my story and urging other customers not to buy from them. (Female, 25, Jordan, retailer)

With regard to “hackers,” the data suggests that consumers also use hacking technologies to take revenge on misbehaving organizations by manipulating and taking over the web domain of the firm, as described by one participant:

I hacked their website. Anyone who visited their website would see the story of what they did to me on the front page. It went down for a couple of hours, but then they got it back.
(Male, 26, Jordan, shopping mall)

Similar to the contract breach service failures, the reason for choosing the Internet for revenge is largely motivated by Internet risklessness, followed by expectancy of reach. Moreover, the emotional outcomes of online revenge are inconsistent, with mixed emotions displayed after the respondent has employed online aggression revenge, and with positive emotions when the consumer commits social media revenge. The rebellious avenger also appears to assume an oppositional approach toward firms. Considering they mainly suffered a “wasta” service failure, which included aspects relating to a lack of procedural, distributive, and interactional justice, adopting a mixed recovery strategy instead of just one of the previous strategies should reduce these angry consumers’ desire for revenge (Ringberg *et al.*, 2007). The service provider could adopt both a symbolic strategy (e.g., an apology) and a utilitarian strategy (e.g., compensation). Furthermore, after the apology, managers could provide consumers with a detailed statement of what went wrong in their service encounter after conducting their own investigation. In addition, they should provide the consumer with the main regulations and the procedures they follow when dealing with consumers. Moreover, publicly explaining how the firm is going to fix the issue of wasta for other consumers could reduce the rebellious avengers’ desire for revenge (Gregoire *et al.*, 2018).

5. Discussion

Using a qualitative approach and a sample of Jordanian and British respondents who had previously committed acts of online revenge (N=73), this study identified four main types of online consumer avengers: materialistic, ego-defending, aggressive, and rebellious. Subsequently, this study presented an empirically derived typology of these online revenge processes, identifying the triggers, the emotional and psychological drivers, and the resulting revenge method and its emotional consequences. In addition, the study revealed three main factors that encourage angry customers to seek revenge online: risklessness, perceived control, and Internet reach. Overall, the findings present previously unidentified types of service failures, as well as forms of online revenge that had not yet been identified.

To highlight the theoretical contributions of this study, we constructed Table (4), which highlights the literature findings regarding consumer revenge in the online and offline contexts when compared to our findings. In terms of theory, the first contribution of this study relates to the first research question, which addresses the triggers and motivations of online revenge. Data analysis shows that four main types of service failures trigger online revenge in two different countries: wasta, employee failure, core service failure, and contract breach. The first and most important contribution of this study is the identification of wasta as a trigger for revenge. This study identified three types of wasta: procedural, distributive, and interactional. Aside from the preferential treatment that firms deliberately engage in to reward their VIP customers (Park *et al.*, 2009), the concept of wasta has not yet been investigated in the service context. This study

not only shows that this phenomenon is a trigger for online revenge, but also identifies it as a new type of service failure. The severity of waste service failures is indicated in this study by the fact that they incorporate all three elements of procedural, interactional, and distributive unfairness. In addition, this study identifies a new type of service failure and trigger labeled a “contract breach.” This form of service failure could be due to the lack of proper consumer protection legislation in Jordan, compared to more advanced economies (Obeidat *et al.*, 2016). Some Jordanian firms take advantage of this lack of regulation and oversight, making changes to procedures and services without the customer’s knowledge. With regard to the third type of service failure, labeled “employee failure,” the previous literature tends to support this study’s finding. For example, Huang and Lin (2011) and Gruber (2011) identified similar forms of service failure, which they labeled “employee rude behavior” and “lack of attention to customers.” The final trigger and type of service failure, the “core service failure malfunction,” was also supported. For example, similar to the late/no order malfunction category, Huang and Lin (2011) found a similar type of service failure, labeled “unavailable service.” Park *et al.* (2008) also identified product failure and delivery failure as new types of service failure. Generally, this typology of service failures moves away from the often exhaustive and broad types of service failures, such as fairness dimensions (e.g., Gregoire *et al.*, 2010) and process/outcome failures (Obeidat *et al.*, 2017), that have dominated the literature. Consequently, this approach offers decision makers a detailed look into ten main types of service failures that can result in acts of revenge and how to deal with each one.

The second contribution of this study relates to the second research question, regarding the forms of online revenge. The study identifies three main types of online customer revenge—social media revenge, third-party revenge, and online aggression revenge—with 16 subcategories. To our knowledge, aside from the creation of websites as a form of revenge (Ward and Ostrom, 2006) and third-party complaints for negative publicity and to consumer advocacy websites (Gregorie *et al.*, 2010; Gregorie *et al.*, 2018), none of the forms identified in this study have been previously identified or explored. In contrast to traditional brick-and-mortar revenge methods, the findings of this study show the variety of online tools that customers can use to get back at misbehaving firms, from simple tweets or status updates to illegal and complex behaviors, such as hacking the web domain of the firm or manipulation of search engine results to reduce the misbehaving firm’s ranking. The forms of online revenge identified require various levels of effort, time, and technical skills from the customers. Nevertheless, the results show how easy it is for an angry customer to use social media revenge after a service failure.

Regarding the motivations of getting revenge online, this study identifies three main factors—reach, risklessness, and control—that encourage customers to seek revenge online instead of using traditional means of revenge (e.g., physical and verbal abuse, negative word of mouth, vandalism). The most frequently cited reason for getting revenge online was Internet reach. Consequently, this devastating feature allows a customer who would normally tell the service failure story only to family and friends to highlight the failure to most of the company’s market share and to other potential customers, thus increasing the negative publicity of the failed actions. In addition, the Internet appears to increase the customer perception of control, making a behavior that might otherwise seem difficult feel, instead, easy and accessible. In the online context, customers can take time to think, and then choose the method of revenge they can carry out best. The Internet also offers an environment where the customer can perform the revenge act without fear of penalty or acts of counterretaliation by the firm. This nature of

risklessness allows the angry customer to get revenge mostly through words, and without the negative consequences that often accompany the traditional means of revenge such as vandalism, trashing, or physical and verbal attacks. Generally, support for these findings exists in the literature. For example, the perception of control and the risklessness of the Internet were found to encourage some acts of customer misbehavior such as online piracy and shoplifting (e.g., Shanahan and Hyman, 2010; Tonglet, 2000). The widespread nature of the Internet was found, in some instances, to encourage the forwarding of online content and online complaints (Ho and Dempsey, 2010; Ward and Ostrom, 2006), which relates to the concept of reach.

With regard to the third contribution of this study and the third research question, data analysis shows that the majority of respondents enjoyed mostly positive emotional outcomes after committing acts of online revenge. Generally, there are two different perspectives on the emotional consequences of revenge, with some research arguing that revenge will produce positive emotional outcomes (e.g., Bushman *et al.*, 2001; Strobe *et al.*, 2011) and others arguing that revenge will produce negative emotions, especially if the offender does have a sense of remorse (e.g., Bushman, 2002; McCullough *et al.*, 2007). In this study, the data analysis shows that the emotional outcomes of online revenge are mainly dependent on the method and tools used for getting revenge. In other words, when the consumer employs legal means for getting back at the misbehaving firm and feels that his/her actions would actually benefit other consumers while harming the firm, positive emotional outcomes will arise. In contrast, if consumers employ illegal methods such as hacking to get back at the firm, they may be happy but still feel that they had done something wrong in order to achieve the gratification—which demonstrates the mixed emotions that can arise. In general, a number of factors support this result. First, it is assumed that revenge has healing powers and that acting on anger generally feels good, especially when the actions punish violations such as a firm’s misbehavior (Bushman *et al.*, 2001). Second, revenge is often found to lead to increased satisfaction when the offender understands that the action was bad (Gollwitzer and Denzler, 2009). Because social media allows other people to know the offender’s mistake, and as the reach of the customer’s revenge story has increased, it becomes more likely that the offending company will understand its wrongdoing. In addition, because the customer’s target of revenge is not an individual, the negative feelings that are reported to accompany acts of traditional revenge are removed, and will be replaced with positive responses if the customer perceives the firm to be greedy—a factor that is reported to increase the motivation for customer revenge (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010).

Table 4: Comparison of Our Contributions Compared to the Literature

Factor	Online revenge	Offline revenge	Our findings
<i>Triggers of consumer revenge</i>	Double deviation, process and outcome service failures (Source: Obeidat <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010)	Double deviation; procedural, interactional, and distributive justice violations; failure severity; blame attribution (Source: Joireman <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010)	1) Core service malfunction (i.e., product malfunction, wrong order malfunction, inferior order malfunction, late/no order malfunction) 2) Employee failure 3) Wasta (procedural, interactional, and distributive) 4) Contract breach

Methods of revenge	Third-party complaining for publicity	Vandalism, trashing, verbal and physical abuse, create cost/loss, theft, vindictive word of mouth, third-party complaining for negative publicity, direct and indirect revenge (i.e., negative online third-party complaining for publicity)	1) Social media revenge (i.e., rabble-rousers, Facebook review, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, angry unboxers)
	Vindictive complaining to consumer websites		2) Third-party revenge (i.e., nitpickers, generic nitpickers, scribes)
Mediators and moderators	Creation of anti-consumption websites		3) Online aggression (i.e., hackers, SEO manipulators, web creators, spammers, shot-callers)
	(Source: Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Ward and Ostrom, 2006)	(Source: Huefner and Hunt, 2000; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009)	
Behavioral and emotional consequences of revenge	(Greater negative publicity, altruistic senses)	Perceived power, relationship quality, perceived greed, firm's motive, ideocentrism, allocentrism	Risklessness, reach, and perceived control
	(Source: Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Funches <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Ward and Ostrom, 2006)	(Source: Zourrig <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2010)	
Behavioral and emotional consequences of revenge	Emotional consequences	Behavioral consequences (i.e., switching, avoidance, demands of reparation)	Positive affect (if revenge method was legal), mixed affect (if revenge method was illegal)
	Positive affect	(Source: Zourrig <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Joireman <i>et al.</i> , 2013)	
	(Source: Gregoire <i>et al.</i> , 2018)		

The current research identifies the cultural differences in online revenge between Jordan and Britain. For Jordanians, the most frequent triggers were wasta and then contract breaches, while for the British sample, the most frequent revenge triggers were core service malfunctions and then employee service failures. These findings are consistent with previous findings in the literature (Gregoire *et al.*, 2010; Funches *et al.*, 2009), which showed that in Western countries, service failures tend to originate more from a lack of distributive and interactional fairness than from procedural fairness. Considering that Jordan is mainly a collectivist tribal culture with a high tendency to adopt favoritism (Qasem, 2015), it's unsurprising that this type of service failure was one of the main triggers of online revenge. In Britain, however—a highly individualistic culture (Loewe, Blume, Schönleber, Seibert, Speer, and Voss, 2007)—this tendency for favoritism was minimal in service encounters, and for this sample there was a higher level of behaving in accordance with rule and process by the British service providers. Furthermore, the lack of consumer protection regulations makes it easier for some firms to bend the rules and change their policies to take advantage of some Jordanian consumers in the form of contract breaches (Obeidat *et al.*, 2016). Another finding that was consistent with previous research was that a limited influence was found for procedural service failures (i.e., contract breaches) on acts of revenge (Funches *et al.*, 2009), which again suggests a higher degree of rule-following by British service providers.

In terms of online forms of revenge, social media platforms are the most popular channel for revenge acts in both countries. However, with regard to third-party revenge, British participants favored third-party revenge acts more than Jordanians. This finding is supported by the findings of Gregoire *et al.* (2018) and Funches *et al.* (2009) and suggests that avengers in Western countries sometimes embody the role of altruists while getting revenge. Consequently, the revenge action here is aimed not only at getting even with the firm, but also at helping and protecting other consumers, which causes the individual to post their revenge message on third-party platforms. This finding can also be explained by the lack of local review platforms in Jordan compared to Britain (Obeidat *et al.*, 2017), which leaves angry Jordanian consumers with social media platforms in addition to the illegal revenge methods. Additionally, the category of online aggressors was found only in the Jordanian sample. Consequently, the lack of online and cyber-crime protection laws in Jordan as compared to Britain could also explain the greater tendency to engage in online aggressive acts. This also indicates why risklessness was cited more in the Jordanian sample and why perceived control was lower. This choice of channel could also be down to the individual's emotional condition before the act of revenge, as previous evidence shows that the emotional outcomes of service failures for Jordanian consumers were more charged than their British counterparts, who tended to cognitively evaluate their revenge options more (Obeidat *et al.*, 2017). As a result, positive emotions were always found in the UK sample, but for Jordanians the emotional outcomes following online aggression were mixed. The findings of Gregoire *et al.* (2018) tend to support these findings considering that positive affect resulting from complaining to consumer platforms (i.e., legal method) was also found for the vigilante schema.

6. Managerial Implications

As seen by the findings of this study, customers are not submissive anymore; social media and online platforms have provided them with powerful tools to get back at firms that have wronged them. As technology will certainly continue to empower customers and provide them with new means of revenge (Funches *et al.*, 2009), the best way to minimize acts of online vengeance is to try to minimize or eliminate service failure incidents and to employ better recovery actions (Joriman *et al.*, 2013). Generally, companies can prevent such acts by offering quick and suitable recovery actions as soon as the customer makes a complaint. Nevertheless, managers also need to identify, handle, and respond to online revenge acts.

While suitable recovery actions were presented earlier for each type of avenger, generally, in failures relating to the final outcome and interactional aspect of the service encounter, which were common in the British sample, the customer has suffered a material loss, and so quick refunds and compensation would be a good first response. Employees should receive sufficient training on appropriate ways to behave with customers. This is especially true for frontline service personnel, who are typically first to handle complaints and who most frequently must absorb the customer's anger. Better training should minimize the number of customers who feel the need to resort to an online medium to vent or get even. Improvements to operating and tracking systems to show customers the status of their orders should also minimize customer frustration. Furthermore, the social media platform pages of the service provider should move beyond a focus on promoting the company and also act as a customer service center that quickly absorbs and responds to consumer complaints.

Similar to the British sample, for managers operating in the Middle East a better approach to dealing with failures related to the process of the service would be to apologize and to take actions to boost the ego of the customer. Moreover, managers should implement specific measures to reduce waste service failures, including queue systems, codes of conduct for employees, and operating systems that assign a unique number that masks customer identity so that employees will not know whose application they are processing. Firms should provide a detailed job description that each employee must follow for all customer interactions. Imposing financial and legal penalties on employees who participate in waste and who show discrimination against customers could also help to minimize these types of service failures. Also, to avoid accusations of waste and to minimize accusations of customer or gender favoritism, customers could be given detailed information about the service process they should expect. With regard to contract breach failures, implementing modern consumer protection laws and educating Jordanian consumers on their rights, as well as imposing financial penalties on firms that change elements of signed customer contracts, could also minimize such acts of fraud. The lack of governmental monitoring and consumer protection laws seems to have empowered consumers to take matters into their own hands and to strike back against firms that have wronged them, instead of merely complaining. Noting that a number of respondents indicated that their motivation for online revenge was due to changes made to their original contracts, firms should highlight their customer service procedures and policies more explicitly at the start of any customer interaction. Considering the more aggressive nature of revenge acts in Jordan, more up-to-date laws should enforce regulations on the work of social media platforms and protect firms from hacks and unrealistic “blackmailing” complaints. Control measures limiting the number of messages an angry customer can post on the service provider’s social media page could allow the company time to respond and to handle the complaint appropriately, while reducing acts of spamming on their web pages. Furthermore, consumer advocacy and experience platforms such as booking.com, tripadvisor.com, and consumeraffairs.com should employ measures to investigate user postings to ensure that consumer revenge messages are honest.

7. Limitations and Future Research

As with all research designs, the current study is restricted by the approach and techniques used. However, the findings of this study provide a framework upon which future research could build. First, future research could apply a more quantitative approach. A study with a larger sample would provide a better understanding of the relationships between the variables identified in this study, especially regarding the emotions and the best recovery actions after revenge. In addition, considering that this study included samples from two countries in order to compare different cultures, future research could employ larger samples that are more appropriate for a cross-cultural comparison. Second, considering the sensitivity of the issues and the difficulty of finding participants who are willing to provide their stories, employing more experimental designs could help to achieve higher response rates. Third, other forms of online revenge that have not yet been identified may exist, which is a subject that calls for further research. Fourth, the role that personality traits play in situations of consumer revenge is another neglected area of research. Consequently, future research could examine the influence of different personality traits on acts of online revenge. Finally, examining the

contextual factors relating to social media websites could uncover more factors that encourage acts of online revenge.

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Appendix A: Data supporting interpretation of process typology of online revenge

Theme	Definition	Representation Quotations
	Triggers of online revengers	
Core service malfunction	flaws in the core product and service performance and delivery	
product malfunction	refers to service failures that occur as a result of a malfunction in the product sold to the customer	<i>I bought a shirt from a clothing store, before I did, I asked the merchant to about the quality of the fabric to which he assured me it was excellent and if anything happens to it I can return it. After I went home and washed the shirt, it shrunk, so I went back to the store and told him what happened. He said sorry but it's not my problem you must have washed in a wrong way and you cannot return. So I throw it back in his face and said keep it won't even fit my younger brother. (Male, 23, Jordan, clothing retailer)</i>
"Wrong Order Malfunction	a situation when a customer receives an incorrect order and the service provider fails to admit the mistake	<i>I ordered a dress from an online store, however, when it was delivered it turned out to be very different from what I ordered, it was made from a different bad material and it had a different color. They answered after my third email but they refused to change the dress for me or refund me for their mistake</i>

		<i>although I showed a screenshot of my original order!!! (Female, 26, UK, online retailer)</i>
"Inferior Order Malfunction"	is when the product or service is actually delivered, but with a lower standard than what the customer was promised	<i>It was a coffee shop that promises to serve fresh cocktails and have a relaxing atmosphere. When I went there I didn't find any of these promises, the juices were not fresh nor natural, the place was really noisy and their prices were too expensive. (Female, 21, Jordan, hospitality sector)</i>
"Late/No Order Malfunction"	situations in which the customer order is very late or is not received at all	<i>A supplier in Amazon.com promised me to deliver a book in 7 days but after waiting it for 3 weeks I asked supplier to cancel my order and return my money back and I gave feed to that in amazon' website as- worst seller ever seen.(Male, 27, UK, online retailer)</i>
Employee failure	A situation where the service provider is either unresponsive or unwilling to comply with consumer demands, or responds to the consumer request in an unconventional, rude, or sarcastic manner	<i>Me and my friends were at a coffee shop having dinner and they had a buffet, one of my friends asked the waiter responsible for the drinks "can you please fill me another glass of juice" to which he sarcastically replied "fill another one yourself!" we then complained to the manager but to no response. (Female, 22, Jordan, Restaurant)</i>
Contract breach	the service provider backs out of the initial agreement with the customer by changing the procedures and the legal documents initially signed by the customer	<i>My issue was with an internet company (Internet service provider), the company transferred their customers to another company. The internet company contracts forbid them from transferring clients and most of the customers paid one year up-front. The company breached the contracts and forced the clients to get a lower offer at the other company. The new company they transferred us to, requested all transferred customers to sign new contracts for a lower offer or the service will be stopped. (Male, 35, Jordan, Telecommunications sector)</i>
Wasta	a practice in which one party favors another because of a social or personal connection, and can include favoritism for non-family members such as close friends or favored customers	
Distributive Wasta".	This type relates to unfairness in the outcomes provided to customers by the firm. In this situation the firm and its employees unfairly distribute their services to customers based on the favored customers' previous social links to the service provider	<i>I took a course in marketing with a real close friend of mine with a doctor that I previously heard some rumors about, nevertheless, it was the only course I could take at that specific time and no other doctor was teaching that course at the time. I got 27 in the mid-term exam and she got 18, in the project and participation I also got higher marks than her. Despite that when the grades came out she got an A and I got a B+ despite doing very well in the exam. After I while I found out that she got a higher mark because the doctor was from the same city my friend was from. So I really trashed the doctor on Facebook and received a lot of likes and shares of my story. I also filed a complaint against her with the university but nothing was done to her however after my post the students are very hesitant at taking classes with this doctor. (Female, 23, Jordan, educational sector)</i>

Procedural Wasta,	the unfairness occurs at the levels of service delivery process and service policy, and demonstrates favored delivery and process for some consumers at the expense of others, based on social and gender connections	<i>I waited in line for almost an hour with no movement in the que at a governmental agency, then all of a sudden two guys show up and go directly to the front of the line greeting the employee saying that they were sent by a person related to the employee, without any shame, the employee handles their application with all of us waiting and staring at each other in amazement, everyone started to complain but nobody really paid attention to us, so I sent the story to an online news agency who published it.(Male, 31, Jordan, governmental sector)</i>
Interactional Wasta	The preferred customers receive better treatment than others due to their gender or to previous social links to the service provider.	<i>I went out to a nice restaurant with some male friends of mine, their service was absolutely rubbish, they didn't pay attention to us, they were overly sarcastic and rude to our demands and all of the waiters concentrated on serving a girls table right next to us although we were there before them, they were served first, every few minutes the waiters would go to them asking if they needed anything, they were given free desert and a discount too, after seeing this we complained to the manager a few times to which he sarcastically replied that the girls were close friends to one of the waiters. (Male, 28, U.K., Hospitality sector)</i>
	<i>Facilitator factors</i>	
Expectancy of reach	the number of people exposed to the avenger message through the various online media	<i>I wanted to share my experience with my family and friends on the Internet, who can also share it and spread it. Because in the end, the only thing these firms care about are there reputation and their profits. So I thought creating negative publicity about their actions is the only way to hurt them and get even.(Female, 27, UK, Telecommunications sector)</i> <i>Easy to use, cheap, and can reach a wider audience than magazines or newspapers. (Female, 28, U.K., Hospitality sector)</i>
Perceived control	the individual's perception of how easy or difficult performance of the behavior is likely to be	<i>It was easily accessible and it's the only way I think I can do it, also it takes less time to type something to post on the internet than it does to write out and post a formal letter. (Male, 28, U.K., Hospitality sector)</i> <i>It was easily accessible and it's the only way I think I can do it, also it takes less time to type something to post on the internet than it does to write out and post a formal letter. (Male, 25, Jordan, Local retailer)</i>
Risklessness	Refers to opposite function of perceived apprehension risk, which reflects the undesirable consequences of behaviors	<i>It's the only way to get my revenge without going to jail!! Because I seriously considered pulling the worker from his desk and smashing him, we don't have laws here to stop these sort of things and I doubt they can catch me!!. (Male, 26, Jordan, shopping mall)</i> <i>i think its the only way i can make them pay without getting caught (Male, 21, Jordan, Telecommunications sector)</i>

Appendix (B): types of online revenge:

Type of online revenge	Form	Channel	Definition	Quote
Social Media Revenge	Rabble-rousers	Facebook	online avengers who uses status updates to tell their service failure story and to trash the misbehaving firm. In addition to directly posting warnings for their Facebook friends not to deal with the firm, rabble-rousers also include discussions and comments, and sharing of the original post	<i>To get back at them, I updated my status on Facebook describing what they did to me and I urged my contacts to share this post so that other people would know, I got a lot of likes and shares from my friends on this post, it really went viral, they tried to contact me afterwards, but the situation was irreconcilable for me by then. (Female, 26, Jordan, Hospitality sector)</i>
Social Media Revenge	Facebook Review Avengers	Facebook	customers who seek retribution through writing reviews on the service provider's Facebook page or by using ranking systems set up by the service provider in a vindictive way	<i>Their page give you the chance to review them, so my and friends gave them a horrible review. (Female, 25, Jordan, Hospitality sector)</i>
Social Media Revenge	Twitter avengers	Twitter	angry customers who seek retribution through multiple tweets and hash-tags that attacking the service provider and detail the customers' stories to their followers	<i>I tweeted my story using the hash-tag "#air.....#worstflightexperience" and urged all of my friends to Retweet my post. It was Retweeted by 56 of my followers. They had no concern for my health issues and offered no apology nor compensation, I am a customer, I have rights and they had to pay. (Male, 30, Jordan, Airlines)</i>
Social Media Revenge	Instagram Avengers	Instagram	Customers who post a picture of the misbehaving service provider, in addition to describing their	<i>I posted a photo of that horrendous meal they offered me on Instagram, I hash-tagged the name of</i>

			story on the post. In some cases, to increase the damage to the service provider the angry customer tag a celebrity in the picture so anyone searching for the celebrity would see the post	<i>the restaurant and the names of all the people I follow to increase the exposure of their awful service. (Female, 24, Jordan, Hospitality sector)</i>
Social Media Revenge	Snapchatters	Snapchat	a group of customers who post on their Snapchat accounts a series of videos with angry rants toward the firm	<i>I posted a couple of snaps on Snapchat telling the people who follow me how awful my experience with them was. (Female, 28, Jordan, Hospitality sector)</i>
Social Media Revenge	Angry Unboxers	Youtube	consumers who upload videos to YouTube and other video-based media platforms that describe and review unsatisfactory incidents with a service provider	<i>I posted my review of them on YouTube and then i posted my video on their Facebook page. (Male, 32, UK, Hospitality sector)</i>
Third-party Revenge	Nitpickers	Consumer websites	consumer platform complainers who get back at the misbehaving firm by complaining to a consumer advocate website	<i>To get back at them I sent a very bad but fair complaint to a consumer advocacy website that we have here, they even published my complaint in the main page. (Male, 24, Jordan, Local retailer)</i>
Third-party Revenge	Generic Nitpickers		consumers take revenge by writing vindictive reviews about their experience. However, in order for other consumers to see reviews, they post on any website that enables them to describe their bad experience with the service provider	<i>I gave them a very bad review using Tripadvisor.com reviews because people trust online reviews from other consumers. (Female, 28, UK, hotel)</i>
Third-party Revenge	Scribers	Local news websites	A group of consumers who take revenge by sending their stories to news websites, enabling other consumers to read descriptions of their bad	<i>"I sent my story to local news website that is very popular here, the story was commented on by a lot of people who agreed with</i>

			experiences with service providers	<i>my action” (Male, 29, Jordan, Local retailer)</i>
online aggression revenge	Hackers	Web platforms	consumers who use hacking technologies to take revenge on misbehaving organizations by manipulating and taking over the web domain of the firm	<i>I hacked their website, anyone who visited their website would see the story of what they did to me on the front page, it went down for a couple of hours but then they got it back. (Male, 26, Jordan, shopping mall)</i>
online aggression revenge	SEO Manipulators	Search engines and web platforms	angry customers who manipulate the order of search results on Google and other search engines so that the misbehaving firm appears lower in the results of the search engine	<i>I posted a number of scam ads on their website, what they don't know is that my ads will reduce the rank and the number of people who visit their website because when their website appear scandalous, the number of visitors will decline and so will their rank in the organic results on any search engine. (Male, 25, Jordan, online local retailer)</i>
online aggression revenge	Web Creators	Web-platforms	angry customers who create websites focused on insulting the misbehaving firm, as a mean for getting back at them	<i>I created a webpage full of insults to this company, they tried to contact me to shut it down and even threatened me with legal action, but I wanted people to know their true face, nevertheless, to avoid a law suit I changed the nature of the webpage to a customer service review page now. (Male, 21, Jordan, Telecommunication sector)</i>
online aggression revenge	Spammers	Facebook	A group of customers who get revenge on firms by spamming their Facebook pages with continuous threats and vindictive	<i>I really drove them mad, I kept posting the same text everyday just to expose and annoy them until eventually the blocked me,</i>

			complaints, often posting the same complaint every time it is deleted just to annoy the firm and create negative publicity	<i>but then I let all of my friends to post the same message on their page. (Male, 24, Jordan, Hospitality sector)</i>
online aggression revenge	Shot-Callers	Facebook	A group of customers who, after an unsatisfactory experience with a service provider, create a Facebook group to publicly criticize the firm and its actions in order to create negative publicity that will damage the firm	<i>I created a Facebook group called "S...buy sucks", detailing my story and urging other customers not to buy from them. (Female, 25, Jordan, Retailer).</i>