



PHD

**Customer Revenge as a Venting Outlet: The Place of Emotion Regulation in the Context of General Self-control**

Gemtou, Eleni-Maria

*Award date:*  
2018

*Awarding institution:*  
University of Bath

[Link to publication](#)

**Alternative formats**

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:  
[openaccess@bath.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@bath.ac.uk)

Copyright of this thesis rests with the author. Access is subject to the above licence, if given. If no licence is specified above, original content in this thesis is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) Licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>). Any third-party copyright material present remains the property of its respective owner(s) and is licensed under its existing terms.

**Take down policy**

If you consider content within Bath's Research Portal to be in breach of UK law, please contact: [openaccess@bath.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@bath.ac.uk) with the details. Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

**Customer Revenge as a Venting Outlet:  
The Place of Emotion Regulation in the Context of General Self-control**

Eleni-Maria Gemtou

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

School of Management

September 2017

**COPYRIGHT**

Attention is drawn to the fact that copyright of this thesis/portfolio rests with the author and copyright of any previously published materials included may rest with third parties. A copy of this thesis/portfolio has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it understands that they must not copy it or use material from it except as permitted by law or with the consent of the author or other copyright owners, as applicable.

This thesis/portfolio may be made available for consultation within the University Library and may be photocopied or lent to other libraries for the purposes of consultation with effect from.....(*date*)

Signed on behalf of the Faculty/School of.....

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	12
Abstract.....	14
List of Abbreviations .....	15
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>16</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	16
1.2 Background to the study .....	18
1.3 Conceptual model .....	20
1.4 Research method.....	22
1.5 Contributions.....	23
1.5.1 Theoretical Contributions.....	24
1.5.2 Practical Contributions.....	24
1.6 Outline of the thesis .....	24
1.7 Chapter summary .....	25
<b>Chapter 2 Customer revenge: the effect of unfairness, emotions and forgiveness.....</b>	<b>26</b>
2.1 Revenge.....	26
2.1.1 Definition of revenge .....	27
2.1.2 Theoretical perspectives of revenge.....	30
2.1.3 Customer revenge: its defining characteristics.....	31
2.1.4 Customer revenge and other related constructs.....	34
2.1.5 Forms of customer revenge .....	35
2.1.6 Service failure/recovery .....	39
2.1.7 Summary .....	41
2.2 Justice.....	42
2.2.1 Justice and Fairness .....	42
2.2.2 Justice theory in the service recovery context.....	44
2.2.3 Forms of justice.....	45
2.2.3.1 Distributive justice.....	45
2.2.3.2 Procedural justice .....	46

2.2.3.3 Interactional justice.....	48
2.2.4 Unfairness and customer revenge .....	49
2.2.5 Summary .....	50
2.3 Emotion.....	51
2.3.1 Emotion, mood and affect .....	51
2.3.2 Cognitive appraisal theories of emotion.....	53
2.3.3 Emotions in service recovery .....	55
2.3.4 Moral emotions .....	56
2.3.4.1 Anger .....	57
2.3.4.2 Disgust.....	57
2.3.4.3 Contempt .....	58
2.3.5 Summary .....	59
2.4 Forgiveness .....	60
2.4.1 Forgiveness and other related concepts.....	60
2.4.2 Forgiveness and fairness .....	62
2.4.3 Summary .....	63
2.5 Chapter summary .....	64
<b>Chapter 3 Customer revenge as an emotion regulation strategy .....</b>	<b>65</b>
3.1 Emotion regulation.....	65
3.2 Emotion regulation, coping and mood management .....	66
3.3 Emotion regulation goals .....	68
3.3.1 Emotion regulation serving hedonic goals .....	68
3.3.2 Emotion regulation serving instrumental goals.....	70
3.3.3 Customer revenge serving hedonic goals.....	71
3.4 Emotion regulation strategies .....	72
3.4.1 Customer revenge as an emotion regulation strategy.....	75
3.5 Chapter summary .....	76
<b>Chapter 4 Customer revenge as a self-control goal conflict .....</b>	<b>78</b>
4.1 Goal-directed behaviour.....	78
4.2 Self-regulation: Customer revenge as a self-control failure .....	78
4.3 Goal properties.....	81
4.4 Goal activation .....	82

4.5 Emotion regulation goals vs self-control goals in customer revenge .....	84
4.6 Customer revenge behaviour in sequential decision-making .....	86
4.7 Chapter summary .....	88
<b>Chapter 5 Conceptual Model and Hypotheses.....</b>	<b>89</b>
5.1 The role of unfairness in customer revenge .....	90
5.2 Moral emotions as mediators in the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge .....	95
5.2.1 The emotion of anger .....	96
5.2.2 The emotion of disgust .....	97
5.2.3 The emotion of contempt .....	98
5.3 The process of forgiveness.....	99
5.4 Customer revenge as an emotion regulation strategy .....	101
5.5 Customer revenge as a self-control goal conflict.....	104
5.6 The role of goal commitment and goal progress in customer revenge in sequential behaviours .....	107
5.7 Chapter summary .....	109
<b>Chapter 6 Methodology .....</b>	<b>110</b>
6.1 Ontology .....	110
6.2 Epistemology .....	111
6.2.1 Positivism.....	111
6.2.2 Interpretivism .....	113
6.2.3 Critical Realism.....	114
6.3 Paradigms.....	115
6.4 Research approach .....	116
6.4.1 Deduction .....	116
6.4.2 Induction.....	117
6.5 Research strategy: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research.....	117
6.6 Philosophical assumptions of this thesis.....	118
6.7 Quality criteria in quantitative research .....	119

6.8 Research design .....	121
6.8.1 Experiments.....	121
6.8.2 Cross-sectional .....	122
6.8.3 Longitudinal .....	122
6.8.4 Case study .....	123
6.9 Research methods .....	123
6.9.1 Questionnaires.....	124
6.9.2 Interviews .....	124
6.9.3 Observation .....	124
6.9.4 Secondary data collection.....	124
6.10 Choice of research design and methods for this thesis .....	125
6.11 Assessment of quality criteria in this thesis .....	127
6.12 Summary .....	129
6.13 Ethics.....	131
6.14 Research outline.....	133
6.15 Measurement of the constructs .....	134
6.16 Sampling strategy.....	135
6.17 Participant recruitment.....	136
6.18 Statistical Analysis.....	138
6.19 Chapter summary .....	140
<b>Chapter 7 Study 1: The role of fairness, moral emotions and forgiveness in customer revenge.....</b>	<b>141</b>
7.1 Participants.....	143
7.2 Recruitment.....	143
7.3 Research Design.....	144
7.4 Procedure .....	144
7.5 Pre-tests.....	146
7.5.1 Pre-test 1 - Scenarios.....	146
7.5.2 Pre-test 2 - Waiting time for procedural fairness .....	150

7.6 Measurement.....	150
7.7 Findings.....	153
7.7.1 Manipulation check.....	153
7.7.2 Tests of normality.....	153
7.7.3 Main Analysis .....	154
7.8 Discussion.....	166
7.9 Limitations .....	167
7.9.1 Manipulation of procedural fairness .....	167
7.9.2 Measurement of the moral emotions.....	167
<b>Chapter 8 Studies 2 and 3: The role of emotion regulation in customer revenge .....</b>	<b>168</b>
8.1 Study 2.....	169
8.1.1 Participants.....	169
8.1.2 Recruitment.....	169
8.1.3 Research Design.....	170
8.1.4 Procedure.....	170
8.1.4.1 Manipulation of mood change beliefs - eating chocolates .....	172
8.1.5 Pre-test.....	174
8.1.6 Measurement .....	175
8.1.6.1 Anger-out tendencies.....	177
8.1.6.2 Cultural orientation.....	178
8.1.7 Findings - Examination of the whole dataset.....	179
8.1.7.1 Manipulation check .....	179
8.1.7.2 Tests of normality .....	179
8.1.7.3 Descriptive statistics .....	180
8.1.7.4 Main Analysis.....	180
8.1.8 Findings - Examination of the female-only dataset .....	182
8.1.8.1 Manipulation check .....	182
8.1.8.2 Tests of normality .....	182
8.1.8.3 Descriptive Statistics .....	183
8.1.8.4 Main results .....	183
8.1.9 Discussion .....	186
8.1.10 Limitation .....	187
8.2 Study 3.....	187
8.2.1 Participants.....	187
8.2.2 Research Design.....	188
8.2.3 Procedure.....	188
8.2.3.1 Manipulation of mood change beliefs - happy memory recall.....	189

8.2.4 Pre-test.....	190
8.2.5 Measurement .....	191
8.2.5.1 Mood improvement beliefs.....	193
8.2.6 Findings.....	194
8.2.6.1 Manipulation check .....	194
8.2.6.2 Tests of normality .....	194
8.2.6.3 Descriptive Statistics .....	195
8.2.6.4 Main results .....	195
8.2.7 Discussion .....	199
8.2.8 Limitations .....	200
8.2.8.1 Confound effects.....	200
8.2.8.2 Ordering of the measurement of emotions .....	201
8.2.8.3 Priming instructions.....	202

**Chapter 9 Study 4: The role of conflicting goals in customer revenge.....204**

9.1 Participants.....	205
9.2 Research Design.....	205
9.3 Procedure .....	206
9.4 Measurement.....	207
9.4.1 Impulsivity .....	209
9.5 Findings.....	209
9.5.1 Manipulation check .....	209
9.5.2 Tests for normality .....	209
9.5.3 Descriptive Statistics .....	211
9.5.4 Main analysis.....	211
9.6 Discussion .....	215
9.7 Limitation.....	216
9.7.1 Conscious priming.....	216
9.7.2 Instructions to prime self-control .....	217

**Chapter 10 Study 5: The role of goal commitment/goal progress inferences in sequential revengeful behaviours .....218**

10.1 Participants.....	219
10.2 Research Design.....	219
10.3 Procedure .....	219



10.4 Measurement.....	222
10.5 Findings.....	222
10.5.1 Tests of normality.....	222
10.5.2 Descriptive Statistics .....	224
10.5.3 Main analysis.....	224
10.6 Discussion .....	227
10.7 Limitation.....	227
10.7.1 Expressive writing task .....	227
10.7.2 The questions of commitment and progress.....	228
<b>Chapter 11 Discussion .....</b>	<b>229</b>
11.1 The mediating role of emotions in the relationship between unfairness and customer revenge.....	231
11.1.1 The effect of unfairness in customer revenge .....	231
11.1.2 The effect of moral emotions in customer revenge.....	237
11.1.3 The effect of forgiveness in customer revenge .....	243
11.2 The effect of emotion regulation in customer revenge .....	244
11.3 Boundary conditions for the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge .....	248
11.3.1 The effect of goal accessibility in customer revenge in single behaviours.....	248
11.3.2 The effect of goal focus in customer revenge in sequential behaviours .....	250
11.4 Chapter summary .....	253
<b>Chapter 12 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>254</b>
12.1 Background to the study and research findings .....	254
12.2 Contributions.....	257
12.2.1 Theoretical Contributions.....	257
12.2.1.1 Discrete emotions as mediating mechanism.....	258
12.2.1.2 Customer revenge employed in the service of emotion regulation .....	259
12.2.1.3 Customer revenge in the presence of conflicting goals .....	261
12.2.2 Practical Contributions .....	262
12.3 Limitations .....	266
12.3.1 Scenario-based methodology .....	266
12.3.2 Generalisability of the sample.....	267
12.3.3 The use of revengeful behaviours .....	268
12.3.4 Self-reported measures .....	268

12.4 Future Research .....269

**References .....272**

## List of Tables

Table 1.1: Broad research questions of the thesis.....	23
Table 2.1: Summary of previous studies examining customer revenge .....	28
Table 2.1: Summary of previous studies examining customer revenge (continued).....	29
Table 3.1: Overview of emotion regulation strategies.....	73
Table 6.1: Components of critical realism (adapted from Johnson and Duberley, 2000) .....	114
Table 6.2: Fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research .....	117
Table 6.3: Quality criteria in this research.....	128
Table 6.4: Summary of philosophical and methodological choices .....	130
Table 6.5: Ethical considerations for experimental designs .....	131
Table 6.6: Research outline.....	133
Table 7.1: Hypotheses tested in Study 1 .....	141
Table 7.2: Descriptive Statistics for negative emotions.....	149
Table 7.3: Descriptive statistics for overall fairness perceptions .....	149
Table 7.4: Descriptive statistics for scenario realism .....	149
Table 7.5: Tests of Normality for Experiment 1 .....	154
Table 7.6: Main results for H1-H3.....	155
Table 7.7: Main results for H4-H6.....	157
Table 7.8: Effect sizes of the relationships testing H4-H6 .....	159
Table 7.9: Measurement model analysis.....	162
Table 7.10: Main results for H7 .....	164
Table 7.11: Fit indices of the model without accounting for common method variance .....	165
Table 7.12: Fit indices of the model when accounting for common method variance.....	166
Table 8.1: Hypotheses tested in Studies 2 and 3.....	169
Table 8.2: Tests of Normality for Experiment 2 (whole dataset) .....	179
Table 8.3: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 2 (whole dataset) .....	180
Table 8.4: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 2 (women-only dataset).....	183
Table 8.5: ANOVA results for Experiment 2 (women-only dataset) .....	184
Table 8.6: MANCOVA and ANCOVA results for Experiment 2 (women-only dataset).....	185
Table 8.7: Tests of Normality for Experiment 3.....	194
Table 8.8: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 3.....	195
Table 8.9: ANOVA results for Experiment 3 .....	196
Table 8.10: MANCOVA and ANCOVA results for Experiment 3 .....	198
Table 9.1: Hypotheses tested in Study 4.....	205
Table 9.2: Tests of Normality for Experiment 4.....	210
Table 9.3: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 4.....	211
Table 9.4: ANOVA results for Experiment 4 .....	213
Table 9.5: MANCOVA and ANCOVA results for Experiment 4 .....	215
Table 10.1: Hypotheses tested in Study 5.....	219
Table 10.2: Tests of Normality for Experiment 5.....	223
Table 10.3: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 5.....	224
Table 10.4: ANOVA results for Experiment 5 .....	226
Table 11.1: Summary of the hypotheses and findings of this thesis.....	229

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Core conceptual model of the thesis.....	22
Figure 5.1: Core conceptual model of the thesis.....	90
Figure 6.1: Deductive approach to research (sourced from Bryman, 2016).....	116
Figure 7.1: Structural model testing H1-H3 .....	156
Figure 7.2: Structural model testing H4-H6 .....	158
Figure 7.3: Structural model testing H7.....	163
Figure 8.1: Mean aggression across conditions .....	198
Figure 8.2: Mean vindictive complaining across conditions .....	198
Figure 8.3: Mean NWOM across conditions .....	198
Figure 8.4: Mean third-party complaining across conditions .....	198
Figure 9.1: Mean aggression across conditions .....	213
Figure 9.2: Mean vindictive complaining across conditions .....	213
Figure 9.3: Mean NWOM across conditions .....	214
Figure 9.4: Mean third-party complaining across conditions .....	214
Figure 10.1: Mean aggression across conditions .....	226
Figure 10.2: Mean vindictive complaining across conditions .....	226
Figure 10.3: Mean NWOM across conditions .....	226
Figure 10.4: Mean third-party complaining across conditions .....	226

## List of Appendices

Appendix A – Scenarios for the pre-test.....	286
Appendix B – Hotel overbooking scenario used in Experiments 1 and 5 .....	294
Appendix C – Measures and Loadings (Experiment 1).....	296
Appendix D – Airline flight delay scenario used in Experiments 2, 3, and 4 .....	298
Appendix E – Measures (Experiment 2).....	299
Appendix F – Measures (Experiment 3).....	301
Appendix G – Measures (Experiment 4) .....	301
Appendix H – Advertisements.....	302

## **Acknowledgements**

On this long journey, there have been so many people in my life who have supported this effort and deserve a special thank you. First, my family, especially my parents, Fanis and Athina, for their unconditional love, support and blind faith in my decisions throughout my life. You have taught me to follow my dreams and work hard to accomplish them. But most importantly you taught me the meaning of ethos and that I should always try to educate not only my mind but also my heart. My brother, Tasos, for his relaxed character that always calms me down and especially for fixing my computer the countless times it was running down and I was panicking. My grandmother who has this great charisma and the ability to adapt her advice to any situation even if she has never experienced it herself and hence, it is difficult for her to imagine. You will always be my best friend, the person who understands me more than anyone else and the best example of having a positive attitude to life for me. Our housekeeper, Vaso, who is like a sister to me, for her continuous love, support and understanding.

I would like to thank the School of Management of the University of Bath for giving me the opportunity to be part of such a great research team and environment. Special thanks to my first supervisor Dr Haiming Hang for his positive energy and all the support and guidance he gave me in completing the PhD. Also, my second supervisor Dr Richard Fairchild for his collaboration all these years. I am also grateful to Professor Avi Shankar for showing his trust in my ability and giving me the GRS scholarship in the second year of my studies, making me responsible for delivering the seminars in the Marketing modules of the school. I was so pleased to collaborate with great academics on delivering the seminars of their modules. Dr Judith DeGroot, Dr Mike Redwood, Mr Donald Lancaster, and Professor Nancy Puccinelli, you have always been very approachable and kind to me. A special thanks to Dr Judith DeGroot for giving me the opportunity to become a reviewer for the Journal of Consumer Behaviour and to Professor Nancy Puccinelli for nominating me for the Worshipful Company of Marketors Award.

I feel honoured and would like to thank the British Academy/Leverhulme trust for being awarded £9.000 for my research. This fund was crucial, because I was able to pay the participants, fund my conferences and to buy software for the University of Bath.

Finally, I would like to thank all these close friends and special people who made this isolated period of my life less lonely. My love to all my friends at Athens University of Economics and Business and especially Lina, Alexandra, Louiza, Stelios and Giorgos for the countless moments of laughter and craziness we shared. You have been my fellow travellers in this PhD journey and you were there in the moments of happiness and disappointment, giving me the energy and strength to continue. My love to all my friends at the University of Bath for making the UK experience unforgettable. Stella, I miss our fun moments, the ice cream sessions, the long summer walks and the amazing car drives. Angeliki, my office buddy over the past two years, thanks for being so compassionate and for all the warmth and ‘kefi’ you always seem to have. Riccardo, thanks for bringing your Italian temperament to the Greek gang and for this genuine politeness and sensitivity you have. Last but not least, thank you to all the PhD crew of all the PhD years for all the drinking socials, birthday parties, and nights out in Bath.

I dedicate this PhD thesis to all the people I mentioned and I love, because this journey would have been impossible to be completed without your love and support.

## Abstract

Customer revenge is a response to perceived wrongdoing that is almost always accompanied by intense emotional states. When harm is experienced with a strong sense of unfairness, such as after severe service failures and failed service recoveries, customers are left to cope with a serious stress. One major theme that emerges from research in negative affect is that individuals who feel bad will spontaneously try to remedy or repair their emotions. The argument advanced in this thesis is that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. It is argued that individuals have internalized beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and engage in such behaviour with the intent to feel better. In the case of revenge, the avenger seeks to eliminate the painful emotions and to restore the disturbed psychological balance. Revengeful acts provide individuals with a cathartic release because they externalize negative emotions that build up inside the self and influence the psyche. Hence, this thesis suggests that when customers are personally harmed and hurt by the firm, the goal of emotion regulation may be activated and become the prime driver of customer revenge.

Over five studies, the eleven hypotheses derived from the theoretical model proposed were tested. The studies employed a scenario-based experimental design while the sample consisted of UK university students. This thesis investigates first, the mediating role of certain discrete emotions in translating perceived unfairness into customer revenge. It then, examines the main assumption of the thesis, i.e. whether customer revenge is driven by emotion regulation goals. Finally, it tests boundary conditions under which emotion regulation goals guide customer revenge: the role of goal conflict in both single and sequential revengeful behaviours.

Findings from the studies demonstrate that: 1) the moral emotions of anger and contempt arise from perceptions of unfairness and in turn, influence customer revenge both directly and indirectly through the mechanism of forgiveness; 2) customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation; 3) accessibility of conflicting goals influence customer revenge in opposite directions such that accessibility of emotion regulation goals results in a higher likelihood of customer direct revenge, but no higher likelihood of indirect revenge, than the accessibility of impulse control goals; 4) when an initial customer action towards the goal of emotion regulation is interpreted as goal progress, individuals subsequently are less motivated to engage in customer revenge than when the same action is interpreted as goal commitment. These findings have important theoretical and practical implications.



## **List of Abbreviations**

The following lists abbreviations used within this thesis in alphabetical order.

ANCOVA (Univariate analysis of covariance)

ANOVA (Univariate analysis of variance)

CB-SEM (Covariance-based SEM)

MANCOVA (Multivariate analysis of covariance)

NWOM (Negative word-of-mouth)

PLS-SEM (Partial least squares SEM)

SEM (Structural equation modelling)

TPC (Third-party complaining)

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

The customer revenge phenomenon has been expanding considerably in recent years (Funches, Markley, & Davis, 2009; Grégoire, Laufer, & Tripp, 2010; McColl-Kennedy & Smith, 2006). Services appear to be more at risk of customer outbursts due to their intangibility and the human interactions involved (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005). After severe service failures and failed service recoveries, customers do not just passively exit the firm or passively complain but rather, they seek ways to get even with the firms (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Grégoire et al., 2010). Customers may engage in various forms of revenge behaviour, some of which are overt in nature, such as aggression and vindictive complaining, and others which are covert, such as negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) and third-party complaining (Grégoire et al., 2010).

Numerous real-life incidences show that outraged customers can be very creative and go to extremes in order to hurt firms. In 2017, a man in Virginia used 300,000 coins to pay his tax bill on two cars at the Department of Motor Vehicles. The man was upset because he was denied access to the direct phone number of the Lebanon Department of Motor Vehicles until filing a Freedom of Information Act request. In revenge over months of legal dispute, the man delivered five wheelbarrows full of change forcing the employees to count them by hand. The coin payment required eleven people and took at least seven hours to be counted causing great inconvenience to the Department of Motor Vehicles (Szathmary, 2017).

The potential for customers to get even with firms has grown exponentially with the advent of the Internet. The proliferation of complaint websites and user-generated platforms have empowered customers by providing them with a number of outlets through which they can post their misadventures and chat with others. Online badmouthing can cause damage to the firm to a greater extent because of its pervasive use and the potential to reach a vast audience at a very short time (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). A few years ago, United Airlines saw its reputation being seriously damaged and its stock price falling after one of its customers decided to take revenge on it. During a flight with United Airlines, Dave Carroll, a Canadian musician watched his beloved guitar being tossed around by baggage handlers on the tarmac. After nine months of fruitless negotiations with the airline, he wrote a song and created a music video describing his

bad experience. His protest song “United Breaks Guitars” went viral and had over five million views in only one month prompting the instant response of United Airlines which apologized and compensated him for his loss (Nasaw, 2009). However, the damage to the firm’s reputation was irrevocable. Media reported Carroll as the personification of the avenging customer and the song as a success story in terms of humiliating the public relations department of United Airlines (Mapstone, 2015).

These are only a few examples to show that the prevalence of customer revenge is alarming. More importantly, firms appear to tacitly condone customer revengeful episodes rather than enforce social norms against dysfunctional behaviour. The rise of consumerism along with the dominant philosophy that “the customer is always right” and the ever-escalating standards of service fuel customer sovereignty and threaten social order (Harris & Reynolds, 2004). Hence, understanding the underlying process of customer revenge is important because its negative consequences have multiple recipients, including firms, employees and customers (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). For firms, customer revenge means loss of customers and profits as well as damage to reputation. Furthermore, according to the Northwestern National Life’s (1993) survey, 44% of the physical aggression against employees in the workplace comes from customers (cited in Zourrig, Chebat, & Toffoli, 2009a). Frontline employees who have to deal with angry customers suffer significant emotional distress which, in turn, results in job absenteeism and high job turnover (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Revenge may have a negative impact on other customers who are present during the revenge episode. These customers may be less satisfied with the service experience or more prone to imitate the behaviour of the avenger customers (Harris & Reynolds, 2003).

While traditionally customer revenge has been thought to be driven by the motive to restore justice in the relationship between the customer and the firm, it may also be guided by emotion regulation motives (Tripp & Bies, 2010). A 2003 Customer Care Alliance survey indicated that 62% of dissatisfied customers engaged with a service firm wanted to get the chance to vent their negative emotions (cited in Zourrig, Chebat, & Toffoli, 2009b). Individuals describe revenge as a ‘hot’ and emotionally laden phenomenon that is almost always accompanied by strong emotional responses (Bies & Moag, 1986). Severe service failures and failed recoveries constitute situations where harm is experienced with such severe perceptions of unfairness that leave customers to cope with a serious stress. Strong negative emotions insistently press for corrective action motivating customers to seek ways to regulate upwardly their emotions

(Zourrig et al., 2009a). This thesis argues that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. Individuals may have internalized beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and engage in the revengeful acts in anticipation of the emotional relief they will experience (Carlsmith, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008). In line with this, it has been suggested that the essential purpose of revenge is to give the avenger relief from painful negative emotions and to restore the psychological balance (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Hence, revenge may serve as an emotional outlet for negative emotions that build up in the psyche and create an internal tension.

The motivation of this thesis is to investigate whether customer revenge is driven by emotion regulation goals. That is, whether individuals engage in the various revengeful behaviours because they expect that by doing so they will feel better. Whereas service literature has mainly focused on the cognitive drivers of customer revenge, it has overlooked its emotional triggers. This research fills this gap by examining the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge. In doing so, this thesis first, examines the mediating role of certain discrete emotions in the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge. Second, it investigates whether customer revenge serves emotion regulation purposes. Third, it tests boundary conditions under which emotion regulation goals guide customer revenge: the role of goal conflict in both single and sequential revengeful behaviours.

## **1.2 Background to the study**

Past studies have recently acknowledged the importance of customer revenge and have sought to understand its underpinning psychological mechanism (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2010; Joireman, Grégoire, Devezer, & Tripp, 2013). Customer revenge has been primarily examined as a response to injustice (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Blodgett, Hill, & Tax, 1997; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). Customers are postulated to form perceptions of fairness about the service failure/recovery encounters which in turn, motivate revenge. This thesis goes one step further to investigate the emotional aspect of customer revenge. Drawing on interdisciplinary research in psychology and organizational studies, this research aims to examine the process whereby negative emotions motivate customers to get even with the firm while the main focus is on the role of emotion regulation as a driver of customer revenge.

Service failures especially when followed by failed service recoveries constitute highly stressful situations. When feeling harmed by the firm, customers go through an appraisal process where they seek to assign blame to the firm (Zourrig et al., 2009a). Customers evaluate the service failure/recovery encounters with regards to the fairness of the outcomes (i.e. distributive fairness), processes (i.e. procedural fairness) and interpersonal treatment (i.e. interactional fairness) received (Blodgett et al., 1997; Goodwin & Ross, 1992; Tax, Brown, & Chandrashekar, 1998). Customer appraisals that judge that the firm has violated norms of fairness elicit intense negative emotional reactions which in turn, drive customer revenge (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Funches et al., 2009). In particular, it is argued that three moral emotions: anger, disgust and contempt, serve as the mediating mechanism that translates perceptions of unfairness into the various forms of revengeful behaviours. This is in line with research in moral psychology that posits that moral transgressions, including violations of justice, give rise to moral emotions which subsequently influence moral judgments and behaviour (Haidt, 2003).

Negative emotions are unpleasant and painful, and insistently press for action. Individuals develop from an early age hedonistic tendencies and are motivated to approach pleasure and avoid pain (Koole, 2009b). Therefore, customers in negative affective states will seek ways to decrease their negative emotions and increase their positive ones (Larsen, 2000). The tenet of this thesis is that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. This assumption is supported by psychological research that indicates that individuals have internalized beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and have expectations that they will feel better after punishing the offender (Bushman, Baumeister, & Phillips, 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008). In line with this, it is argued that disgruntled customers engage in various revengeful behaviours because they believe that by so doing, they will alleviate their negative emotions. In this sense, customer revenge is said to serve emotion regulation goals.

Revenge is only one of the potential customer responses to negative service experiences. On other occasions, customers may choose to be less revengeful by reconciling or avoiding the firm (Yi & Baumgartner, 2004). Therefore, there are boundary conditions under which emotion regulation goals guide customer revenge. In this thesis, it is contended that the presence of conflicting goals affects the impact of emotion regulation on customer revenge in both single and sequential revengeful behaviours. In particular, it is posited that the decision of whether to take revenge or not depends on goal accessibility. Goals drive customer behaviour such as

whether the individual responds to provocation by being competitive, collaborative, or resigned (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Recent research suggests that individuals simultaneously hold various goals which, if seen in isolation, may appear conflicting (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005). In

the dynamic environments in which we live, individuals encounter various environmental stimuli that increase the salience of these goals and individuals constantly have to switch attention and resources from one goal to another (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). In service failure/recovery encounters, customers are faced with a self-control conflict between the short-term emotion regulation goal and the long-term impulse control goal. When the emotion regulation goal is accessible, individuals will seek to immediately alleviate their negative emotions by engaging in revengeful behaviour. Conversely, when the impulse control goal becomes accessible, individuals will seek to restrain their aggressive impulses and will be less motivated to exact revenge.

The conflict between these two goals influences customer revenge behaviour not only in single but also in sequential behaviours. Oftentimes, customers have to take several actions to achieve their goals (Fishbach, Zhang, & Koo, 2009). Firms may provide customers with the opportunity to regulate their emotions with an initial action (e.g. writing a complaint letter to the firm's management). Customers will subsequently have to decide whether they will engage in customer revenge. Prior research suggests that how the initial customer action congruent with a certain goal influences subsequent behaviour depends on the inferences individuals make about whether the action denotes goal commitment or goal progress (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Fishbach, Dhar, & Zhang, 2006). Inferences of goal commitment regarding an initial action indicate the importance of the goal for the individual and result in subsequent goal-congruent behaviours, while inferences of goal progress give a sense of accomplishment and liberate the individual to pursue goal-incongruent actions (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007; Fishbach et al., 2009). In line with this, the thesis argues that customers will subsequently engage in more revengeful behaviours when an initial action congruent with the emotion regulation goal is interpreted as goal commitment rather than goal progress.

### **1.3 Conceptual model**

To examine the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge and address the gaps in the extant literature, the following theoretical model is proposed. The model draws on

psychological research in emotions, emotion regulation and goal conflict theory to form the hypothesized relationships. It is predicted that moral emotions arise from customer appraisals of unfairness regarding the service recovery encounter and in turn, trigger customer revenge both directly and indirectly, through the mechanism of forgiveness (Study 1). It is further suggested that emotion regulation is the mechanism that explains how negative emotions are translated into customer revenge (Study 2 and 3). Intense negative emotions automatically activate emotion regulation efforts whereby individuals are motivated to exact revenge because they expect to feel better. This research further focuses on the conditions under which emotion regulation results in customer revenge. It is suggested that the presence of conflicting goals will affect customer revenge both in single and sequential revenge behaviours through the effect of goal accessibility (Study 4) and goal focus respectively (Study 5).

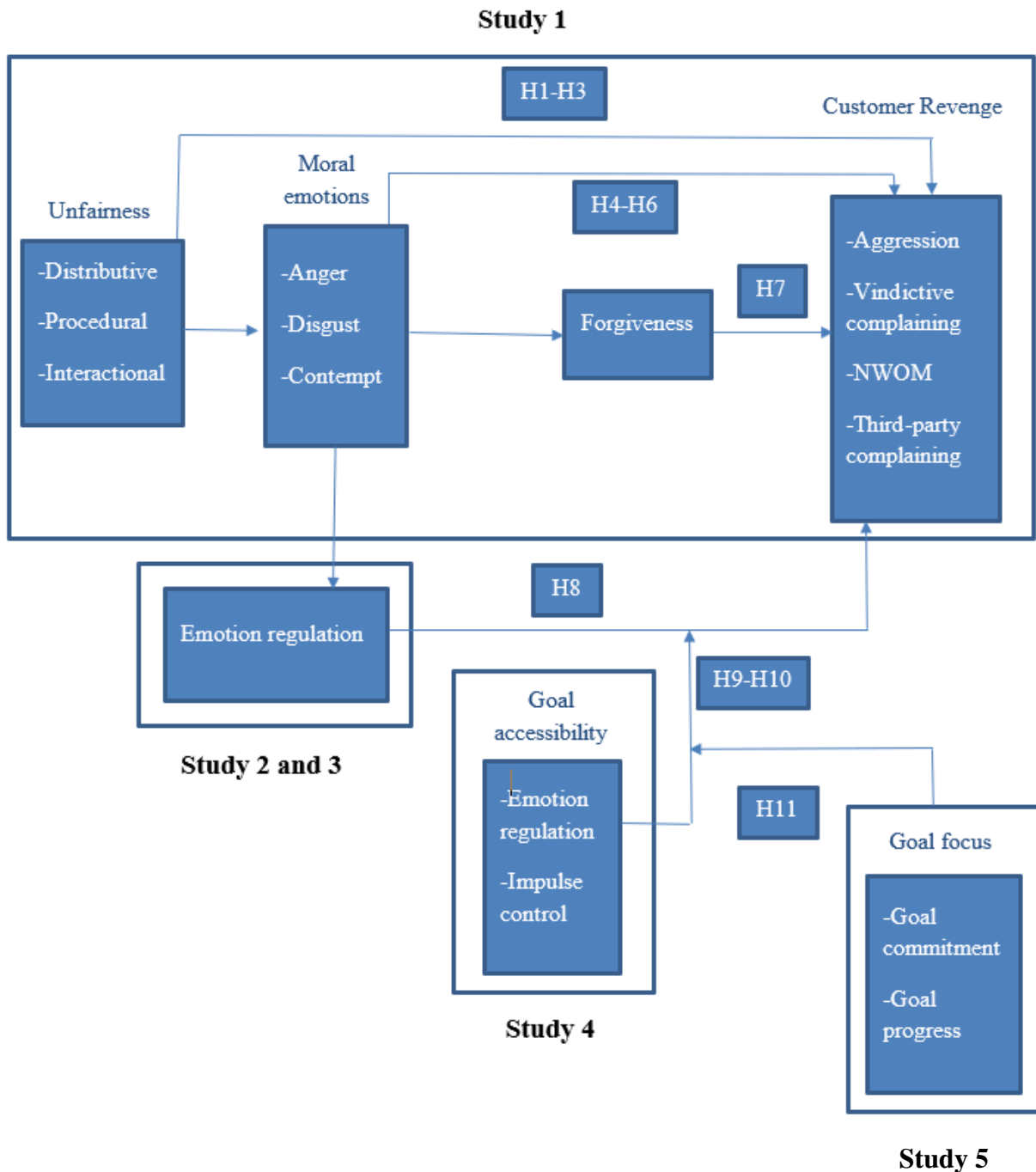


Figure 1.1: Core conceptual model of the thesis

## 1.4 Research method

This research has made specific predictions about the role of discrete emotions, emotion regulation and goal conflict in customer revenge behaviour. To examine the hypothesized causal relationships between the variables, a scenario-based experimental methodology was deemed appropriate. The scenarios cover airline and hotel service failure/recovery encounters,



while the scenario stories were written after reviewing customer complaint websites in order to make them more realistic and representative of real-life customer experiences.

Over five studies the eleven hypotheses of this thesis are tested. The table below outlines the broad research questions addressed in this thesis which are used to examine the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge. Specific hypotheses will be developed in the hypothesis development chapter (Chapter 5).

Table 1.1: Broad research questions of the thesis

<b>Broad research questions</b>
Discrete emotions (Study 1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do moral emotions mediate the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge?</li> </ul>
Emotion regulation (Studies 2 and 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do customers engage in the various revengeful behaviours with the intent to regulate upwardly their negative emotions?</li> </ul>
Conflicting goals (Studies 4 and 5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does accessibility of the emotion regulation vs impulse control goal differentially impact on customer revenge?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do inferences of goal commitment vs goal progress about an initial customer action congruent with one of the two conflicting goals differentially influence subsequent revenge in sequential behaviours?</li> </ul>

The sample employed in this research consisted of UK university students. Moreover, the first two experiments took place in a laboratory while the other three used the Prolific Academic online participant recruitment platform. Data from the first experiment were analysed with the PLS-SEM and CB-SEM method using SMARTPLS and AMOS software respectively. The other four experiments employed SPSS software in order to analyse the data with ANOVA and its variants (i.e. ANCOVA and MANCOVA).

## 1.5 Contributions

The overall contribution of the theoretical model proposed is that it focuses on the emotional aspect of customer revenge behaviour, extending prior research that has mainly examined its

cognitive antecedents. Findings from this thesis have significant theoretical and practical contributions as discussed below.

### **1.5.1 Theoretical Contributions**

At the theoretical level, this thesis contributes to the literature by examining the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge behaviour. In particular, it addresses three gaps in the literature. First, while previous research has examined general affective states, this work investigates the role of discrete emotions in translating customer perceptions of unfairness into the various revengeful behaviours. Secondly, it reconciles conflicting psychological evidence about whether revenge arises from justice or emotion regulation motives (Carlsmith et al., 2008; Gollwitzer & Bushman, 2012). In particular, it demonstrates that when individuals are personally harmed, they spontaneously seek to regulate their emotions with customer revenge serving as an emotion regulation strategy that individuals employ to alleviate their negative emotions. Thirdly, while the service literature has neglected the role of customer goals, this study adopts goal conflict theories to investigate the role of conflicting goals in both single and sequential customer revenge behaviours.

### **1.5.2 Practical Contributions**

Findings from this research have important implications for firm strategies and public policy. Firms can use the results to design better service recovery strategies that mainly focus on alleviating customer negative emotions. In particular, firms should train employees to be able to detect early signs of negative emotions as well as help customers “let off steam”. Furthermore, firms should set in place venting outlets, such as asking for customer feedback or creating a dialogue with dissatisfied customers in online customer complaint outlets in order to absorb customer negative reactions within the firm. For public policies, the research findings suggest that educational programmes should be implemented to inform individuals about the negative consequences of exacting revenge on social harmony.

## **1.6 Outline of the thesis**

This thesis comprises twelve chapters. Chapter 2 starts with the various views of revenge and explains where customer revenge is situated by outlining its defining characteristics and its various forms. The chapter then proceeds with describing the theories of justice and shows how the three forms of justice, namely distributive, procedural and interactional, have been applied in a service context. Next, appraisal theories of emotions are introduced and the appraisal and

motivational properties of the three moral emotions (anger, disgust, and contempt) are reviewed. Chapter 3 focuses on emotion regulation theories and introduces the idea that customer revenge may serve as an emotion regulation strategy that individuals can employ to ameliorate their negative emotions. Chapter 4 adopts goal conflict theories to examine customer revenge as a self-control conflict between emotion regulation and impulse control goals. This is followed by an explanation of how this goal conflict may influence customer revenge in single and sequential revenge behaviours. Next, to address the gaps in the literature, the theoretical model along with the research hypotheses is presented in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 outlines the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions underlying this thesis. Following this, in Chapters 7 to 10 the data collection and data analysis procedures followed in the five experiments conducted for this research are presented and explained. The discussion of the findings from these experiments is provided in Chapter 11. Finally, in Chapter 12 the conclusion of the thesis is given, the theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed, and limitations and directions for future research are outlined.

## **1.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented an introduction to the thesis outlining the research problem and the theoretical gaps that have led to the theoretical model proposed in this research, Next, the adopted research method was explained and the theoretical and practical contributions briefly summarised. The next chapter provides a review of the theories of revenge, justice and emotions and explains how fairness and emotions can serve as antecedents of customer revenge.

## Chapter 2

### **Customer revenge: the effect of unfairness, emotions and forgiveness**

This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature and is split into four sections. These will address, first, the notion of revenge; second, the concept of unfairness and its various forms; third, the role of emotional reactions to unfairness; and finally, the mechanism of forgiveness.

#### **2.1 Revenge**

Revenge is a “basic human impulse and a powerful motivator of social behavior” (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999, p. 608). It has often been cited as the primary cause of human aggression (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). The desire for revenge has been reported as the cause of a number of antisocial acts that range in extremity, from the most extreme incidences, such as blood feuds and terrorist attacks, to the less extreme cases that are documented in daily life, such as vandalism, workplace aggression and customer revenge (Grégoire et al., 2010; Schumann & Ross, 2010; Tripp & Bies, 2010). These examples indicate that the phenomenon is pervasive.

Recognising the importance of the phenomenon, revenge has attracted the attention of researchers in various fields, such as social psychology (Carlsmith et al., 2008; Gollwitzer & Bushman, 2012), criminology (Grobbink, Derksen, & van Marle, 2015), organisational studies (Tripp & Bies, 2010) and consumer research (Grégoire et al., 2010). Customer revenge has only recently emerged as a separate area of study to address instances where the customers seek to get even with firms (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2010; Zourrig et al., 2009a). When harmed by the firm, customers do not passively exit from it, but rather, they engage in various revengeful behaviours, such as spreading negative word-of-mouth, verbally, or physically insulting a frontline employee, or even committing vandalism (Grégoire et al., 2010). Indeed, the number of customers behaving badly has been growing dramatically, as indicated in statistics that demonstrate that customer revenge instances being reported in the workplace are rapidly increasing (Daunt & Harris, 2012b; Zourrig et al., 2009a). Notably, there are many websites even offering advice to customers on how to exact revenge (e.g. [www.consumer-revenge.com](http://www.consumer-revenge.com)).

Grobbink et al. (2015, p. 2) suggest that “some border of acceptability is probably given” to the acts of revenge. Societal trends in consumerism and the high-pressure put on organisations to please the customer at any cost may encourage or implicitly condone behaving in such a manner, thereby rendering customer revenge more socially acceptable (Harris & Reynolds, 2004; Yagil, 2008). Whilst customers have a repertoire of responses when they feel unjustly treated by the firm (e.g. exit, reconciliation), choosing to exact revenge may result in negative consequences for the firm in terms of material loss, psychological damage to the employees and a long-lasting impact on its reputation (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). For this reason, a number of researchers have pointed out the need for further investigation of the psychological processes that underpin customer revenge in order to gain a greater understanding of this phenomenon (Funches et al., 2009; Grégoire et al., 2010; Zourrig et al., 2009a). The current research adopts an intrapersonal perspective to examine whether the primary motive for customer revenge is the individuals’ desire to restore their psychological balance. This is a different approach from that deployed in previous studies that have mainly focused on the restoration of justice as the primary motivator of customer revenge (Grégoire et al., 2010; Zourrig et al., 2009a).

### **2.1.1 Definition of revenge**

While definitions of revenge in the literature may vary, their common characteristic is the perception that the individual has been wronged, which motivates him/her to get even or punish the offender (Kähr, Bettina, Harley, & Wayne, 2016). In organisational studies, Tripp and Bies (2010, p. 424) defined revenge as:

*...an action in response to some perceived harm or wrongdoing by another party that is intended to inflict damage, injury, discomfort, or punishment on the party judged responsible.*

This definition is the most widely accepted and hence, will be adapted to customer revenge to account for the harm inflicted on a service firm in response to unacceptable service (Grégoire et al., 2010). The Table 2.1 below summarizes the key findings of the main studies to date examining customer revenge.

Table 2.1: Summary of previous studies examining customer revenge

Author	Conceptualization of revenge	Type of research	Sample	Research aim	Key findings
Huefner and Hunt (2000)	“An aggressive behavior done with the intention of getting even”	Content analysis and survey	Study 1: 331 respondents Study 2: 393 respondents (51% male)	Expand Hirschman’s exit-voice -loyalty model to include retaliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Six consumer retaliation categories were identified: create loss, vandalism, trashing, stealing, NWOM, personal attack</li> <li>- Voice, exit and retaliation are independent consumer responses to dissatisfaction</li> </ul>
Bechwati and Morrin (2003)	Desire for consumer vengeance: “the retaliatory feelings that consumers feel toward a firm, such as the desire to exert some harm on the firm, typically following an extremely negative purchase experience”	Experiments	Study 1: 232 University students (41% male) Study 2: 93 University students	Understand the process by which outraged customers choose the next brand to purchase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Given sufficient desire for vengeance, customers will behave proactively and choose to switch to the suboptimal choice alternative to exact revenge</li> <li>- Bad interpersonal treatment, rather than negative tangible outcomes, drives customers to exact revenge</li> </ul>
Bonified and Cole (2007)		Experiment, content analysis	Study 1: 143 University students	Examine the effect of emotions on post-purchase behaviours after a service failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anger mediates the effect of attributions of blame to the service provider on retaliatory behaviours</li> <li>- Recovery efforts that decrease anger reduce retaliatory behaviours</li> </ul>
Grégoire and Fisher (2008)	“A customer’s actions that are designed to punish and cause inconvenience to a firm for the damages the customer felt it caused”	Retrospective recall survey	226 respondents (63% male)	Examine how relationship strength affects customer motivation for revenge after a service failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Betrayal is a key motivational force that leads customers to restore fairness by exacting revenge</li> <li>- Higher relationship strength drives customer revenge with greater intensity because a fairness violation has a stronger effect on the sense of betrayal felt by loyal customers</li> </ul>
Funhes Markley and Davis (2009)	“An action taken in return for an injury or offense”	In depth and semi-structured interviews	Study 1: 15 respondents Study 2: 75 University students Study 3: 300 respondents	Examine the motives and the roles of retaliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of distributive and interactional justice are key motives for retaliation</li> <li>- Roles of retaliation: teach the firm a lesson, protect others, and restore the sense of power</li> <li>- Four customer retaliatory categories were identified: cost/loss, aggression and power, consumption prevention and boycotting, voice, exit and betrayal</li> </ul>
Grégoire, Tripp and Legoux (2009)	Desire for revenge: “customers’ need to punish and cause harm to firms for the damages they have caused”	Longitudinal survey, experiment	Study 1: 172 respondents (39% male) Study 2: 113 University students	Investigate the effect of time and relationship strength on the evolution of customer revenge in online public complaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The desire for revenge decreases over time</li> <li>- The desire for revenge of strong-relationship customers is sustained over longer periods</li> <li>- Recovery attempts substantially reduces the desire for revenge of the strong-relationship customers over time</li> </ul>

Table 2.1: Summary of previous studies examining customer revenge (continued)

Author	Conceptualization of revenge	Type of research	Sample	Research aim	Key findings
Zourrig, Chebat and Toffoli (2009)	“The infliction of harm in return for perceived injury or insult”	Conceptual paper		Examine the influence of cultural values on customer revenge behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customer revenge is viewed as a coping process</li> <li>- Individual-level differences in cultural values (allocentrism/idiocentrism) influence the cognitive, emotional and motivational patterns of customer revenge process</li> </ul>
Gelbrich (2010)	Confrontative coping: “aggressively attacking another party to get him/her to change his/her mind and to vent negative emotions”	Experiment, retrospective recall survey	<p>Study 1: 311 University students (42% male)</p> <p>Study 2: 525 respondents</p>	Examine the role of helplessness in explaining coping responses to anger after a service failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When anger coincides with high levels of helplessness, confrontative coping is increased</li> </ul>
Grégoire, Laufer and Tripp (2010)	“Customers causing harm to firms after an unacceptable service”	Retrospective recall surveys	<p>Study 1: 247 respondents (41% male)</p> <p>Study 2: 103 University students</p>	Develop a comprehensive customer revenge model	Judgments of unfairness and blame increase perceptions of firm greediness. This, in turn, generates anger and the desire for revenge which ultimately result in direct and indirect revenge behaviour
Joireman, Grégoire, Devezer and Tripp (2013)	“Negative behaviors that aim to punish and cause inconvenience to a firm for the harm it has caused”	Retrospective recall survey, experiment	<p>Study 1: 250 respondents</p> <p>Study 2: 249 respondents (47% male)</p> <p>Study 3: 434 University students (57% male)</p>	Examine how customers respond to failed service recoveries (i.e. double deviations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inferred firm motives mediate the effect of established cognitions (i.e. blame, severity, and fairness) on anger and desire for revenge</li> <li>- A positive inferred motive results in a stronger desire for reconciliation than revenge which, in turn, leads to lower revenge behaviour</li> <li>- Offering paired apology with compensation results in positive inferred motive and lower revenge behaviour</li> </ul>

### **2.1.2 Theoretical perspectives of revenge**

Before examining the defining characteristics of customer revenge, it is imperative to place it in the broader context of the psychological theories that it originated from in order to understand its main qualities. Past theories of revenge differ in terms of the perspective they adopt and the psychological processes they examine. Specifically, revenge in previous studies has been viewed as rational or irrational (Elster, 1990; Tripp & Bies, 2010), adaptive or maladaptive (Grobink et al., 2015; McCullough, Kurzban, & Tabak, 2010) or as involving benefits or costs.

Initial conceptions of revenge, primarily coming from philosophers, viewed it as an evil, irrational, and mindless action that occurs at the heat of the moment (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). In this sense, revenge arises from visceral factors that overshadow any rational action and render individuals out of control (Loewenstein, 1996; Potegal & Novaco, 2010). In contrast, more recent views of revenge have stressed the morality and rationality of this behaviour (Tripp & Bies, 2010). Here, researchers argue that revenge is a rational and morally justifiable response to injustice that aims to right a wrong or prevent future injustice. Hence, under this lens, revenge serves social functions and acts as a guardian of social order (Tripp & Bies, 2010).

Accounts of revenge further differ as to whether it is viewed as adaptive or maladaptive. Supporters of the adaptive view, stress the beneficial outcomes of revenge both for society and the individual (Gollwitzer, Keller, & Braun, 2011; McCullough et al., 2010; Schumann & Ross, 2010). In particular, evolutionary psychologists have viewed revenge as an evolutionary product that has evolved to solve certain adaptive problems. McCullough et al. (2010) have suggested that revenge serves three functions that enable deterrence and prevention of future transgressions and foster cooperation. On the intrapersonal level, revenge is said to serve a protective function for the individual since it restores the psychological balance by providing relief to the victim from all the suffering and psychological pain endured after the transgression, maintains the sense of self-worth, and restores the power balance between the victim and the transgressor (Gollwitzer, Meder, & Schmitt, 2011; Grobink et al., 2015). Conversely, supporters of the view that revenge is maladaptive primarily examine destructive forms of revenge, such as homicide and mass murder. These cases of revenge are indicative of some



sort of psychological dysfunction and have been associated with problems early in a person's development and with psychological disorders (Grobbink et al., 2015).

Theorists have further examined revenge according to the benefits and costs for the avenger, the transgressor and society. On the beneficial side, the extant research generally overlaps with that of the adaptive view of revenge. Despite the aforementioned benefits, revenge has costs for the avenger regarding energy and time resource expenditure along with the risk of counter-revenge (Elster, 1990). It can involve adverse psychological outcomes for the individual, such as negative health outcomes and decreased life satisfaction (Grobbink et al., 2015; Schumann & Ross, 2010). Furthermore, it may increase rather than decrease negative emotions and result in further aggressive behaviours (Bushman et al., 2001). On the interpersonal level, revenge can be costly because it may often motivate counter-revenge resulting in escalation of conflict and prolonged feuds (Stillwell, Baumeister, & Del Priore, 2008), which could put the social order in danger (Harris & Reynolds, 2004).

In sum, revenge has been examined from different perspectives, some overlapping, while others are contradictory. These perspectives have provided rich insights into the revenge phenomenon and its various manifestations. The next section explains the view adopted in relation to customer revenge in this thesis through an examination of its characteristics.

### **2.1.3 Customer revenge: its defining characteristics**

Customer revenge, in a service context, has attracted considerable attention in recent years (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Huefner & Hunt, 2000). Two streams of research are responsible for the emergence of customer revenge as a separate area of study: consumer complaining behaviour and consumer misbehaviour research. Revenge as a form of complaining behaviour, first appeared in Huefner and Hunt's (2000) work, which proposed an expansion of Hirschman's (1970) voice, exit and loyalty model to incorporate revenge as a distinct response to consumer dissatisfaction, whilst providing empirical evidence to support this view. Customer misbehaviour refers to customers' actions that violate generally accepted norms of conduct in a service setting and that disrupt firm operations (Fullerton & Punj, 1993). In this stream of research, the revenge motive is repeatedly considered a driver of various forms of customer misbehaviour and is said to underlie a number of customer misbehaviour classifications (Daunt & Harris, 2012b; Harris & Reynolds, 2004). Following these two streams

of research, customer revenge as a separate area of study, attracted a number of studies investigating the underlying mechanisms and the characteristics of revenge (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2010).

As noted in the previous section, revenge has been examined under different perspectives. Hence, an explanation and justification for the position adopted regarding customer revenge in this thesis is provided first. Customer revenge is a personal response to unfair treatment (Gollwitzer, Keller et al., 2011). A number of studies have tied revenge to moral intuition and the subjective sense of justice and deservingness (Gollwitzer, Keller et al., 2011; Tripp & Bies, 2010). It is the violation of norms of fairness and the sense of undeserved harm that give rise to the motivation for revenge. Moreover, customer revenge is considered an intentional and conscious act to right a wrong that requires significant cognitive processing (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Funches et al., 2009). Typically, the customers go through a period of reflection on the harm, where they appraise/reappraise the negative incident in terms of the severity and blame attribution to decide how they will act about it (Zourrig et al., 2009a). In line with this, Tripp and Bies (2010) developed a comprehensive model to show the process that leads from the initial provocation to the actual revengeful behaviour. This contradicts the view that revenge is a mindless, animalistic impulse (Elster, 1990). Customer revenge in this research is not inherently irrational as traditional views of revenge suggest, but it is argued that on certain occasions it may lead to actions that hurt rather than advance an individual's long-term self-interest. Furthermore, in conjunction with its cognitive nature, revenge is affectively driven as well. Past studies reveal that revenge is almost always accompanied by intense negative emotions (McCull-Kennedy, Patterson, Smith, & Brady, 2009). These emotional states serve as the mechanism that translates cognitive appraisals (i.e. perceived unfairness) into revengeful acts (Zourrig et al., 2009a).

Furthermore, customer revenge is not a sort of psychological dysfunction as the maladaptive view of revenge postulates. Indeed, instances of customer revenge in daily life demonstrate that customers that exact revenge have the characteristics of ordinary-seeming and not mentally ill people (Harris & Reynolds, 2004). Customer revenge is considered as a form of instrumental aggression, where customers engage in revengeful actions not to cause harm to the firm as their ultimate goal, but as an instrument to achieve other higher-order goals, such as restoring equity or venting negative emotions (C. A. Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Kähr et al., 2016). This

stands in contrast with the concept of hostile aggression in social psychology and brand sabotage in marketing, where the ultimate goal is to cause harm.

Customer revenge in this research is examined primarily as an intrapersonal phenomenon, although its interpersonal aspect is considered as well (Grobbink et al., 2015). In particular, the main assumption for this thesis is that the primary goal for customer revenge is to vent negative emotions in order to restore the psychological balance in the individuals' psyche (intrapersonal perspective) (Zourrig et al., 2009a) followed by the motive to restore justice (interpersonal perspective) (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). In line with this assumption, Stuckless and Goranson (1992, p. 26) argue that revenge has "the essential purpose of giving the avenger relief from a feeling of discomfort". After a severe negative incident, negative emotions press for corrective action. Individuals may believe that customer revenge will offer them escape from these negative emotions and engage in such acts with the intention to feel better (Carlsmith et al., 2008). This view will be elaborated in more detail in Chapter 3. Whilst the intrapersonal perspective is the main focus of this thesis, the fact that customer revenge is also an interpersonal phenomenon and may be driven by the goal to restore justice is acknowledged. This is in line with the vast literature on revenge that has placed the restoration of justice at the heart of revengeful behaviour (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Tripp & Bies, 2010).

Regarding the costs and benefits of customer revenge, a brief review of the extant literature indicates that there is no definitive response as to whether revenge is costly or beneficial (Carlsmith et al., 2008; Schumann & Ross, 2010; Tripp & Bies, 2010). Customer revenge can, indeed, be beneficial in that it serves as a deterrence to a firm's unfair practices. That is, in knowing that customers have a repertoire of revengeful actions that they might employ in response to unacceptable service, firms will be deterred from exploiting their customers. Nevertheless, this thesis adopts the view that the costs of customer revenge most of the time outweigh the benefits for the following reasons. First, whether revenge actually restores the psychological balance is debatable. A number of studies have indicated that, whereas individuals expect to feel better after exacting their revenge, they finally end up feeling worse (Bushman et al., 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008). Gollwitzer and Denzler (2009) demonstrated that revenge can be satisfying and result in positive emotions when it delivers the intended message and the transgressor shows that he/she has understood the message of the revenge. Nevertheless, in transactions with a firm, customer revenge seldom produces the desired

outcomes, especially because some of its forms take place outside the firm (e.g. vindictive NWOM). Consequently, it is often difficult for customers to know whether they have delivered the message of revenge to the firms and thus, ameliorate their negative emotions. Second, customer revenge can be viewed as a self-control failure, where individuals seeking immediate relief from their negative emotions fail to control their aggressive impulses and to follow socially acceptable behaviours that will advance their long-term interests (Baumeister, 1997). In line with this, Tice, Bratslavsky, and Baumeister (2001) have provided evidence that when individuals are in emotional distress, their goal to feel better immediately takes precedence over their long-term self-control goal. This view will be elaborated upon in more detail in Chapter 4.

Third, customer revenge may often be disproportional to the severity of the initial service failure. Individuals tend to inflate the attributions of intentionality and personal harm caused by the transgressor and subsequently engage in disproportional reactions to the initial harm, which may result in an escalation of conflict between the customer and firm representatives (Stillwell et al., 2008). Finally, the prevalence of revengeful actions, especially when accompanied by a lack of sanctions against such behaviour, may signal that firms are encouraging or tacitly condoning behaving in such a manner (Harris & Reynolds, 2004). Hence, customers may take advantage of their power in a “customer is always right” environment and be more prone to revenge in response to an unacceptable service, which in turn might put the social order in danger. Hence, from the above discussion it would seem that while customer revenge may be beneficial on some occasions, most of the time it results in negative consequences for both customers and firms.

#### **2.1.4 Customer revenge and other related constructs**

Previous literature has employed various terms to denote individual’s responses to negative acts. These concepts need clarification in order to distinguish them from that of revenge. Some researchers have employed the terms revenge and vengeance interchangeably (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992; Zourrig et al., 2009a). In particular, similarly to revenge, Stuckless and Goranson (1992) defined vengeance as the infliction of harm in return for a perceived wrongdoing. Furthermore, revenge and retaliation have sometimes been used interchangeably in the consumer literature (e.g. Funches et al., 2009; Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). In particular, retaliation has been defined as “a customer’s actions that are designed to punish and cause

inconvenience to a firm for the damages the customer felt it caused” (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008, p. 247). Conversely, psychological research has drawn a distinction between the term revenge and other forms of negative reciprocity, such as retaliation, hostility, and retribution. Revenge differs from retaliation in terms of its rationality, affect and purpose. In particular, the primary purpose of retaliation is deterrence, while for revenge, it is to give the avenger relief from uncomfortable or painful emotions (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). While revenge may deter future aggression, this may not always be the case since it often provokes rather than impeding further aggressive reactions (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Revenge is not always rational, in contrast with retaliation, which is a fast and rational response and does not necessarily involve affect (Zourrig et al., 2009a). Conversely, revenge is affective and takes place after the victim has ruminated about his/her suffering and the offender (Tripp & Bies, 2010). Since, the main purpose of this research is to demonstrate that individuals engage in revenge with the intent to alleviate their negative emotions, the term revenge fits better our conceptualization.

Revenge also differs from retribution. That is, acts of retribution are sanctioned by a third-party and involve lower emotional and behavioural intensities. Conversely, revenge is more personal, arises from intense negative emotions and results in responses of greater intensity than the initial provocation (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Revenge can be further distinguished from hostility since the former is motivated by the perception of having been wronged, while the latter is driven by undifferentiated feelings of hostility towards others (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992).

Finally, in service literature the concept of customer brand sabotage has recently appeared. This is a form of hostile aggression (C. A. Anderson & Bushman, 2002), with the end goal being to harm the firm and where both customers and non-customers of the firm can be potential actors (Kähr et al., 2016). Conversely, customer revenge is not primarily driven by the motive to harm the firm per se and since it is a response to negative transactions, it requires individuals to be customers of the firm (Kähr et al., 2016).

### **2.1.5 Forms of customer revenge**

Previous literature has identified customer revenge as a general construct that incorporates various forms of harmful actions employed by customers with the intent to punish the firm (Funches et al., 2009; Grégoire et al., 2010; Huefner & Hunt, 2000). Among the typologies

produced, that of Grégoire et al. (2010) is the most widely accepted and the one that will be followed in this research. According to this, customer revengeful behaviours are categorised into direct revenge, which involves marketplace aggression and vindictive complaining and indirect revenge, including negative word-of-mouth and third-party complaining. These behaviours are not mutually exclusive and customers can engage in multiple behavioural responses. Categorisation of behaviours into direct and indirect acts is important because of the different consequences for the firm they produce. More specifically, direct revenge puts much pressure on frontline employees, inducing costs, such as employee absenteeism and turnover, and financial costs for the firm. However, it is more visible and controllable by the firm than its counterpart. On the other side, indirect revenge is less visible and difficult to control, but can seriously harm a firm's reputation (Grégoire et al., 2010).

These four revengeful behaviours have been repeatedly reported in the literature to be motivated by revenge goals and the intent to harm the firm (Daunt & Harris, 2012b; Wetzer, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2007; Yagil, 2008). Nevertheless, as noted before, customer revenge is viewed as a form of instrumental aggression, where harming the firm is not an end goal, but rather, a means to achieve other higher-order goals. The two higher-order goals that are examined in this research are venting negative emotions and restoration of justice (Kähr et al., 2016), although it is acknowledged that these behaviours may, in some instances, be employed with other types of goals as well. Focusing on these two goals will enable the researcher to build the unfairness-negative emotions-revenge framework of this thesis and to argue that both injustice and negative emotions are key antecedents of customer revenge. The main assumption for this research, is that negative emotions play a major role in translating perceptions of unfairness into customer revenge and hence, venting may be the primary driver of customer revenge followed by the goal to restore justice.

Indeed, prior research has stressed these two goals as the main drivers of revenge. A key assertion of previous studies is that customer revenge is an attempt to restore equity in the relationship between the customer and the firm. Customers require compensation for an outcome they deserve, but have not received (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Grégoire et al., 2010). Consequently, justice is a key antecedent of revenge and the goal to restore it is the key motivator of such behaviours (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002; Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Tripp & Bies, 2010). Moreover, a recurrent driver for the four revengeful behaviours appearing in the literature is venting. Customer revenge is emotionally-laden behaviour and a

coping response that individuals employ to cope with their negative emotions (Zourrig et al., 2009a). Hence, revenge is thought to arise from an expressive motivation where customers seek to vent, release or express their negative emotions (Ambrose et al., 2002; Kähr et al., 2016; Nyer, 1999). Below, the four revengeful behaviours are examined in detail and evidence about their association with these two goals is provided.

Marketplace aggression is a destructive form of revenge that directly harms the firm or its employees (Grégoire et al., 2010). Customer aggression encompasses a wide range of psychological and physical actions, including damaging a firm's properties, violating its policies (Harris & Reynolds, 2004) or making personal attacks on its employees through the use of abusive language or physical aggression (Huefner & Hunt, 2000). Previous studies report considerable variation in the level of extremity and damage caused to the firm by customer aggressive behaviours, which can range from mere financial losses to severe psychological strain (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Research on the goals associated with customer aggression is disparate and has mainly focused on individual forms of aggression. For instance, Van Vliet (1984), focusing on vandalism, suggested that it may be driven by revenge goals, while other goals ranged from financial gains to thrill-seeking. Evidence for the link between aggression and restoration of justice and venting goals mainly comes from research in psychology and organisational studies, which found that individuals who perceive that their rights are not being respected or believe that they will achieve release of their negative emotions through aggression, are more likely to aggress (Ambrose et al., 2002; Bushman et al., 2001).

Complaining has been defined as "expressing discontent, dissatisfaction, protest, resentment, or regret" (Alicke et al., 1992, p. 286). In this sense, complaining is a customer initiated behavioural expression of dissatisfaction with a situation or person (Bougie, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2003; Kowalski, 1996). For the customer, complaining is the means to make his/her feelings known when unfair service provider practices are encountered (Fornell & Westbrook, 1979). The essential characteristic of vindictive complaining is that customers voice their dissatisfaction to the employees to inconvenience firm's operations (Grégoire et al., 2010). This type of behaviour aims to punish the firm and force employees change their minds (Gelbrich, 2010). Accordingly, vindictive complaining is an aggressive type of voice in Singh's (1988) taxonomy and differs from more constructive forms of complaining that aim to constructively discuss the problem with the firm and find a mutual solution (Hibbard, Kumar, & Stern, 2001). A number of motives have been associated with complaining in past research.

Individuals have reported justice motives, such as seeking corrective actions, seeking an apology and asking for an explanation (Heung & Lam, 2003). Hence, those who complain may demand a form of redress for inequitable treatment to restore the justice in the customer-firm relationship (Alicke et al., 1992). More importantly, complaining serves cathartic purposes, whereby individuals complain to achieve emotional relief and be freed from their negative emotions (Kowalski, 1996). Indeed, Alicke et al. (1992) demonstrated that venting feelings was the most commonly reported reason for complaining in social interactions. Complaining behaviour can be triggered by other motives, including seeking sympathy and understanding (Alicke et al., 1992) or for self-presentation purposes (managing the impressions others form for oneself) (Kowalski, 1996), but these are less relevant for this research.

With indirect revenge, customers might maliciously spread negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) by informing friends and other members of their social network about their bad experience with the firm (Bougie et al., 2003; Harris & Reynolds, 2004). Vindictive NWOM can be understood as an aggressive form of private response according to Singh's (1988) taxonomy. NWOM has received increasing attention in the literature due to its high incidence rate in the marketplace and its persuasive role in influencing consumers' attitudes and purchase decisions (Sundaram, Mitra, & Webster, 1998). Indeed, past research has indicated that highly dissatisfied consumers are more likely to share their experiences than satisfied ones (E. W. Anderson, 1998). This badmouthing denigrates a firm and dissuades others from using its services (Gelbrich, 2010). Vindictive NWOM differs from support-seeking WOM, where individuals, by sharing their negative experiences, seek the empathy and understanding from others (Gelbrich, 2010) or from other constructive forms of NWOM that are driven by motives of warning others and seeking advice (Wetzer et al., 2007). Justice and venting motives have been found to underlie NWOM. In particular, past research has repeatedly demonstrated that NWOM behaviour is driven by the goal to restore justice (Blodgett, Granbois, & Walters, 1993) and to let off steam by expressing the emotions (Wetzer et al., 2007).

Finally, third-party complaining is a public form of complaining that is directed towards an agency not directly involved in the exchange relationship (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b). In this case, the customer contacts a third-party (e.g. an agency, media) to publicise his/her misadventure with the company (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). This is an aggressive form of third-party responses from Singh's (1988) taxonomy. Third-party complaining is the most effortful of all complaining behaviour and is usually considered a last-resort action usually



occurring after customers have attempted other forms of revenge (Russell-Bennett, Härtel, & Drennan, 2010). Compared with NWOM, third-party complaining is addressed to the mass audience and can have a larger impact on firm's reputation, making the intent to get even clearer (Grégoire et al., 2010). The revenge motive differentiates this form of third-party complaining from other that are driven by altruistic goals to protect other customers or goals to restore individuals' self-worth (Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Third-party complaining has mainly been examined as a response aimed at restoring justice (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b). However, venting motives have also been implicated in the literature (Russell-Bennett et al., 2010). As a public form of complaining, third-party complaining behaviour might be used by customers to vent their anger, especially in cases where the other forms of revenge have not produced the desired outcomes.

Previous literature has not considered relationship exit and boycott as forms of revenge (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Huefner & Hunt, 2000). The former is considered a passive form of negative response to dissatisfying experiences that primarily arises from the desire to avoid a future negative experience, rather than harming the firm per se (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). Whilst a boycott is a form of extended exit usually of a medium-term nature (Boote, 1998). When considering a personal boycott, the potential harm caused to the company is relatively insignificant (Funches et al., 2009), while collective actions are primarily viewed as prosocial actions that are driven by altruistic motives (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). For these reasons, relationship exit and boycott are not examined in this research.

### **2.1.6 Service failure/recovery**

A service context is employed in this research to examine customer revenge in response to perceived unfairness. Services involve unique qualities not involved in goods that pose challenges for service marketers (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985). The evolution of service marketing as a separate area of research can be traced back to the works of Zeithaml et al. (1985), Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990) and Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel, and Gutman (1985). It is generally agreed that four characteristics, namely, intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perishability are unique to services (Zeithaml et al., 1985). More specifically, in contrast with goods, services cannot be touched or tasted, they are produced and consumed simultaneously, they involve high variability in performance and quality, and they cannot be stored (Zeithaml et al., 1985).

Service encounters are viewed as dyadic interactions between the customer and the service provider, where each party is expected to perform a role and to enact certain behaviours so that the transaction can proceed smoothly (Solomon et al., 1985). The service context is deemed appropriate for this research since services, due to their innate characteristics, may frequently cause customer dissatisfaction and result in customer revenge (Grégoire et al., 2010; McCollough, Berry, & Yadav, 2000). Whilst firms try to provide consistently high service quality, the human element involved makes service delivery more error-prone and susceptible to frequent service failures when compared to product delivery (Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2009). When service performance falls short of customer expectations service failure occurs (Hess, Ganesan, & Klein, 2003). Indeed, failures, such as flight delays, hotel overbookings or wrong meal orders are almost unavoidable (Goodwin & Ross, 1992).

Since service firms cannot completely eliminate errors, past research has stressed the importance of service recovery efforts as a way to win customers back. Service recovery has been defined as “the actions and activities that the service organization and its employees perform to rectify, amend, and restore the loss experienced by customers from deficiencies in service performance” (Hess et al., 2003, p. 129). Prior studies have shown that customers form expectations not only about outcomes, but also, about the process of service delivery (Bitner, 1990). Using a critical incident technique, Bitner et al. (1990) demonstrated that service performance is evaluated both in terms of what is delivered regarding outcomes and of how the service is delivered in terms of how the service personnel respond and behave. Consequently, service recovery techniques may include both tangible outcomes, such as a refund, or process-related reparation in the form of an apology and/or an explanation for the service failure (Goodwin & Ross, 1992).

Service recovery significantly impacts on customer responses since customers are more emotionally involved and observant of recovery efforts than first-time service encounters (A. K. Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999). More importantly, fairness issues become particularly salient in service recovery and influence subsequent behaviour (Blodgett et al., 1993; Seiders & Berry, 1998). Prior studies have consistently demonstrated that successful service recovery efforts result in positive responses, while poor recovery intensifies the negative effects of failure (Blodgett et al., 1997; Tax et al., 1998). When service firms recover successfully, customers form higher perceptions of fairness and experience more positive emotional reactions (Blodgett et al., 1997). Superior service recovery has further been associated with a

number of positive psychological outcomes, such as increased trust and commitment (Tax et al., 1998) and behavioural outcomes, such as reduced revengeful actions (Blodgett et al., 1997). Some researchers have even claimed that customers who have encountered a service failure become more satisfied with the firm after successful recovery efforts than those customers who have never encountered a problem (A. K. Smith & Bolton, 1998), what McCollough and Bharadwaj (1992) called the service-recovery paradox. Despite this finding having been questioned in other studies (e.g. McCollough et al., 2000), it is generally agreed that superior service recovery provides more opportunity for firms to remedy service failure when compared to inferior service recovery (McCollough et al., 2000).

Yet, research suggests that more than half of recovery efforts actually reinforce dissatisfaction (Hart, Heskett, & Sasser, 1990). A firm's failure at the service recovery level causes a 'double deviation' scenario, a term coined by Bitner et al. (1990) to denote the instances where both failed service and service recovery efforts occur (Bitner et al., 1990). Double deviation scenarios exacerbate the already negative customer evaluations of service providers and result in higher perceptions of unfairness as well as more intense negative emotional states (Casado-Díaz, Más-Ruiz, & Kasper, 2007; Joireman et al., 2013). Because double deviations constitute highly stressful situations, individuals may seek to cope with their negative emotions (Zourrig et al., 2009a) and consequently, engage in various revengeful behaviours to alleviate these emotions. The context of double deviation scenarios will form the basis of most of the experiments of this research, because of the intense negative emotions and the increased desire for revenge that these double deviations create.

### **2.1.7 Summary**

To summarise, this section has provided an overview of the crucial elements of customer revenge. What can now be argued is that customer revenge is a deliberate act that involves significant cognitive processing; is a response to perceived injustice; is almost always accompanied by intense negative emotions; is driven primarily by the desire to restore the psychological balance followed by the goal to restore justice; and may result in self-control failure when the hedonic goal of immediately feeling better overrides the long-term one of controlling aggressive impulses. Moreover, it has now been shown that customer revenge encompasses various forms of harmful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining), which primarily serve two goals (i.e.

restoration of justice and venting negative emotions). Finally, service recovery constitutes an appropriate context to examine the effects of customer perceptions of unfairness and associated emotions in the various customer revengeful behaviours.

Drawing on work in psychology, organisational studies and marketing, the focus of this research is on the cognitive-emotive factors that influence whether individuals seek revenge. With regards to the cognitive factors, perceived injustice has been implicated as a key antecedent of revenge (Grégoire et al., 2010; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Tripp & Bies, 2010) and hence, is discussed first. The next section addresses the role of the three dimensions of justice in customer revenge. This refers to hypotheses H1-H3 of the conceptual model in Chapter 5.

## **2.2 Justice**

### **2.2.1 Justice and Fairness**

The notion of (in)justice has been placed at the heart of revenge (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Gollwitzer, Keller et al., 2011; Tripp & Bies, 2010). Many theorists view revenge as a behavioural response to perceived injustice aroused after a provocation or offence by another person (Gollwitzer, Keller et al., 2011; Tripp & Bies, 2010). While justice is more of a static or ideal condition, injustice, defined as the individual's belief that he/she has been treated unfairly (Ambrose et al., 2002), is an active process that aims to remedy or prevent what gave rise to the sense of injustice (Tripp & Bies, 2010). As this definition shows, the terms justice and fairness are used interchangeably. Rawls' (1958) work on political philosophy was the first to argue that justice should be seen as fairness. In his view, justice is provided when some principles of fairness are met, i.e. when individuals have equal rights to certain liberties, equal opportunities and when the state intervenes to restore equality. Keeping in line with this idea and following previous studies that have used the two terms interchangeably (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Blodgett et al., 1997; Greenberg, 1993; Tripp & Bies, 2010), for this research, it is assumed that justice and fairness refer to the same concept.

The study of justice emerged from fields such as philosophy, religion, and legal studies and more recently justice theories have been employed in organisational and consumer research studies (Greenberg, 1993). These theorists have acknowledged that concerns about fairness shape daily life. On a broader level, fairness is a social norm that provides some standards of

acceptable and unacceptable patterns of behaviour for the members of a social group (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Social norms are important for a society since they guide or constrain behaviour and help to establish social harmony between the members of the group (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Evidence suggests that fairness norms are acquired through learning and socialisation processes from an early age and they intrinsically motivate individuals to follow them even when no personal gain is expected (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). In particular, studies employing economic games demonstrate that individuals view punishment at violations of the fairness norm as a 'moral duty' and punish transgressors even at the expense of their own self-interest (E. Fehr & Gächter, 2000). Similarly to fairness norms that dictate social behaviour, exchange relationships in the marketplace are based on rules and norms of fair outcomes and processes. Over time, rules of exchange become institutionalised and shape the expectations of entitlement that customers hold about fair outcomes and processes enacted by firms (Maxwell, 2002). Consequently, while firm adherence to the norms of fairness has been shown to lead to a number of positive outcomes, such as customer commitment, loyalty, and satisfaction (Blodgett et al., 1997; Cropanzana, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007), violations of such rules trigger consumer moral outrage and motivate revenge (Maxwell, 2002; Tripp & Bies, 2010).

Prior studies have identified three key issues regarding justice. First, individuals are concerned about justice issues for three reasons: they believe that justice will bring them long-term benefits regarding positive personal outcomes; justice provides signals that the individual is valued and respected by a larger social group; and justice signals respecting of moral and ethical obligations (Colquitt, 2012; Cropanzana et al., 2007). Second, the formation of perceptions of justice can be either an automatic (e.g. fairness heuristic theory) or an effortful process (e.g. fairness theory) (Colquitt, 2012). Perceptions of injustice for this research follow these controlled processes. In other words, customers faced with a service failure are assumed to appraise/reappraise the initial harm to decide the severity and the intentionality of the harm and these appraisals arouse a sense of (in)justice. Third, regarding the forms of justice, conceptualisations broadly differ in terms of focusing on either the outcome or process (Greenberg, 1990). These forms of justice will be elaborated upon in more detail in section 2.2.3.

Justice theory has proved to be valuable in explaining individuals' responses to conflict resolution situations across several contexts (e.g. legal and organisational). The service failure/recovery context of this research also constitutes a conflict resolution situation since it

involves a conflict between the firm and the customer arising from initial service failure (Tax et al., 1998). The next section, provides justification for using justice theories in the service recovery context.

### **2.2.2 Justice theory in the service recovery context**

A number of theories have been put forward to explain negative customer responses to service recovery efforts, such as the attribution theory (Folkes, 1984), disconfirmation theory (Oliver & Swan, 1989) and justice theory (Blodgett et al., 1997). Attribution theory postulates that after a negative event, individuals seek to assign blame for the failure (Folkes, 1984). Individuals engage in an evaluative process where they seek to determine locus (firm's responsibility for the failure), stability (the likelihood that the failure will happen again) and controllability (whether failure is under firm's volitional control) (McCullough, 2000). It is argued that the more customers attribute the locus of the service failure to the service provider and perceive the cause to be stable and controllable, the more likely they are to engage in negative responses towards firms. Disconfirmation theory posits that individuals compare the actual service recovery performance to their expectations about service performance. The greater the gap between the actual and the expected performance, the more the firm performance is said to be negatively disconfirmed, thus resulting in higher levels of dissatisfaction (Oliver & Swan, 1989).

Attribution theory is not deemed suitable for the context of this study, because it mainly focuses on the cause of the conflict and cannot account for the whole conflict episode between customers and firms (e.g. procedures and interaction with the employee during the conflict resolution process) (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). Conversely, justice theory helps in understanding the evolution of the entire process of the conflict, including all the stages. Furthermore, while the disconfirmation and justice paradigms are complementary theories for explaining consumer responses to service recovery, the former has been primarily used to explicate satisfaction. Comparing the two theories in their study, Smith et al. (1999) demonstrated that justice theory has significantly more predictive power in consumer responses to service failures than disconfirmation theory and hence, is further used in this research.

Justice theory has been the dominant theoretical framework employed by previous studies to explain consumer negative responses to service recovery efforts (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003;

Blodgett et al., 1997; Tax et al., 1998). This theory is employed in this research for the following reasons. First, as noted before, a number of studies have argued that the motivation for revenge is rooted in the perception of injustice (Grégoire et al., 2010; Tripp & Bies, 2010), where by taking revenge, victims seek to restore justice. Second, consumers are especially sensitive to fairness issues in services due to their intangibility (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005). Smith et al. (1999) suggest that service failure/recovery encounters involve the exchange of both utilitarian resources, such as money, time and effort and symbolic ones, such as self-esteem and social status. Service failures create a loss in either utilitarian and/or symbolic resources and cause an imbalance in the relationship between the customer and the firm (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005). This caused imbalance gives rise to unfairness perceptions and motivates the customer to take action to restore it. Third, service recovery can be viewed as a sequence of events that starts with the communication of the complaint from the customer side and where a procedure results in a decision outcome through an interaction process (Tax et al., 1998). Each part of the sequence of events has been shown to involve a different aspect of justice, namely, distributive, procedural and interactional justice. A number of researchers have found that all three types of justice can account for distinct variance in consumer responses and thus, are critical determinants of service recovery evaluations and customer behaviour (Blodgett et al., 1997; Grégoire et al., 2010; Tax et al., 1998). For this reason, for this study, the focus is on all three types of justice. These are elaborated in the next section.

### **2.2.3 Forms of justice**

#### **2.2.3.1 Distributive justice**

Distributive justice refers to the fairness of the outcome of a decision (Blodgett et al., 1997; Colquitt, 2012; Greenberg, 1990). In the service recovery context, distributive justice refers to the fairness of the compensation given to the customer for the service failure (Blodgett et al., 1997). The compensation may take the form of refunds, repairs, replacement, and/or store credits, among others (Tax et al., 1998). For instance, a customer might be offered a free drink for slow restaurant service, replacement of a defective product, or waiving of room charges when the experience with a hotel is unsatisfactory.

The most influential theory of distributive justice was Adams's (1965) equity theory, which claims that individuals evaluate the fairness of the distribution of outcomes by comparing the ratio of their perceived outcomes to their perceived inputs with the corresponding ratio of a

relevant comparison other. Equal ratios are postulated to give a sense of equity and satisfaction. However, when the ratios are unequal, individuals are theorised as experiencing negative emotions and being motivated to react in order to redress the inequity either behaviourally (e.g. altering their inputs to the exchange relationship) or psychologically (e.g. altering their perceptions about the decision outcomes) (Greenberg, 1990). Most theories of distributive fairness focus on the role of equity rule in shaping subsequent exchanges (Blodgett et al., 1997). Two other allocation rules have been suggested in the literature: the equality rule (equal allocation of outcomes among individuals) and the needs rule (allocation of outcomes according to personal requirements) (Deutsch, 1975). Because of its link with social exchange theory, marketing literature has focused solely on the equity rule of distributive justice (Blodgett et al., 1997) and hence, this rule is considered in this research.

Past studies have suggested that service recovery efforts are less favourably received when the compensation is not aligned with the magnitude of the perceived costs experienced by the customer during service failure (Blodgett et al., 1997). Perceptions of distributive unfairness have been associated with a number of negative consumer reactions, both in terms of psychological (e.g. low commitment) (Tax et al., 1998) and behavioural responses (e.g. reduced repurchase intentions) (Blodgett et al., 1997).

Whilst the notion of distributive justice generated a proliferation of studies in this area, it later fell into disfavour. This is because it could not adequately explain individuals' concerns about fairness of the process with which decisions are enacted as opposed to the outcome of these decisions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Researchers in organisational and legal studies started raising questions about how decisions were enacted and not what the decisions were, which shifted attention towards more process-oriented forms of justice (Greenberg, 1990).

### **2.2.3.2 Procedural justice**

Procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the procedures and policies used by decision makers to reach the decision outcome (Greenberg, 1990). In this sense, individuals evaluate fairness in relation to how decision outcomes are enacted, rather than the outcome of the decision per se. Procedural justice is important, because it can explain how firms can retain relationships with customers even when the outcome is unfavourable (Tax et al., 1998). The conceptualisation of procedural justice is attributed to the pioneering work of Thibaut and



Walker (1975) in dispute-resolution situations, which demonstrated that offering disputants control over the procedures used to settle a grievance affected perceptions of justice. The finding that voice-giving procedures were considered fairer than mute procedures was later replicated in other contexts (Greenberg, 1990). Subsequent studies provided evidence that distributive and procedural justice are conceptually different not only at a theoretical level, but also, that individuals can in practice distinguish between fairness of outcomes and fairness of procedures when they evaluate the fairness of critical incidences (Greenberg, 1990).

Researchers have suggested that procedural justice is judged upon a number of elements. Whilst Thibaut and Walker (1975) focused solely on process control, Leventhal, Karuza, and Fry (1980) postulated that a process is deemed fair when it adheres to rules of consistency, bias-suppression, accuracy, correctability, representativeness of all parties' needs and ethicality. However, in a service failure context, Tax et al. (1998) found that process and decision control are not important determinants of procedural justice and that elements such as assuming responsibility, responsiveness and timeliness, and convenience play a more significant role in customer perceptions of procedural justice (Blodgett et al., 1997).

A number of theories that have sought to explain why individuals are concerned with procedural justice have stressed either its instrumentality and association with final outcomes or its value expressive qualities irrespective of outcomes (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1989). In this sense, individuals are postulated to be concerned with procedural justice either because this may lead to positive personal outcomes and encourages control over desired outcomes (Tyler, 1994) or because procedural justice provides signals about whether they are valued members of the group, being treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve (Tyler, 1989). Hence, customers may be concerned with procedural justice either because they believe that the latter will bring positive personal outcomes or because it provides signals that they are valued and respected by the firm.

Despite the extensive examination of procedural justice in organisational studies its role in service research remains ambiguous. Some studies fail to find an effect of procedural injustice on consumer negative reactions (e.g. Blodgett et al., 1997), while others report that individuals are unaware of firm policies or that the policies are not always salient to them (Funches et al., 2009). Consequently, it remains uncertain whether customers will be as concerned with

procedural justice as with the other two forms of justice (i.e. distributive and interactional justice).

As more studies accrued on procedural justice, it became apparent that judgments of procedural justice are influenced by factors that go beyond the fairness of procedures and that individuals are concerned with the interpersonal treatment they receive during the enactment of procedures (Greenberg, 1990). This is discussed next.

### **2.2.3.3 Interactional justice**

Interactional justice refers to the manner in which customers are treated during the conflict resolution process (Blodgett et al., 1997). Interactional justice can be judged according to various elements. In particular, research in organisational studies has suggested that elements such as, politeness, respect and honesty during the communication process with the decision-maker (Bies & Moag, 1986), provision of explanations/justifications for a decision outcome (Bies & Shapiro, 1987) as well as truthfulness and accuracy of statements (Bies & Moag, 1986) influence interactional fairness perceptions. Studies in a service failure context have further indicated that empathy, the effort put into the conflict resolution (Tax et al., 1998) and an apology (Goodwin & Ross, 1992), are key determinants of interactional justice perceptions.

Tax et al. (1998) suggested that the examination of interactional justice in a service recovery context is important, because it can explain how people may feel unfairness even when the outcomes and procedures are deemed to be fair. Bies and Moag (1986) were the first to suggest that considerations about interpersonal treatment can form a separate concept of justice. In a series of studies, they found that individuals are concerned with the quality of interpersonal treatment when they form fairness judgments and that this is independent of the final decision outcome (Bies & Moag, 1986). Whilst some have suggested that interactional justice is just the social side of procedural justice and hence, not distinct from the latter (Ambrose et al., 2002), others have demonstrated that it results in different behavioural outcomes to procedural justice (Greenberg, 1990). Consequently, according to the latter view, there is practical utility in conceptually distinguishing between these two dimensions of justice (i.e. procedural and interactional justice). Past research has demonstrated that the interpersonal aspect of justice plays a key role in customer responses and that interactional injustice impacts negatively on satisfaction (Tax et al., 1998) as well as other behavioural outcomes, such as NWOM, third-

party complaining and repatronage intentions (Blodgett et al., 1997; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b).

#### **2.2.4 Unfairness and customer revenge**

Whilst the primary goal of this thesis is to investigate the emotional aspect of customer revenge, examination of the cognitive aspect of customer revenge (i.e. unfairness) is also considered. This is because an extensive review of the literature pertaining to marketing and organisational studies indicates that there is lack of evidence on how the various forms of injustice influence the different types of revengeful behaviours that are examined in this research (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining). Jawahar (2002) posits that there is need for further studies in this area in order to demonstrate the individual effect of the different types of injustice in the various forms of revengeful behaviours. Accordingly, this research involves addressing this gap in the literature by investigating these relationships.

Past research has suggested that individuals being encountered with violations of fairness norms seek to react in some way (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). In a service context, the seminal work of Grégoire and colleagues (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2010; Joireman et al., 2013) on customer revenge has mainly focused on testing holistic models, rather than examining the direct effect of the various dimensions of unfairness in customer revenge per se (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2010; Joireman et al., 2013). Hence, these studies do not offer specific predictions about how various forms of injustice influence the different types of revengeful behaviours. Two other studies of customer revenge stress the importance of interactional injustice in customer revenge. In particular, Funches et al. (2009) found that whilst individuals acknowledged the importance of distributive injustice, it was the interactional injustice that motivated their retaliatory behaviour, while these individuals did not indicate any concern about procedural injustice elements. However, this study was qualitative in nature and included primarily behaviours of negative reciprocity (e.g. boycott, exit) that are not part of my conceptualisation of customer revenge. Furthermore, Bechwati and Morrin's (2003) study also demonstrated that it is the interactional and not distributive injustice that led to customer revenge. However, this study involved examining only one form of customer revenge and hence, did not provide predictions for the whole range of revengeful behaviours that are examined in this research.

Service research has further tested the effect of the various dimensions of fairness on various post-complaining consumer responses that are not always categorised as customer revenge. Findings from studies in this area are also mixed. For instance, whilst all three types of justice were linked with post-complaint satisfaction (Tax et al., 1998), Blodgett et al. (1997) documented significant effects of only distributive and interactional justice on negative word-of-mouth and repurchase intentions. Furthermore, Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005) found that only interactional injustice had a direct effect on the decision to exit from a bank. Inconsistencies in the findings might arise because past studies have used various contexts, operationalisations of the three types of justice and psychological and behavioural responses (del Río-Lanza, Vázquez-Casielles, & Díaz-Martín, 2009). Some contexts that have been investigated are airlines (McCollough et al., 2000), hotels (Kim et al., 2009) and restaurants (Goodwin & Ross, 1992). Moreover, manipulations used for the justice types varied considerably. For instance, procedural justice has been operationalised as voice (Goodwin & Ross, 1992), convenience of process (Tax et al., 1998), and speed (Blodgett et al., 1997), among others. Finally, the responses that have been studied are satisfaction (Goodwin & Ross, 1992), negative word-of-mouth (Blodgett et al., 1997), repurchase intentions (Blodgett et al., 1997), third-party complaining (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b), retaliation (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003), and many others. Consequently, the dimensions of justice might work differently under varying contexts and manipulations, thus producing inconclusive results in the literature.

To sum up, previous studies examining consumer responses to service failures/recoveries have provided inconclusive results about the individual effect of the various dimensions of justice. Hence, this research involves addressing this need and directly examining the impact of distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness on the various forms of customer revenge.

### **2.2.5 Summary**

This section has introduced the concept of justice or fairness and its various dimensions to explain customer revenge. What can now be argued, is that when individuals form perceptions of fairness, they consider the aspects of the decision outcome as well as the process that led to the decision outcome and interpersonal treatment received. Furthermore, in the review it has been recognised that past service research has provided inconclusive results about the individual effect of the various dimensions of fairness on the different revengeful behaviours. As a result, the first contribution of this thesis, although not its main aim, is to shed more light

on these relationships. The first contribution refers to hypotheses H1-H3 of the conceptual model in Chapter 5.

Revenge is a hot and emotionally laden phenomenon and it is almost always preceded by negative emotions. Hence, the role of emotions is examined next. This refers to hypotheses H4-H6 of the core conceptual model.

## **2.3 Emotion**

### **2.3.1 Emotion, mood and affect**

For a long time, researchers overemphasised the cognitive element of justice as a determinant of revenge behaviour, which came at the expense of its emotional aspect (Colquitt, 2012). Whilst justice theorists implicitly assumed that emotion plays a central role in translating unfairness perceptions into behavioural responses, they only recently started to examine systematically discrete emotions (Weiss, Suckow, & Cropanzano, 1999). Evidence from qualitative research in organisational studies has revealed that individuals describe their justice responses as hot and emotionally laden (Bies & Moag, 1986). This led Weiss et al. (1999, p.786) to claim that the lack of research on the discrete emotional reactions to perceived unfairness is a serious omission and that “by not directly examining discrete emotions, researchers have failed to explicate and measure potentially pivotal mediating variables”. Consequently, it becomes apparent that a framework that integrates the cognitive and affective mechanisms is needed to understand the underlying process of revenge.

The primary focus of this research is on the emotional aspect of revenge. In this section, the role of customer emotions in translating injustice perceptions into revengeful behaviours is investigated. Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer (1999, p. 184) define an emotion as “a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts; has a phenomenological tone; is accompanied by physiological processes; is often expressed physically (e.g. in gestures, posture, facial features); and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion, depending on its nature and meaning for the person having it”. Despite the current research being restricted to examining emotions with associated appraisals and behavioural responses, it is important to acknowledge that emotions encompass a whole set of co-ordinated responses, including physiological, expressive and phenomenological responses and that different patterns of these responses are associated with various discrete emotions (Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz,

1994). This definition of emotion is based upon the assumption that emotions are adaptive, because they trigger a set of responses that enable the individual to react to changes in the environment so as to deal with encountered problems and opportunities (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). This view contradicts the traditional view of emotions as irrational that posits that emotions impair judgment and healthy social interactions and drive impulsive and self-destructive behaviours (Loewenstein, 1996; Potegal & Novaco, 2010). Conversely, emotions in this research are seen as functional because they prioritise certain goals and direct attention, information processing and judgements to respond to the emotion-eliciting event (Lerner & Keltner, 2000).

At this point, it is important to clarify the difference between various terms that past studies have used to denote the affective experience. Affect refers to a superordinate category of positively or negatively valenced subjective feeling states, which includes emotion and mood states (Gross, 1998b). Confusion usually occurs with the distinction between moods and emotions. Moods and emotions are mainly distinguished in terms of their intensity, duration and source of identification. The term mood is usually used to refer to relatively undifferentiated feeling states of low intensity (Gross, 1998b). Moods produce a vague sense of feeling 'good' or 'bad', they do not have a specific source of identification nor do they result in specific action tendencies, except for broad approach and avoidance tendencies (Cohen, Pham, & Andrade, 2008). Their effect is long-lasting, ranging from hours to weeks, in contrast with emotions, whose influence dissipates relatively quickly (Larsen, 2000). Conversely, emotions are more intense and differentiated. They arise from a specific cause (e.g. a customer is angered because he/she experiences a poor service) and they give rise to specific action tendencies (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Accordingly, as emotions unfold in time, their onset, peak and offset can be observed, something that is difficult to discern in moods (Larsen, 2000).

This research is focused on emotions since there is a specific source of identification that precludes the presence of moods (Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). In this case, the service recovery situation serves as the specific event that triggers the emotional reactions and results in certain behavioural responses. In order to appreciate how emotions arise, the next section discusses cognitive appraisal theories of emotion.

### **2.3.2 Cognitive appraisal theories of emotion**

The majority of studies in the literature on emotion and decision-making have adopted a valence-based approach (Han, Lerner, & Keltner, 2007). That is, emotions have been examined under broad categories of positive and negative emotions, which are suggested as influencing judgments and decisions in a congruent manner (Bagozzi et al., 1999). A number of studies have demonstrated that positive affect results in positive evaluations and judgments, while negative affect in negative evaluations and judgments (Bower, 1981; Forgas, 1995; Schwarz & Clore, 1996). This congruent effect was attributed to affective effects on memory (i.e. affect makes mood-congruent material accessible in memory) and the affect-as-information effect (i.e. affective states provide informational value that guides an individual's evaluations and judgments) (Bower, 1981; Schwarz & Clore, 1996). Despite these theories differing in their specifics, they all base their predictions on the valence of affect.

However, these theories fail to explain how emotions of the same valence can have differential effects on judgment and decision-making (Han et al., 2007). Researchers in service marketing have called for more studies on the mediating role of discrete emotions in the relationship between perceived unfairness and revenge behaviour (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009; Weiss et al., 1999). Hence, a theory that accounts for discrete emotions is needed. Cognitive appraisal theories of emotions dominate current thinking in emotions and can account for emotion differentiation. These theories stress the unique qualities of discrete emotions in terms of cognitive appraisals, physiology and behavioural responses (Frijda, Kuipers, & Ter Schure, 1989; Han et al., 2007; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 1991). According to this theorising, emotions arise as a response to appraisals of an event or situation of relevance to the individual. The term appraisal refers to the process where evaluative meaning is assigned to objects or events (Cohen et al., 2008). Hence, it is not the emotional event per se that gives rise to discrete emotions, but the unique appraisal the individual places when evaluating and interpreting the event (Bagozzi et al., 1999). In other words, different people can interpret a particular event in different ways, but the same patterns of appraisals will give rise to the same discrete emotions. Whilst this research is focused on conscious cognitive processes that lead to emotion differentiation, it is acknowledged that discrete emotions may arise in other non-cognitive ways, such as after bodily feedback (James, 1884) or unconsciously (Zajonc, 1980).

Adopting cognitive appraisal theory to the service recovery context will help in the examination of how appraisals of the unfairness of service failure/recovery trigger specific emotional experiences and behavioural responses. One way to understand the relationship between justice and emotions is to examine the manner in which they are both appraised. Both appraisal and justice theorists have put forward a two-stage model to explain how discrete emotions are triggered (Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005; Weiss et al., 1999). In the primary appraisal stage, individuals evaluate whether the event or situation is of relevance to their well-being, goals and/or values (Barclay et al., 2005; Lazarus, 1991; Weiss et al., 1999). These primary appraisals provide an overall evaluation of the harm or benefit and trigger general positive or negative affective states (Weiss et al., 1999). In this stage, outcome favourability provides information about the relevance of the event for the individual (Barclay et al., 2005). That is, a service failure (i.e. outcome unfavourability) will be appraised as relevant and incongruent to the individuals' goals and will trigger negative affective states.

In the secondary appraisal stage, individuals interpret and give meaning to the event. It is this process that leads to emotion differentiation (Barclay et al., 2005). Appraisal theorists postulate that emotions can be differentiated according to a small set of cognitive dimensions (Frijda et al., 1989). However, these theorists differ regarding the nature and number of cognitive dimensions, which they believe are important to distinguish emotions (Roseman, 1991; C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). For instance, Lazarus (1991) proposed three appraisals: attribution of blame and responsibility for the harm; coping potential; and future expectancies about whether the coping will work out favourably or unfavourably. Other researchers have provided similar schemes (Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman, 1991; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Similarly, justice theorists suggest that the evaluation of the justice elements conveys information about the secondary appraisals. Embedded within the justice information are appraisal dimensions, such as blame attribution, intentionality and coping potential (Weiss et al., 1999). Accordingly, individuals will search for information on distributive, procedural and interactional justice to give meaning to the service failure. Evaluation of these justice elements will give rise to discrete emotions.

Emotions are not mere reactions to cognitive appraisals, for they also are associated with motivational goals, action tendencies and actions (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Frijda et al., 1989; Roseman et al., 1994). Motivational goals refer to desired goal states, while actions pertain to actual behaviours (Roseman et al., 1994) and action tendencies refer to "readiness to engage in



or disengage from interaction with some goal object in some particular fashion” (Frijda et al., 1989, p.213), such as ‘moving against’, ‘moving towards’ and ‘moving away’. Closely related to action tendencies is the concept of coping responses, which refer to the psychological and behavioural actions undertaken by individuals to manage stressful situations. Lazarus (1991) suggested that when individuals are in distress they seek to restore the psychological equilibrium by engaging in either problem-focused or emotion-focused coping responses. Knowledge about the content of all the aforementioned elements provides information about the motivations associated with discrete emotions and allows for predictions of the subsequent behavioural responses. Supporting this idea, past studies have provided evidence that different emotions are associated with distinct action tendencies, actions, goals and coping responses (Lazarus, 1991; Roseman et al., 1994). Accordingly, a cognitive appraisal theories framework is deemed appropriate for this research since it explains how emotions arise from cognitive appraisals (i.e. unfairness dimensions) and how they result in certain behavioural responses.

### **2.3.3 Emotions in service recovery**

A review of past studies in a service context reveals that the role of discrete emotions in translating justice perceptions into consumer behavioural responses is relatively understudied. First, most of the studies that examine emotions tend to report diffuse positive or negative affective states (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005; del Río-Lanza et al., 2009; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b). Second, even those studies that have examined discrete emotions have only focused on very few, mainly the emotion of anger (Bougie et al., 2003; Grégoire et al., 2010).

In this research, the importance of negative discrete emotions in customer revenge is stressed. Service failures constitute negative and stressful events that have been shown to generate negative emotions. A failure by the provider to offer a minimum standard considered by the customer to be appropriate for the service, triggers negative affective states (McColl-Kennedy & Smith, 2006). Negative emotions may be especially exacerbated in cases where the severity of the service failure is high and where it is followed by a failed service recovery (so-called double deviation). In these instances, negative emotions may become the primary drivers of customer revenge. Moreover, violations of norms of fairness have been shown to generate certain moral emotions that in turn, guide behavioural responses (Haidt, 2003). These are discussed below.

### **2.3.4 Moral emotions**

This research focuses on three discrete emotions, namely, anger, disgust and contempt. Previous work has assigned these emotions to the “moral emotions” family (Haidt, 2003). In particular, research in psychology has showed that moral transgressions generate emotional reactions in individuals and that moral emotions link the violations of moral rules to moral judgment and behaviour (Haidt, 2003; Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999). Moral emotions are combinations of inherited and learned reactions to events that violate an individual’s moral standards (Haidt, 2003). Moral emotions act as guardians of moral order and motivate individuals to act to restore the moral order or make the violators change their behaviour (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Failed service delivery and service recovery can be viewed as a type of moral transgression. Indeed, fairness norms influence the evaluation of service recovery efforts and negative reactions reflect a sense of violation of those norms more than mere ‘unmet expectations’ (Smith et al., 1999). When firms fail to meet standards of fair outcomes, procedures and interpersonal treatment, customers are not just hurt, for they feel wronged and they feel that taking revenge is morally justified (Tripp & Bies, 2010). Hence, the concept of moral emotions fits well with the context of this research. By incorporating the moral emotions into the framework, the second contribution of this research is examining how the three moral emotions mediate the relationship between the various dimensions of fairness (i.e. distributive, procedural and interactional) and the various customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).

Past research has drawn a distinction between other-condemned, self-related, other-suffering and other-praising families of moral emotions (Haidt, 2003). However, my focus is only on the other-condemned family of emotions, which includes anger, disgust, and contempt, because the customer is the victim and appraisal of service failures and recoveries will involve placing blame on the firms. Debate exists in the literature about whether these three moral emotions are distinguishable or underlie the same emotional state. For instance, Izard (1977) suggested that all three emotions arise from disapproval of others and hence, should be grouped together. However, Rozin et al. (1999) demonstrated that although interrelated, these emotions can be distinguished because they are triggered by violations of different moral codes (i.e. community, autonomy and divinity). Furthermore, these emotions have been linked with different motivational properties (Haidt, 2003) and hence, are examined as distinct emotions in this research.

#### **2.3.4.1 Anger**

The emotion of anger is well studied in a service context as it is the most commonly felt emotion in response to failed services (Bougie et al., 2003; Funches et al., 2009; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009). A number of studies have examined the appraisals that give rise to the emotion of anger. Anger can be distinguished from disgust and contempt in that it arises from violations of autonomy, i.e. when individuals' rights or freedom are disregarded (e.g. violations of justice) (Rozin et al., 1999). In particular, a number of researchers have demonstrated that anger arises when the individual feels betrayed and treated unfairly (Frijda et al., 1989; Haidt, 2003; Lazarus, 1991). Hence, customers will most likely experience anger after service failures/recoveries, because they feel their rights to justice have been violated. Moreover, angry feelings are associated with attributions of blame towards another person for the negative event, who is perceived to have control over the incident (Lazarus, 1991; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) and especially when the self does not believe it deserves such negative outcomes (Roseman, 1991). Anger has also been linked with a sense of certainty about what has happened and what has caused the negative event as well as a sense of control over the situation, where the individual feels to have the power or ability to cope with it (Litvak, Lerner, Tiedens, & Shonk, 2010).

Regarding behavioural responses, angry feelings trigger a motivation to move against the offender by attacking, hurting, humiliating or getting back at the person to blame (Frijda et al., 1989; Haidt, 2003). Indeed, anger is an approach-related emotion and has been shown to induce a whole range of destructive behaviours, such as hostility and aggression (Berkowitz, 1990), violence (C. A. Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and revengeful acts (Tripp & Bies, 2010). Some have even suggested that the goal of anger is to make offenders change their behaviour, which in the short-term might have negative consequences, but in the long-term it can lead to reconciliation (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Hence, anger can serve as a mediator between the various dimensions of unfairness and the different revengeful acts, at least in the short-run.

#### **2.3.4.2 Disgust**

Disgust serves as a response to both physical objects and social violations. Haidt (2003, p.857) suggests that disgust refers to "something revolting, primarily in relation to the sense of taste, as actually perceived or vividly imagined; and secondarily to anything which causes a similar feeling, through the sense of smell, touch, and even of eyesight". Disgust grew out of a distaste

for food and was later extended to incorporate responses to physical contact with people who violate cultural rules regarding how to use their bodies (Haidt, 2003). Consequently, disgust was initially elaborated in relation to bodily concerns and was described as a guardian of the mouth and the body against pollution and degradation (Rozin et al., 1999).

The elicitors of disgust were later expanded to include sociomoral concerns that do not involve any physical objects (Haidt, 2003). Here, researchers have taken different stances. Some argue that disgust emerges in a wide range of sociomoral violations, such as sexual mores, dishonesty and exploitation (Haidt, 2003; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). For instance, Rozin et al. (1999) distinguished disgust from anger and contempt in that it arises from violations of divinity (i.e. actions that involve contamination or impurity) and this refers to all immoral acts and not just those specific to the body. In support of this view, Moretti and Di Pellegrino (2010) demonstrated that disgust can arise from violations of fairness when blame is attributed to a specific person, while Hutcherson and Gross (2011) found that disgust arises from the appraisal that someone is morally untrustworthy. Conversely, others have argued that disgust is a response solely to bodily moral violations, such as immoral sex and eating, regardless of harm or injustice (Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2013). Consequently, if disgust arises from moral violations, in general, then the service failure/recovery situation should elicit disgust. If the view that disgust only relates to bodily moral violations is correct, then disgust should not be a response to the unfair service incident.

Disgust has been associated with action tendencies to expel and avoid contact with the offending party as well as a motivation to wash, purify and remove any residues of any physical contact with the entity (Haidt, 2003; Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2013). In this way, disgust establishes social order since ostracising those who trigger disgust serves as a punishment of and deterrent for inappropriate behaviours (Haidt, 2003). However, others have suggested that when arising from moral violations, it tends to have anger-like tendencies, with a desire to lash out and a motivation to get back at the offender (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011).

#### **2.3.4.3 Contempt**

Contempt is the least studied among the three moral emotions and is considered the most subtle and coldest emotion of the three (Rozin et al., 1999). As with the other two moral emotions, contempt is associated with blaming another person and perceiving the transgression as

intentional, but contempt further arises from appraisals that the offender is morally inferior and is worthy of complete disregard (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Rozin et al. (1999) suggested that the distinguishing characteristic of contempt from the other two moral emotions is that it arises from violations of the ethic of community/hierarchy when an individual fails to carry out his/her obligations within a community or social hierarchy. Hence, service failure/recovery should elicit feelings of contempt, as the firm violates communal values, such as the right of individuals to be treated fairly. Furthermore, Hutcherson and Gross (2011) demonstrated that the perceptions that the offender is incompetent distinguishes contempt from disgust. Contempt, in this case, serves to reduce the interaction with individuals who cannot meaningfully contribute to the social group, because of low competency. Service failures and recoveries can also signal that the firm is incompetent in serving the customer satisfactorily and may trigger contempt.

Contempt has been linked with avoidance tendencies and is characterised by attempts to ignore, gossip about or diminish a person's reputation with the intent to exclude them from one's social network (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). It has been associated with a permanent negative belief that the offender is intrinsically bad and there is no other way to change them. As a result, contempt has the goal to exclude the offender from one's social environment, because this way it reduces the negative impact of his or her negative behaviour (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Hence, it has a detrimental impact both in the short and long-term and it results in long-term rejection of the individual, in contrast with anger, which can result in reconciliation in the long-term (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Fischer and Roseman (2007) have further demonstrated that contempt arises when someone is still angry and hence, co-occurs with anger. That is why after a transgression has taken place tendencies to attack and tendencies to exclude co-occur and contempt can result in hostile reactions. In line with this, Romani, Grappi, and Bagozzi (2013) showed that contempt results in destructive punitive behaviours when moral violations occur. Therefore, contempt may result in customer revenge.

### **2.3.5 Summary**

In this section, the role of emotions as mediators in the relationship between perceived unfairness and revengeful behaviours has been discussed. What can now be argued is that emotions differ from affect and moods and that moral emotions arise from cognitive appraisals of unfairness and result in certain behavioural responses. Past research has neglected the role

of discrete emotions and has primarily examined the mediating effect of diffuse affective states. Due to their distinct appraisals and motivational properties, discrete emotions may differentially impact on customer revenge. This research addressed this gap by focusing on moral emotions and more specifically, on the emotions of anger, disgust, and contempt. These emotions arise from violations of moral rules and norms, such as the violations of the norms of fairness and trigger the motivation to punish the transgressors. Hence, this section addressed hypotheses H4-H6 of the core conceptual model.

Negative emotions may not just directly impact on customer revengeful behaviours but also indirectly through the mechanism of forgiveness. This refers to hypothesis H7 of the conceptual model in Chapter 5 and is discussed next.

## **2.4 Forgiveness**

### **2.4.1 Forgiveness and other related concepts**

Despite the popularity of revenge as a response to perceived injustice, in fact, individuals have devised a number of mechanisms to respond to interpersonal transgressions. One such mechanism is forgiveness. Revenge and forgiveness are not only conceptually different, but also refer to distinct mechanisms that produce conflicting cognitive, affective and behavioural processes (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999).

The study of forgiveness can be found in various fields, such as law, philosophy, theology, psychology and more recently in management research (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). Researchers have provided numerous definitions of forgiveness, some of which focus on the interpersonal (McCullough et al., 2010), whilst others on the intrapersonal aspect of forgiveness (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001). Forgiveness in this research is defined as “a process whereby an individual who perceives himself or herself to have been the target of a morally injurious offense deliberately attempts to (a) overcome negative emotions (e.g., resentment, anger, hostility) toward his or her offender and (b) refrain from causing the offender harm even when he or she believes it is morally justifiable to do so” (Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003, p. 212). This definition encompasses both the intra- and interpersonal aspects of forgiveness and is deemed more appropriate for this thesis. In this sense, forgiveness denotes the process whereby individuals forgo bitterness and vengeance and become increasingly motivated to enact more positive responses towards transgressors

(McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Hence, forgiveness is the mechanism that can interrupt the natural motivation for revenge against transgressions.

Prior research generally agrees that forgiveness differs from other related concepts and in particular, from pardoning (mainly a legal concept), condoning (i.e. justifying the offence), excusing (i.e. when a transgression occurred because of extenuating circumstances), forgetting (i.e. when the memory of the transgression has decayed), denial (i.e. unwillingness or inability to perceive the harmful injuries one has incurred) (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). Forgiveness also differs from reconciliation, which implies the restoration of a broken relationship between the victim and the offender. Forgiveness can promote reconciliation, but the latter does not always imply the former, since the victim may attempt reconciliation while still having strong negative emotions (McCullough et al., 2010).

From an evolutionary perspective, forgiveness has evolved to restore beneficial relationships of high relationship value after an interpersonal harm (McCullough et al., 2010). Individuals might expect to acquire benefits from retaining the relationship since they preserve access to the benefits the other party can provide for them and refrain from meting out the costs associated with establishing new relationships, the reliability and trustworthiness of which are unknown (McCullough et al., 2010). Consequently, sometimes it may be less costly for the individual to forgive than to take revenge. After severe service failures, such as flight delays and hotel overbookings, customers might feel powerless and unable to change the situation. In such instances, switching costs are high, especially because of the time, effort and associated risks involved in searching for alternatives. Hence, customers may sometimes choose to forgive the service provider, rather than take revenge, when they believe this will serve their self-interests.

Past research agrees that forgiveness can strengthen and heal interpersonal relationships in the aftermath of a personal offence (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011). This healing power of forgiveness is important for this research. After the service failure, the relationship between the customer and the firm is broken and the firm attempts to fix it through recovery efforts. Forgiveness should be an important concern for service providers since it may be granted even when the firm is undeserving or when the firm's recovery actions have not restored justice (Exline et al., 2003) and may promote reconciliation with the firm. Despite its importance, the mechanism of forgiveness has been largely overlooked in a service recovery context (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011;

Zourrig et al., 2009b). The few theoretical models proposed view forgiveness as a coping strategy that customers employ after service failure/recovery to cope with their negative emotions (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011; Zourrig et al., 2009b). Whilst these studies have examined forgiveness as an outcome, this research involves investigating it as the mediating mechanism that transforms the negative customer emotional reactions to failed services and recoveries into less revengeful behaviours.

Regarding the characteristics of forgiveness, there is general consensus in the literature that it is a process rather than an act, which involves cognitive and emotional progression that evolve over time and require significant effort (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011). Furthermore, forgiveness is a conscious and deliberate act to alter how one thinks, feels and behaves towards the transgressor rather than the dissipation of negative feelings (Exline et al., 2003; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011). Forgiveness is a complex set of cognitive, affective and behavioural phenomena in which negative affect and behavioural responses are diminished (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). At a cognitive level, the forgiver reinterprets the offence episode and alters attributions of blame (Aquino et al., 2003). At an affective level, forgiveness involves the replacement of negative emotions, such as anger, contempt and disgust, with neutral or even positive ones (Aquino et al., 2003). Finally, at the behavioural level forgiveness decreases the motivation to harm and increases the motivation to reconcile with the transgressor (R. Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010).

#### **2.4.2 Forgiveness and fairness**

Theorists in psychology and philosophy examining the relationship between justice and forgiveness have suggested a positive association between the activation of perceptions of justice and forgiveness. Hence, justice is argued to promote forgiveness (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Karremans & Van Lange, 2005). More importantly, individuals might decide to forgive even when the offender does not restore justice (Exline et al., 2003). Forgiveness is described as an altruistic gift one freely gives to the offenders despite not being deserved (Exline et al., 2003). For forgivers, justice is restored when the individual experiences freedom from negative feelings and opportunities for revenge and reaffirms his/her self-worth, which was called into question by the offence (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999).



Whilst forgiveness can be granted without the sense of injustice being restored, factors that influence the perceptions of justice will also influence the motivation to forgive (Exline et al., 2003). After interpersonal transgressions, individuals experience an injustice gap that arises from the difference between desired and actual outcomes (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). The magnitude of the injustice gap has been demonstrated to be inversely proportional to the motivation to forgive (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Consequently, forgiveness will also be affected by factors that influence the sense of justice. The more severe the service failure/recovery is and the more the individual perceives that it was intentional and under the control of the service firm, the less forgiving customers will be (Fehr et al., 2010). This is because severe offences and attribution of blame make it more difficult for the individual to empathise with the service provider, and show compassion, and benevolence (McCullough et al., 1998). On the other hand, forms of restoration of justice, such as apologies, compensation and acknowledgment of responsibility reduce the injustice gap and enhance forgiveness (Exline et al., 2003).

Whilst the cognitive correlates of forgiveness correspond to the sense-making process regarding the offense and the offender, the emotional correlates relate to the emotional experiences of the victims. Negative emotions are expected to impede forgiveness and hence, the more the service failure/recovery is appraised as unjust and the more negative emotions customers experience, the less likely they will forgive (Fehr et al., 2010). In behavioural terms, forgiveness marks the transition from a focus on past transgressions to a future without retaliation (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2012). Hence, it is inversely related to the motivation for revenge and the less forgiving individuals are, the more likely they are to engage in revengeful behaviours (McCullough et al., 1998; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2012). In sum, it can be argued that the higher the negative emotions individuals experience after a service failure/recovery, the less motivated to forgive and the more motivated to exact their revenge they will be.

### **2.4.3 Summary**

To summarise, this section has investigated the mechanism of forgiveness. The notion of forgiveness was defined and its characteristics analysed. Evidence was provided to support the argument that forgiveness can act as the mediating mechanism between emotional responses to perceptions of unfairness for the service failure/recovery incident and the subsequent customer revengeful behaviours. Past research has neglected the role of customer forgiveness

as a mechanism that enables the abandonment of negative emotions and the motivation for revenge. Hence, this section informed hypothesis H7 of the core conceptual model in Chapter 5.

## **2.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has provided a comprehensive review of the cognitive/emotive framework of customer revenge. This discussion is linked to hypotheses H1-H7 of the core conceptual model in Chapter 5 and to Study 1 of this thesis. Several key points are outlined below.

- Injustice perceptions may take various forms (i.e. distributive, procedural, interactional) which influence subsequent customer revengeful behaviours.
- Revenge is a hot and emotionally laden phenomenon and certain discrete emotions, i.e. anger, disgust, and contempt, may act as the mediating mechanism that translates perceptions of unfairness into customer revenge.
- The effect of the three discrete emotions may be both direct and indirect through the mechanism of forgiveness.
- The service failure/recovery context is deemed appropriate to examine the emotional aspect of customer revenge at unfair treatment.

The main focus of this research will be on the emotional aspect of customer revenge. After having examined the role of discrete emotions, the next chapter will investigate the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge. This refers to hypothesis H8 of the conceptual model in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 3

### Customer revenge as an emotion regulation strategy

This chapter focuses on the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge. First, the defining characteristics of the emotion regulation process are provided. Second, customer revenge under the prism of theories of emotion regulation serving certain goals is examined. Third, an overview is provided of existing emotion regulation strategies and evidence is offered that customer revenge can be viewed as an emotion regulation strategy that individuals employ to improve their negative emotions.

#### 3.1 Emotion regulation

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested that when individuals find themselves in situations that are appraised as stressful and personally relevant, they seek ways to cope with their negative emotions. Service failures, especially when followed by failed recoveries, constitute highly stressful incidences that are negatively received by customers. Due to the repetitive nature of the failure, these double deviation scenarios have been shown to exacerbate negative emotional reactions and result in customer revengeful behaviours (Casado-Díaz et al., 2007; Joireman et al., 2013). In this thesis, it is argued that customer revenge in these cases may act as a means of emotion regulation that individuals employ to regulate their negative emotions (Zourrig et al., 2009a). In other words, customers may choose to engage in revengeful behaviours with the intent to feel better.

Service recovery literature, with only a few exceptions that examine the role of coping strategies (Gelbrich, 2010; Strizhakova, Tsarenko, & Ruth, 2012), remains silent on the role of emotion regulation in the relationship between perceived unfairness and consumer revenge. Whilst customer revenge has been previously suggested to be a coping strategy employed by individuals to cope with their negative emotional reactions to perceived injustice (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Zourrig et al., 2009a), there has been no previous study directly testing the assumption that the various customer revengeful behaviours are actually employed by individuals, because they expect that doing so will ameliorate their negative emotions. Furthermore, while coping literature has traditionally relied on self-report measures of coping strategies, only emotion regulation research has investigated the underlying psychological mechanisms of revenge (e.g. Bushman et al., 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008). This research seeks

to address this gap in the service literature, by directly examining whether customer revenge for unfair treatment is employed by individuals as an emotion regulation strategy with the intent to feel better. The notion of emotion regulation is discussed next.

### **3.2 Emotion regulation, coping and mood management**

Emotion regulation has been defined as “the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” (Gross, 1998b, p.275). Whilst researchers initially questioned the existence of emotion regulation processes owing to the difficulty of disentangling the effects of emotion processing and emotion regulation when these two processes have similar effects on emotions and behavioural responses, emotion regulation is evident when response tendencies arising from particular emotional states do not always turn into associated actual behaviour. In these cases, individuals are said to modulate their response tendencies in an attempt to resist being carried away by the emotional impact of situations, and it is this modulation that shapes the ultimate emotional and behavioural responses (Gross, 1998a; Koole, 2009b). Further evidence that emotion regulation exists comes from individual self-reports that demonstrate that people seek to manage their emotions regularly in their daily lives (Gross, 1998a). Emotion regulation can explain why emotions are sometimes viewed as short-sighted and myopic (Loewenstein, 1996), while at other times as functional (Keltner & Gross, 1999) and adaptive (Ralph Erber, Wegner, & Therriault, 1996). The presence of effective emotion regulation processes provides the right balance between reason and emotion in a way that serves individual’s goals and enhances their well-being, while their absence may result in impulsive behaviours (Gross, 1998b). Not surprisingly then, emotion regulation has been associated with a number of positive outcomes, such as mental and physical health (Gross, 1998a), social functioning (Tamir, 2015), and individual well-being (Gross, 1998b).

The definition of emotion regulation implies four characteristics. First, individuals may increase, maintain or decrease positive and negative emotions (Koole, 2009b). Consequently, emotion regulation does not always involve overriding responses that seek to downregulate negative or upregulate positive emotional states, for sometimes works in close collaboration with emotion processing to maintain current negative emotional states (Koole, 2009b). Second, emotion regulation may happen at one or more points in the emotion generative process, i.e. before or after the emotion has been generated, and may involve changes in all the components

of the emotional experience, including behaviours, physiology, feelings and thoughts (Gross, 1998b; Koole, 2009b). Third, while the definition of emotion regulation seems to imply that it is an effortful process, in fact, it can be either controlled or involuntary (Gross, 1998b). Indeed, while the prototype of emotion regulation is the conscious effortful process to override individuals' spontaneous emotional response (Koole, 2009b), more recent evidence suggests that it can occur automatically and without any conscious awareness (Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2007). Fourth, emotion regulation can be effective or ineffective in bringing about the desired outcomes (Gross, 1998b). Indeed, some emotion regulation strategies have been shown to result, ironically, in the emotional outcomes individuals hope to avoid (e.g. an increase rather than a decrease in negative emotions) (Bushman et al., 2001).

The concept of emotion regulation should be distinguished from other related concepts frequently encountered in the literature, namely coping and mood management. Coping is defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.141). Coping is initiated in response to individuals' appraisals that important goals are at stake and involves the effortful process to cope with the aroused negative emotions (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Coping has been divided into problem-focused, which addresses the source of the distress and emotion-focused, which aims at ameliorating the negative emotions associated with the problem (Lazarus, 1991). Even though emotion regulation literature has borrowed significantly from coping literature, there are some significant differences between the two. First, coping literature has mostly focused on major stressful life events, while emotion regulation covers a wide range of both positive and negative emotions (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Second, coping responses entail only conscious processes, whereas emotion regulation may be both conscious and unconscious (Gross, 1998b). Third, coping processes occur only after the emotion has been generated, while emotion regulation may occur at different stages in the emotion generative process, such as before, during or after the emotional state is initiated (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Fourth, coping covers the whole emotion episode involving the environment-individual interaction and hence, entails both emotional actions aimed at the emotion itself and non-emotional ones aimed at the source of the problem, in contrast with emotion regulation that involves only emotional actions (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Despite contemporary conceptions of coping and emotion regulation considerably overlapping and the distinction between the two often being fuzzy (Gross, 1998b), the latter is deemed more appropriate for this research since this stream of

literature has been more successful in examining the psychological processes underpinning revenge and hence, provides a more holistic and fine-grained framework to investigate customer revenge for unfair treatment.

The concept of mood management concerns the regulation of moods that differ from emotions, primarily, because of their less well defined source of identification and behavioural response tendencies (Larsen, 2000). Furthermore, mood management primarily focuses on the management of the emotional experience and not the emotional behaviour as in emotion regulation (Gross, 1998b). The focus of this research is on emotions rather than moods and hence, mood management is not relevant to this study.

### **3.3 Emotion regulation goals**

Modern thinking about emotion regulation views it as a form of self-regulation guided by goals (Koole, van Dillen, & Sheppes, 2011; Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Self-regulation involves a monitoring process that compares the current with the desired state and an operating process that reduces the discrepancies between the two. Similarly, in emotion regulation individuals monitor their emotional states and when they perceive a discrepancy between the current emotional state and the desired one, emotion regulatory processes are initiated and guide subsequent behaviour (Cohen et al., 2008). Normally, individuals seek to engage in activities that promote goal achievement (Tamir & Ford, 2012). Likewise, individuals are motivated to engage in those emotion regulation activities that promote goal attainment (Gross, 1998b; Koole, 2009b). Research has demonstrated that individuals might hold various goals, hedonic or instrumental, when they regulate their emotions and that these determine the direction and consequences of emotion regulatory efforts (Larsen, 2000; Tamir, 2015). These goals are discussed next.

#### **3.3.1 Emotion regulation serving hedonic goals**

Traditionally, emotion regulation was approached in hedonistic terms, where individuals were assumed to be inherently motivated to maximise pleasure and minimise pain (Larsen, 2000). Positive emotions entail pleasure, while negative ones are costly, because they mobilise a wider range of mental and physical resources within the individual than positive emotions taxing individual's resources (Taylor, 1991). Consequently, individuals who pursue hedonic goals in emotion regulation seek to increase or maintain positive emotions and decrease negative ones

(Tamir, 2015). In fact, hedonic emotion regulation may operate outside of conscious awareness. Corroborating evidence suggests that basic hedonic needs are ingrained in the human psyche and remain throughout an individual's life (Koole et al., 2011). Indeed, tendencies to approach positive stimuli and avoid negative ones involve elementary processes since they emerge in children at an early developmental stage (Koole et al., 2011) and operate automatically and without any conscious awareness in adults (Chen & Bargh, 1999). Hedonic emotion regulation is instantly rewarding by promoting hedonically desirable emotional states in the immediate present (Koole, 2009a). Due to its short-term character, this form of emotion regulation involves an impulsive quality. Individual's efforts are directed towards immediate gratification, sometimes undermining long-term self-regulatory endeavours (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000).

The evidence for the presence of hedonic goals in emotion regulation is robust. Past studies have repeatedly shown the desirability of positive emotions and undesirability of negative ones (Tamir, 2015). When asked about the frequency with which individuals want to experience certain emotions, 81% of the time, people reported that they seek to increase or maintain positive emotions and decrease negative ones (Gross, Richards, & John, 2006). Furthermore, the existence of hedonic emotion regulation was used to explain the lack of findings for the mood-congruency effect in negative emotions. In particular, Isen, Shalcker, Clark, and Karp (1978) documented that individuals in a positive mood were more likely to recall positive memories than those in the negative mood were to recall negative ones. This was attributed to individuals' hedonic emotion regulation efforts, whereby happy individuals seek to prolong their positive states by recalling positive memories, while those in negative moods refrain from recalling negative memories in an attempt to repair their negative emotional states (Isen, 1984).

At the core of hedonic emotion regulation is the idea that for emotion regulation to guide behavioural responses, individuals must intuitively believe that the forthcoming cognitive or behavioural activities entail some affective changing properties that will regulate a current emotional state upward or downward (Cohen et al., 2008). Past studies have demonstrated that individuals in negative emotional states engage in a number of behaviours to improve their current ones. In particular, sad participants are more likely to listen to uplifting music (Cohen & Andrade, 2004), eat fattening snacks (Tice et al., 2001), procrastinate (Tice et al., 2001), help others (Cialdini & Kenrick, 1976) and/or engage in aggressive behaviour (Bushman et al., 2001). More importantly, studies have found that individuals are aware of the uplifting

opportunities associated with altruistic behaviours (e.g. helping) (Cialdini & Kenrick, 1976), eating chocolates (Andrade, 2005) and engaging in aggression (Bushman et al., 2001). Hence, individuals' intuitive theories about the mood-changing properties of such behaviours are critical determinants of the hedonic emotion regulation efforts (Cohen et al., 2008).

### **3.3.2 Emotion regulation serving instrumental goals**

The pursuit of hedonic benefits cannot explain the full range of emotion regulation processes. In some instances, emotion regulatory efforts may be guided by instrumental goals, where individuals are motivated to seek out useful emotions that will promote goal-attainment, irrespective of whether they are pleasant to experience or not (Tamir, 2015). Social contexts may favour various types of emotional outcomes and thus, emotion regulation serving instrumental goals may either promote or inhibit emotional states that are hedonically rewarding (Koole et al., 2011). Consequently, individuals may choose to reduce their positive emotions or increase their negative ones, if they have utility for goal attainment. For instance, in social interactions individuals tend to downregulate both positive and negative emotions when they anticipate interacting with a stranger (Ralph Erber et al., 1996), presumably because neutralising the emotions conforms with socially accepted display norms when meeting a new person and this provides flexibility for emotion fluctuations during social interactions (Ralf Erber & Erber, 2000). Furthermore, certain types of goals may increase the utility of hedonically aversive emotional states and motivate the emotion regulation efforts towards the attainment or maintenance of those states (Tamir, 2015). In particular, when individuals anticipate a confrontational task, they prefer activities that will increase anger since this is expected to be useful to the confrontational goal attainment (Tamir, Mitchell, & Gross, 2008). Similarly, when the end goal is to avoid threats, the emotion of fear is expected to lead to the desired outcomes and hence is more preferred (Tamir & Ford, 2009).

Instrumental emotion regulation relies on individuals' beliefs about the utility of particular emotional states. These beliefs reside in the form of explicit or implicit mental representations or more abstract theories individuals hold about emotional utility (Tamir, Chiu, & Gross, 2007). Consequently, individuals' expectancies of the outcomes of their emotional experiences make them choose to feel those emotions that they expect to be useful in goal attainment (Tamir & Ford, 2012). Indeed, matching emotions with the goals individuals pursue has been



demonstrated to be useful in goal attainment and to lead to higher performance in goal-directed behaviours (Tamir & Ford, 2012; Tamir et al., 2008).

Taken together, these studies suggest that there are instances where individuals may forgo immediate hedonic benefits for some future gain in utility (Tamir, 2015). Whilst it is acknowledged that instrumental forms of emotion regulation exist, these are not deemed particularly relevant for this research.

### **3.3.3 Customer revenge serving hedonic goals**

Past psychological research has argued that hedonic emotion regulation may explain why individuals' negative emotions that arise from aggravating situations result in revengeful behaviours (Bushman et al., 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008; Gollwitzer & Bushman, 2012). These studies posit that individuals seek revenge in the hope that doing so will enable them to feel better (Bushman et al., 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008). In this sense, revenge results from individuals' efforts to remedy or repair their current negative emotions. In particular, Carlsmith et al. (2008), in a social dilemma context, demonstrated that individuals expect to feel better after exacting revenge and punish the transgressor with the intent to ameliorate their negative emotions. More direct evidence that individuals engage in revenge for hedonic emotion regulation goals comes from Bushman et al. (2001). In their study, individuals were more likely to aggress when they believed that they could improve their emotional states, while this effect was eliminated when they were led to believe that their moods were not changeable, thus rendering any emotion regulation efforts seemingly useless.

At the core of the hedonic view of revenge is that individuals hold beliefs that exacting revenge will release their negative emotions (Carlsmith et al., 2008). There are a number of ways in which individuals may have internalized such beliefs. Bushman (2002) posits that pop psychology (e.g. Freudian perspective) and mass media messages constantly advocate and reinforce the beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge influencing individuals' expectations. Catharsis refers to the emotional cleansing individuals achieve when they externalise and express negative emotions (Bushman, Baumeister, & Stack, 1999). This notion was popularised by Freud's ideas on emotional catharsis, which subsequently formed the basis for modern theories of catharsis. Freud was the first to suggest that repressed emotions could chronically build up and consequently, influence the psyche, taking a toll on psychological and

mental health. In his view, emotional expression, such as revenge, constitutes an effective way to discharge emotional states and free the psyche from their harmful effects (Bushman, 2002). Moreover, mass media messages continuously endorse the view that expressing aggressive feelings is healthy and constructive, while suppressing them creates internal tension that leads to eventual blowup (Bushman et al., 1999). These messages may shape individuals' beliefs and ultimately influence behaviour. Corroborating evidence has shown that exposure to media messages that support the value of catharsis, indeed, increases individuals' aggressive behaviour (Bushman et al., 1999).

Finally, individuals may have learned through experience about the uplifting properties of exacting revenge and these intuitive theories may guide their behaviour (Cohen et al., 2008). While there is debate in the literature about whether revenge actually decreases or increases negative emotions and aggressive behaviour (Bushman et al., 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008; De Quervain et al., 2004), there seems to be consensus that revenge is accompanied by a sense of satisfaction and an increase in positive emotions (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Bushman et al., 2001). Hence, individuals may find the expectation of pleasure they will derive from revenge sufficient to sustain the belief in its cathartic properties and be less concerned with whether the expectation that their aggressive impulses will be restrained is false. This may explain why beliefs in the value of catharsis remain so widespread.

### **3.4 Emotion regulation strategies**

The aforementioned approaches to emotion regulation focus on why people regulate their emotions. Conversely, emotion regulation strategies, defined as the "thoughts and behaviours intended to eliminate, maintain, or change emotional states" (Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998, p. 790), indicate how people regulate their emotions. A number of theoretical frameworks have been proposed to classify the enormous pool of different strategies individuals employ to regulate their emotional states, with Gross's (1998b) process model being the most widely used taxonomy to date. The process model of emotion regulation classifies emotion regulation strategies according to the time they are employed in the emotion generative process (Gross, 1998a, 1998b). That is, emotion regulation processes can intervene at the different stages of emotion generation and may occur either before the appraisals give rise to the emotional responses (antecedent-focused emotion regulation) or after the emotional responses are generated (response-focused emotion regulation) (Gross, 1998a). A key

assumption of the process model is that emotion regulation strategies are more effective and less effortful when they intervene earlier, rather than later, in the emotion generative process, such that antecedent-focused are more effective than response-focused strategies in regulating emotions (Gross, 1998a).

Gross (1998b) put forward four sets of emotion regulation processes - situation selection and modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation -, with the first three being employed before the emotion has been generated and the last after that. First, in situation selection and modification individuals predict the emotional consequences of engaging in certain situations and subsequently, select and modify the situations to avoid ending up in situations that give rise to the undesirable emotions. Second, attentional deployment is used to direct an individual's attention to specific aspects of the situation in a way that will influence his or her emotions. Third, cognitive change involves altering the cognitive appraisals, i.e. the way individuals view the situation or evaluate their capacity to manage it. Finally, response modulation refers to the direct influencing of physiological, experiential, or behavioural responding to emotional events (Gross, 1998b). The table below summarises the characteristics of some of the most well-studied emotion regulation strategies, following Gross's process model, although the list is far from complete.

Table 3.1: Overview of emotion regulation strategies

<b>Emotion regulation strategies</b>	
<b>Attentional deployment</b>	
Distraction	Distraction may involve focusing on the non-emotional aspects of the situation, shifting of attention away from the situation, or changing internal focus, such as when individuals bring inconsistent thoughts and memories to mind, to counter the emotional impact of a given situation (Gross, 1998b). Distraction has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy for reducing negative emotions (Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). Distracting tasks that require working memory leave limited space for negative thoughts to spread, which is why, the more cognitive effort they require the more effective distraction will prove for negative emotion attenuation (Koole, 2009b).

<b>Emotion regulation strategies</b>	
<b>Attentional deployment</b>	
Rumination	Rumination refers to focusing attention on the emotional triggers that take the form of repetitive self-focused negative thoughts and feelings (Ray, Wilhelm, & Gross, 2008). It has been shown to maintain or exacerbate negative emotions (Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). Ruminative thinking enhances the associations between emotions and semantically related information in memory (Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998), creating a vicious cycle between negative feelings and cognition, where these feelings amplify negative thoughts, which, in turn, further increase negative feelings (Watkins & Moulds, 2005).
<b>Cognitive change</b>	
Cognitive reappraisal	Cognitive reappraisal involves the interpretation of an emotional stimulus in a way that reduces its emotional impact (Gross, 1998a; Richards & Gross, 2000). It may involve interpreting the situation in a new way or taking a third-person perspective when evaluating the situation (Webb, Miles, & Sheeran, 2012). It has been linked with reduced negative emotions (Denson, Moulds, & Grisham, 2012), and expressive behaviour (Denson, Moulds et al., 2012; Gross, 1998a) along with low cognitive costs in working memory (Richards & Gross, 2000).
Meditation	Mindfulness meditation entails a focus of attention on the moment-by-moment experience, including the thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations that accompany it, adopting a nonjudgmental perspective (Bishop et al., 2004). Mindfulness enables individuals to take a de-centred perspective and to become observers of the flow of their emotional experiences (Hölzel et al., 2011). It has been shown to result in reduced negative emotions (Borders, Earleywine, & Jajodia, 2010), increased positive emotions and less ruminative thoughts (Jain et al., 2007).

<b>Emotion regulation strategies</b>	
<b>Response modulation</b>	
Suppression	Suppression entails the inhibition of ongoing emotional responsive behaviour (Gross, 1998b). It has been associated with maintenance of negative emotions, increased accessibility of emotion-related cognitions (Quartana & Burns, 2007), increased physiological responses (Gross, 1998a), and high cognitive costs in memory (Richards & Gross, 2000). As it occurs late in the emotion generative process, it requires significant amounts of cognitive resources to monitor the discrepancy between actual and desired states (Carver & Scheier, 1990) and to continuously control emotional behavioural tendencies (Richards & Gross, 2000).
Venting	Venting refers to the uncontrolled expression of emotions, which can range from mild disclosure to more severe expressions, such as outrage or any other form of inappropriate behaviour (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Although employed by individuals to improve their negative emotions (Bushman et al., 2001; Gollwitzer & Bushman, 2012), it has been shown to prolong negative affective states and to perpetuate aggressive impulses (Bushman et al., 2001).

### **3.4.1 Customer revenge as an emotion regulation strategy**

The main tenet of this research is that customer revenge for unfair treatment is employed as an emotion regulation strategy, because individuals expect that doing so will alleviate their negative emotions. Revenge, in this sense, is a response-focused strategy according to Gross's (1998b) process model, because it arises after the emotional responses to unfair treatment have been generated. Despite previous research that has suggested that customer revenge may serve as a coping strategy (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Zourrig et al., 2009a), no previous study has directly tested this idea. This research addresses this gap by investigating whether the various customer revengeful behaviours are employed in the service of emotion regulation.

The question as to whether revenge for unfair treatment arises from emotion regulation goals has been examined in past psychological research, but the findings are inconclusive. On the one side, Carlsmith et al. (2008) found that individuals have internalised beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and exact their revenge with the intention to ameliorate their

negative emotions. Conversely, Gollwitzer and Bushman (2012) demonstrated that the decision to punish the offender in a social dilemma context is mainly driven by justice and not affect regulation motives. In other words, when deciding to punish the offender, individuals seek to restore justice and not to improve their negative emotional states. Nevertheless, this effect was reversed when individuals focused inwardly and became aware of their angry feelings. In this case, hedonic regulation goals became salient and drove subsequent revenge.

Service literature also provides corroborating evidence that the various customer revengeful behaviours may be employed as an emotion regulation strategy. Although not directly tested, a number of studies have suggested that customer revenge is a coping strategy that individuals use to manage their negative emotions after experiencing service failures (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Gelbrich, 2010; Zourrig et al., 2009a). Furthermore, studies that have examined individual revengeful behaviours separately provide indirect evidence for this assumption. In a consumer context, Huefner and Hunt (2000) found that individuals reported being more pleased after using various forms of aggression, such as vandalism and trashing, as a means to retaliate against the firm, potentially implying that there are cathartic properties of aggression. Similarly, the venting motive has been indicated as the primary motive for complaining (Alicke et al., 1992) and the second most important one for NWOM (Sundaram et al., 1998). Taken together, indirect evidence from service research consistently suggests that the various revengeful behaviours may be employed in the service of emotion regulation goals.

### **3.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has examined the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge. A core theme in research is that when individuals feel bad they seek to repair or remedy their negative emotions. Although prior research has suggested that customer revenge may be used as a coping strategy there is no previous study directly testing this assumption. This thesis addressed this gap by examining whether the various revengeful behaviours are employed in the service of emotion regulation. This is linked with hypothesis H8 of the core conceptual model in Chapter 5 and with Study 2 and Study 3 of this research. The key points outlined in this section are:

- Customer revenge may arise from hedonic emotion regulation goals;
- Customer revenge may be used as an emotion regulation strategy that individuals employ, because they expect that this way they will alleviate their negative emotions.

However, individuals may simultaneously hold various conflicting goals that may influence their behaviours in opposite directions. The next chapter introduces goal theories to investigate customer revenge as a self-control goal conflict between the short-term hedonic emotion regulation goal and the long-term impulse control goal. This refers to hypotheses H9-H11 of the core conceptual model.

## Chapter 4

### Customer revenge as a self-control goal conflict

This chapter examines theories of self-regulation and goal-directed behaviour. First, customer revenge is viewed as a self-regulation failure; second, revengeful behaviour is considered as a conflict between two goals which when activated will have opposite effects in individuals' behaviour; and third, customer revenge in sequential choice situations is examined.

#### 4.1 Goal-directed behaviour

It is widely accepted that consumer behaviour is largely goal-directed (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999). Goals refer to mental representations of desired end states (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). They constitute motivational constructs in guiding consumer decision making (Chartrand, Huber, Shiv, & Tanner, 2008). For instance, as noted in the previous chapter, emotion regulation goals may drive customer revenge. Past research has primarily focused on single goal pursuit (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999). However, more recent studies have adopted a dynamic approach to goal-pursuit, where individuals simultaneously pursue various goals and constantly switch attention and resources from one goal to the other across time and contexts (Louro, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2007). In the complex social environments individuals encounter various stimuli that may activate various conflicting goals simultaneously that, in turn, compete with each other for individuals' limited cognitive resources (Kruglanski et al., 2002). In a similar vein, customers faced with a failed service delivery and recovery may hold various conflicting goals that may drive their subsequent behaviour in opposite directions. For this research, goal theories are adopted to examine how customers' multiple goals may influence their revengeful behaviours both in single and sequential choice situations. But first, the next section introduces the idea that customer revenge may be viewed as a self-regulation failure.

#### 4.2 Self-regulation: Customer revenge as a self-control failure

Past research has portrayed self-regulation as a process involving setting abstract goals that motivate taking actions towards goal attainment (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Latham & Locke, 1991). In multiple goal pursuit, self-regulation plays a crucial role in prioritising goals and resolving goal conflict in order to facilitate successful goal attainment (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Self-regulation is broadly defined as "the set of psychological processes through which



people bring their thoughts, feelings, and behavior in line with abstract standards, goals, or values” (Kooze, 2009a, p.319). Self-regulation is one of the major human capacities and has evolved to help the self to bring about positive outcomes (Baumeister, 1997).

Cybernetic models (e.g. Carver & Scheier, 1990) presuppose that self-regulation is based on three components: standards, monitoring and strength. Standards refer to ideals, goals and other abstract conceptions about how things should be (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Individuals can only regulate themselves successfully when they pay attention to their actions (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Therefore, self-regulation requires constant monitoring where the current state is compared to the desired state or standard. Finally, feedback loops require that when people perceive a discrepancy between the current and desired state they must have the ability (i.e. strength) to bring about the desired changes in their behaviour in order to reach their standards (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Strength relies on a limited but renewable resource that is jointly used for various acts of self-control. Whilst an initial act of self-regulation can deplete resources for another act of volition (Baumeister, Muraven, & Tice, 2000) in the short-term, strength can be made more robust through repeated exercise in the long-term and thus, enhance an individual’s capacity to deal with self-control behaviours (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000).

The essential nature of self-regulation involves denying short-term impulses and overriding hedonistic tendencies. Individuals have impulses to behave in a certain way and self-regulation serves to override this normal or natural tendency and replace it with another response (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). However, often the normal systems for controlling one’s behaviour break down resulting in self-regulation failure (Baumeister, 1997). Most forms of self-control failure involve the pursuit of short-term gains despite long-term costs (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Customer revenge can be viewed as a form of self-control failure. As noted in the previous chapter, customer revenge may be driven by hedonic emotion regulation goals. Individuals in an acute negative emotional state may engage in various revengeful behaviours, because they believe that doing so will make them feel better (Carlsmith et al., 2008). Hedonic emotion regulation goals are oriented towards a positive hedonic balance in the immediate present (Kooze, 2009a). Individuals seek instant rewards by getting rid of their negative emotions and it is this immediate gratification that gives an impulsive quality in customer revenge (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). This short-term time perspective of emotion regulation comes at the expense of the inherently future-oriented self-regulation, which is directed towards individuals’ long-term goals (Kooze, 2009a).

Despite past psychological research in revenge behaviour having not directly made a link to self-regulation, there is indirect evidence coming from the broader literature on aggression. Denson, DeWall, and Finkel (2012) view aggressive behaviour as a self-control failure and suggest that even if conscious and pre-planned, it involves some aggressive impulses. In this sense, revenge arises from a breakdown of the processes that would normally control an individual's aggressive impulses. Indeed, individuals in a cultural context seek to refrain from aggressive behaviours and conform to norms and rules of appropriate behaviour in order to promote social harmony (DeWall, Baumeister, Stillman, & Gailliot, 2007). In support of this argument, a number of studies have associated aggression with a lack of self-control, examining it either as a dispositional or situational characteristic (DeWall et al., 2007; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). These findings led DeWall et al. (2007) to suggest that the proximal cause of aggression is a failure of self-restraint.

Theorists have identified two basic forms of self-regulation failure: underregulation and misregulation. Underregulation involves a failure to exert self-control. The individual does not have or does not exert adequate strength to control him/herself (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Misregulation occurs when a person effectively exerts effort to change behaviour, but he/she uses an ineffective strategy that does not produce the desired positive outcome or even backfires (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Misregulation may arise from false beliefs about the self and the world or when the person gives priority to short-term affect regulation over other long-term goals (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996).

Customer revenge can be viewed as a form of misregulation for two reasons. First, individuals make false assumptions about emotions. Carlsmith et al. (2008) demonstrated that while individuals expected to feel better after punishing the offender they actually reported feeling worse than those who were not given the opportunity to punish the offender. Bushman et al. (2001) further showed that venting was largely ineffective in ameliorating individuals' negative emotions and that people continued to feel bad and engage in aggressive behaviours after venting their emotions. Hence, individuals relying on false assumptions about the cathartic properties of revenge use an ineffective strategy that ultimately backfires and is costly to the self.

Second, customer revenge is a form of misregulation, where individuals place greater emphasis on affect regulation at the expense of their higher-order goal of restraining their aggressive

impulses. Indeed, when people are in a state of emotional distress they want to feel better. Emotional distress intensifies the need to feel better and increases the subjective intensity or urgency of hedonistic desires (Tice et al., 2001). However, many ways of feeling better involve indulging oneself in the things for which individuals normally use self-control to resist (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Tice et al. (2001) examined a number of behaviours that are used by individuals as a means to achieve instant positive emotional states but result in a failure to self-control. Individuals report behaviours, such as procrastination, overeating, and venting to make them feel better, but the short-term gains are outweighed by the eventual negative outcomes of these behaviours. Tice and Bratslavsky (2000) suggest that when emotion regulation and impulse control are in conflict, the former takes precedence over self-control. This conflict may further result in repeating cycles of self-control failure. In particular, the attempt to repair negative feelings by engaging in impulsive behaviours results in further amplification of negative emotional states, leading to emotion regulation failure in the long-run as well (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Baumeister (1997) suggests that revenge is a self-defeating behaviour, because the individual fails to consider the costs and risks associated with it and gains few lasting benefits. This evidence supports the argument put forward here that revenge is a self-regulation failure, where emotion regulation goals take precedence over self-control goals.

### **4.3 Goal properties**

Before examining how goals can be activated it is important to investigate some of the properties of goals. Past research has identified a number of characteristics of goals (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007; Latham & Locke, 1991). First, goals differ in the level of consciousness. Whilst most of the literature has focused on the conscious processes of goal setting and striving (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Latham & Locke, 1991), more recent studies have demonstrated that goals can also be activated outside of conscious awareness (Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Trötschel, 2001; Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Researchers that have examined nonconscious or automatic goal pursuit suggest that the latter is the norm in everyday life and not the exception, while matters such as salience, availability and accessibility in memory are important for goal activation (Chartrand et al., 2008).

Second, goals are hierarchically organised such that more concrete desired states subserve more abstract ones. For instance, in a three-level structure, an abstract higher-order goal (e.g. academic achievement) is connected to its various subgoals (e.g. attend lectures, do well in the

exam), which in turn are connected to their own means for attainment (e.g. note taking, reading the course book) (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). Third, goals are viewed as part of an associative network, where each consists of a wide range of interconnected memories that are related to that goal (Kruglanski et al., 2002). These memories may be subgoals, means of attainment, and other complementary or competing goals that become associated through direct experience as well as semantic and episodic knowledge (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Hence, goals are interconnected with both their corresponding means and other goals. Fourth, the cognitive structure of goal systems rests on the assumption of limited cognitive resources. Goals compete with each other for cognitive resources such that when resources are allocated to one, fewer resources remain for the pursuit of another. This, in turn, may interfere with goal progress and attainment of each of these goals (Kruglanski et al., 2002).

Goals contain information about desired end-states and about plans and behaviours that enable individuals to achieve these end-states. While the cognitive properties of goals are shared with other cognitive structures in memory, what distinguishes goals from the latter is their motivational properties and effects in behaviour. In particular, activation of a goal increases the efforts and persistence towards goal accomplishment until the goal is met. This motivational property cannot be found in other semantic constructs, where activation dissipates at a constant rate (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Hence, both the cognitive and motivational properties are important defining characteristics of goals.

#### **4.4 Goal activation**

Classical goal research that has examined how goals are selected and pursued has focused on conscious goals and the deliberate processes that lead to goal pursuit (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999; Latham & Locke, 1991). In a comprehensive conceptual framework, Bagozzi and Dholakia (1999) outline how conscious goal setting and goal pursuit influence consumer behaviour. However, more recent research has challenged the idea of conscious goals, demonstrating that goals can become accessible and promote congruent behaviours outside of conscious awareness (Chartrand et al., 2008; Kruglanski et al., 2002). This form of goal pursuit operates without any conscious effort, but results in behavioural consequences that parallel those of conscious goal pursuit (Chartrand et al., 2008). An intriguing methodological particularity of the existence of unconscious goal pursuit is that goals can be activated using subliminal or supraliminal priming techniques (Kruglanski et al., 2002). A critical feature in

this line of research is that debriefing of individuals indicates that they are unaware of both the source of goal activation and the effect of the priming manipulations in goal pursuit (Chartrand et al., 2008).

Bargh and Chartrand's (1999) pioneering work on automaticity in behaviour was the first to suggest that goals can nonconsciously be activated by environmental cues and subsequently, guide behaviour. In one of their studies, Bargh et al. (2001) subtly primed participants with words related to achievement and found that they performed better in a word-search puzzle task than those who were not primed with achievement words. The effect of nonconscious goal activation in subsequent behaviour was later replicated in a number of studies (Fishbach et al., 2006; Fishbach & Labroo, 2007). Additional evidence demonstrated that the operation of nonconscious priming, parallels conscious goal setting, causing the same effects in guiding individuals' cognitions, affect, and behaviour as with conscious goals (Bargh et al., 2001).

Goal activation may occur in multiple ways. The notion that goals consist of interlinked memories of related means and goals means that they can be activated by any goal-related stimuli, including end-states, their means of attainment and other social stimuli, the presence of which may prime certain goals (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Furthermore, the stronger the association between the stimuli and the goal, the more likely it is that the goal will be activated and pursued when goal-related stimuli become accessible (Kruglanski et al., 2002). In multiple goal pursuit, goals draw resources from the same repository of limited mental resources and hence, compete with each other for attention, effort, and commitment (Kruglanski et al., 2002). In these cases, self-regulation is called upon to balance opposing demands and to decide how much to invest, when and in which goals (Louro et al., 2007). Past research has shown that activation of a focal goal results in inhibition of the activation of other competing goals in memory. That is, the focal goal shields itself from competing ones by reducing their accessibility in memory (Shah, Friedman, & Kruglanski, 2002). This allows individuals to concentrate their resources in current goal pursuit and effectively pursue their goals (Fishbach, Friedman, & Kruglanski, 2003). However, this inhibition effect occurs only until the focal goal is met after which the individual frees up cognitive resources to be used for new goal pursuits (Förster, Liberman, & Higgins, 2005).

The mechanism through which goal activation influences goal pursuit is a matter of much debate in the literature. Fishbach and Ferguson (2007) have suggested three mechanisms. First,

goal activation renders relevant knowledge in the memory accessible. When a goal is activated, stimuli associated with the fulfilment of the particular goal become accessible and capture attention (Aarts, Dijksterhuis, & Vries, 2001). Second, goal activation influences evaluations of stimuli such that those that are associated with its fulfilment are evaluated in a positive way, while stimuli unrelated to the goal are evaluated negatively (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Third, goal activation influences emotions during goal pursuit. Feedback loop models suggest that a discrepancy between the current and desired end state that denotes fast progress results in positive emotions and reduced effort towards goal attainment while slow progress triggers negative emotions and increased effort (Carver & Scheier, 1990). The current research is agnostic when it comes to the exact psychological mechanism that underlies the effect of goal activation on goal pursuit. Irrespective of the exact mechanism, goal activation will lead to goal-congruent behaviours.

#### **4.5 Emotion regulation goals vs self-control goals in customer revenge**

Consumer research has demonstrated that individuals have a repertoire of coping strategies to manage their negative emotions in negative purchase situations (Yi & Baumgartner, 2004). After a service failure, individuals may not always choose to take revenge, for rather, they may engage in conciliatory behaviours (Bonifield & Cole, 2007) or choose avoidance by exiting from the firm (Huefner & Hunt, 2000). That is, customers vary in their responses and may on some occasions be more forgiving and take less revenge, while at other times they may seek to get back at the firm. The question that arises then is under what circumstances individuals experiencing negative emotional states after service failures will be motivated to engage in revengeful behaviours.

Past research has demonstrated that individuals simultaneously pursue various goals in their daily life, which if considered in isolation, may appear conflicting (Louro et al., 2007). A self-control conflict can occur when customers facing a service failure simultaneously hold a long-term goal to control their aggressive impulses and a short-term, but equally powerful goal, of regulating their negative emotions. These goals when activated will guide customers' motivation to engage in revengeful behaviour in opposite directions. In this thesis, it is suggested that whether individuals decide to engage in revengeful behaviours depends on which goal - emotion regulation or control of aggressive impulses - is accessible.

Individuals faced with a severe service failure seek ways to cope with their negative emotions. In these instances, emotion regulation goals may become accessible and salient. As noted in the previous chapter, customers may engage in the various revengeful behaviours with the intent to release their negative emotions and hence, to feel better (Carlsmith et al., 2008). Hence, when the emotion regulation goal is accessible, individuals will be more likely to engage in revengeful behaviours, because such actions are believed to provide emotional benefits.

In some other instances, the goal to control aggressive impulses may be activated and become more accessible. Revenge is a form of aggression that involves acting on someone's aggressive impulses. Recent formulations of aggression have recognised that in normal human life aggressive impulses are restrained so as to prevent aggressive behaviour (Denson, Pedersen, Friese, Hahm, & Roberts, 2011). In our evolutionary history, aggressive impulses have evolved to serve survival purposes (DeWall et al., 2007). Therefore, humans, as social animals, are naturally predisposed to aggress when encountering a provocation. However, as humans developed culture, aggressive responses to conflict became less desirable and aggressive behaviour became associated with negative consequences, such as social disapproval and legal difficulties (Denson et al., 2011). Consequently, individuals developed the capacity to restrain their aggressive impulses in order to refrain from socially inappropriate behaviours. By restraining their aggressive impulses individuals are able to co-exist peacefully in a cultural context and to receive all the benefits of being part of it (DeWall et al., 2007). As in the cultural context, interactions in service contexts are based on norms and rules of appropriate behaviour. In a similar way that customers form expectations about how they should be treated by the firms, the latter expect their customers to adhere to organisational rules and behave in a compliant manner (Fisk et al., 2010). Consequently, customers will also seek to restrain their aggressive impulses and refrain from revengeful behaviours in order to demonstrate socially acceptable behaviours. Hence, when the self-control goal is accessible, individuals will be motivated to restrain their aggressive impulses and refrain from revengeful behaviours. Indeed, Tangney et al. (2004) demonstrated that individuals low in self-control respond with greater outward aggression to an anger-provoking incident than those high in self-control. Furthermore, evidence suggests that temporal depletion of individuals' capacity for self-control results in higher levels of aggression (DeWall et al., 2007).

#### **4.6 Customer revenge behaviour in sequential decision-making**

The previous sections have covered situations where multiple goals -emotion regulation vs control of aggressive impulses - influence the choice of a single action (i.e. revengeful behaviour) that enables goal attainment. However, few goals can be fulfilled by the execution of a single action and rather, they require the pursuit of multiple actions over time (Zhang, Fishbach, & Dhar, 2007). Hence, individuals may engage in various behaviours over time in order to accomplish their emotion regulation or self-control goals. The hierarchical structure of goals implies that superordinate goals can be attained with the employment of various subgoals or means (Fishbach et al., 2006). In a service context, the emotion regulation goal may be achieved with various actions, such as writing a complaining letter to the manager, aggressive behaviour and/or NWOM among others. These actions may be taken sequentially rather than all at once. On some occasions, the service firm may give the individuals the opportunity to write a complaining letter to the manager or talk to the service personnel after a service failure has occurred. These initial actions provide customers with a means to vent their emotions. After this initial action, customers will have to decide whether they will engage in the various revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) to regulate their negative emotions. Past service research has not examined how an initial customer action towards a goal may influence subsequent customer behaviour. This research will address this gap by examining customer revengeful behaviour in sequential behaviour.

Prior research has suggested that an initial action towards a goal may on some occasions be followed by a complementary action towards the focal goal and on others by an action that serves a competing goal. Consequently, in a sequence of actions individuals often cope with multiple activated goals by using one of the two patterns of self-regulation: highlighting the pursuit of a single goal or balancing between conflicting goals (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005). Choice-highlighting involves the pattern of self-regulation where the pursuit of one goal enhances commitment to that goal relative to conflicting ones and motivates complementary actions over time (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Choice-balancing refers to the pattern of self-regulation, where the initial pursuit of one goal liberates the individual to pursue other conflicting goals in subsequent actions (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007).



Past research has shown that whether individuals will choose the highlighting or balancing strategy depends on how they represent an initial action that is congruent with a goal (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Fishbach et al., 2006). Individuals follow inferential processes by which they observe their own behaviours and try to attach meaning to their actions (Fishbach et al., 2009). Individuals may interpret an initial goal-pursuit in two ways: as expressing commitment or as making progress towards a desired state (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005). Commitment refers to “the degree to which the individual is attached to the goal, considers it significant or important, is determined to reach it, and keeps it in the face of setbacks and obstacles” (Latham & Locke, 1991, p.217). When an initial action towards a goal is interpreted as commitment, the individual will be motivated to pursue further goal-congruent actions (i.e. choice highlighting) (Koo & Fishbach, 2014). Indeed, an underlying assumption of classic goal research is that once the individual has adopted a goal he/she will consistently pursue goal-congruent behaviours in subsequent actions (Fishbach et al., 2009; Koo & Fishbach, 2014). The strength of the motivation depends on the perceived value of the goal and the likelihood of goal attainment (Latham & Locke, 1991).

Goal progress refers to the sense of moving forward towards goal attainment and of a diminishing discrepancy between the current and desired end state (Carver & Scheier, 1990). Research on how perceived goal progress influences subsequent goal pursuit is contradictory. According to the goal gradient hypothesis, motivation should increase as the individual approaches goal attainment. Individuals accelerate their efforts towards the goal as they near it and hence, perceived goal progress should result in more effort allocated to its attainment (Kivetz, Urminsky, & Zheng, 2006). However, these findings have been obtained in single goal pursuits, where all the effort is focused on reducing a single goal discrepancy. In a multiple goal pursuit, where the individual has to prioritise competing demands, findings indicate the opposite pattern. In other words, when an initial action towards a goal is interpreted as progress, the individual will be motivated to pursue goal-incongruent actions (i.e. choice balancing). An initial action that indicates fast progress towards a goal gives a sense of partial fulfilment of a goal and signals that less effort is needed to achieve it, thereby liberating the individual to pursue other conflicting goals (Fishbach et al., 2009). The strength of the motivation is a function of the magnitude of the discrepancy between his/her current and desired state (Koo & Fishbach, 2014).

In one of the first studies illustrating this effect, Fishbach and Dhar (2005) demonstrated that when an initial academic success was interpreted as commitment towards the academic goal, individuals were more interested in pursuing academic tasks further. However, when the initial academic success was interpreted as progress towards the academic goal, individuals indicated higher interest in pursuing social activities. Similarly, an initial consumer action towards the goal of emotion regulation that is interpreted as goal commitment should lead to higher revengeful behaviour than when the same action is interpreted as goal progress.

Past studies have proposed a number of individual and situational variables that influence whether the focus of the individual will be on commitment or progress. More specifically, variables such as framing of questions (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005), level of optimism (Zhang et al., 2007), focus on the subgoal/superordinate goal (Fishbach et al., 2006), and focus on the amount of goal pursuit accomplished/remaining were found to affect individual's inferences about goal commitment or goal progress.

#### **4.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter has focused on goal theories to examine customer revenge. Prior service research has neglected the role of conflicting goals in customer revenge. This thesis has addressed this gap by examining how the conflict between emotion regulation and impulse control goals differentially impact customer revenge behaviour both in single and in sequential behaviours. This contribution is linked to hypotheses H9-H11 of the core conceptual model in Chapter 5 and to Studies 4 and 5 of this thesis. The following key points were made:

- Customer revenge is a self-regulation failure where individuals' short-term emotion regulation goals take precedence over their long-term impulse control goals;
- When deciding whether to exact their revenge, individuals may hold two conflicting goals: an emotion regulation goal and a goal to control their aggressive impulses. Activation of each of these will guide customer revengeful behaviour in opposite directions;
- An initial action that serves the emotion regulation goal will result in a higher likelihood of subsequent customer revengeful behaviours when the initial action is interpreted as commitment to the goal than when the same action is interpreted as goal progress.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conceptual Model and Hypotheses**

This chapter introduces the conceptual model and hypotheses of this thesis. As a first stage, this research will involve examining the role of unfairness, moral emotions and forgiveness in customer revenge. In the second stage, the role of emotion regulation will be investigated and more specifically, whether revenge is employed as an emotion regulation strategy, because individuals expect to alleviate their negative emotions will be tested. In the third stage, goal theories will be adopted to examine whether accessibility of two conflicting goals - emotion regulation and impulse control goals - will drive customer revenge in opposite directions. Moreover, sequential revengeful behaviours will be examined, particularly with respect to the role of individuals' inferences of goal commitment and goal progress in customer revengeful behaviours that occur sequentially. The core conceptual model of this thesis can be seen in Figure 5.1.

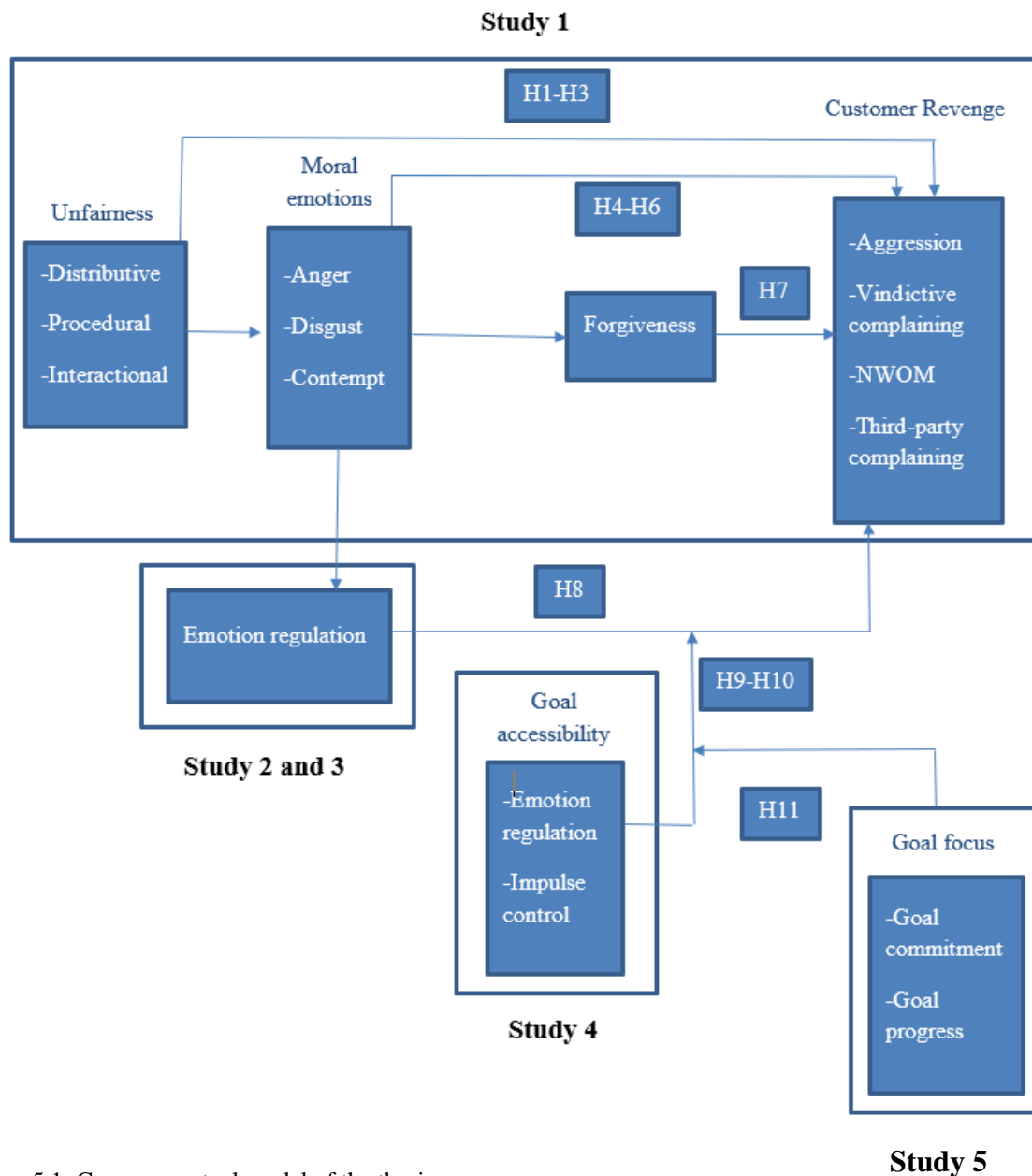


Figure 5.1: Core conceptual model of the thesis

## 5.1 The role of unfairness in customer revenge

Customer revenge has become commonplace and service settings are the most vulnerable to these incidences. Due to the fact that services are produced and consumed simultaneously and are heavily people-based, service failures, such as flight delays and hotel overbookings, cannot be entirely eliminated (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009). Despite service firm attempts to remedy initial service failure, service recovery efforts sometimes fail causing double deviation scenarios of both failed service delivery and recovery encounters. Service recovery actions have a significant impact on subsequent customer evaluations and behaviours, because

customers are more observant and emotionally involved in service recoveries than in first-time service encounters (A. K. Smith et al., 1999). Consequently, firms' failure to redress an initial service failure exacerbates customer dissatisfaction and emotional reactions, thus driving revenge (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Grégoire et al., 2010; Joireman et al., 2013).

Customer revenge is an aggressive behaviour driven by the desire to hurt the firm in return for a perceived wrongdoing (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Funches et al., 2009). Outraged customers may engage in a number of revengeful behaviours, both direct, such as aggression and vindictive complaining and indirect, such as vindictive negative word-of-mouth and third-party complaining (Grégoire et al., 2010). These behaviours are not mutually exclusive, for the customer may engage in various behaviours in response to an unsatisfactory service experience. Customer revenge is a qualitatively different response to the traditional voice-exit-loyalty customer behavioural responses that have been extensively studied in the service literature (Hirschman, 1970). Recent evidence suggests that extreme levels of dissatisfaction, such as when the service failure is severe and especially when it is followed by a failed recovery, may change the nature of response and motivate customers to exact their revenge (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Grégoire et al., 2010; Joireman et al., 2013). In the case of customer revenge, individuals do not just passively exit from the firm or passively complain about dissatisfactory experiences, but rather, they seek to harm or get even with the firm (Grégoire et al., 2010). Customers may find that exiting or complaining is not sufficiently satisfying and instead, want to "inflict damage, injury, discomfort or punishment" (Tripp & Bies, 2010, p. 424) on the service firms. Hence, it is the motivation to hurt the firm that renders the nature of customer revenge distinct from other negative customer reactions to unacceptable service encounters.

As noted in section 2.2.2, the vast literature on customer revenge and service recovery has acknowledged justice theories as the foundational framework to explain customer reactions to service recovery efforts (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Blodgett et al., 1997; Grégoire et al., 2010; Tax et al., 1998). Similarly, research in psychology and organisational studies has identified justice as a key cognitive antecedent of revenge (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992; Tripp & Bies, 2010). Service failures and failed recoveries may be seen as moral transgressions that violate norms of fairness and subsequently energise customer revenge (Grégoire et al., 2010). After being faced with an unacceptable service, the customer becomes a victim who has been wronged by the firm and seeks to even the score (Goodwin & Ross, 1992). In such cases, customers may feel that revenge is morally justified or even desirable (Grégoire et al., 2010;

Tripp & Bies, 2010). Hence, revenge in this sense is thought to serve as a means to restore the individual's sense of justice (Funches et al., 2009).

Justice is a broad and multifaceted concept (Blodgett et al., 1997; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b; Tax et al., 1998). Past research has shown that customers base their service evaluations, not only on outcomes, but also on processes and interpersonal treatment. Service failure/recovery encounters involve exchanges of resources, where the customer experiences a loss due to the service failure and the firm attempts to provide a gain in the form of the recovery efforts (A. K. Smith et al., 1999). Funches et al. (2009, p. 235) suggest that individuals feel injustice when "they feel that their time, money, business and/or feelings are disregarded or are considered unimportant by the offending firm". Loss in terms of time and money resources is associated with evaluations of the outcome of the service recovery, while respect is associated with evaluations of processes and interpersonal communications (A. K. Smith et al., 1999). Hence, customer perceptions of fairness involve three components: distributive, procedural and interactional fairness.

Perceptions of distributive fairness are associated with the fairness of the redress offered by the service provider for a service failure (Blodgett et al., 1997). Customers evaluate the fairness of the service recovery by comparing the costs incurred with the gains received (McCullough et al., 2000). Perceptions of unfairness arise when the customer believes that the outcome he/she has received falls short of the inputs to the relationship with the firm (Adams, 1965). In order to redress the service failure, firms may offer compensation to the customer, such as a refund for a flight delay or an upgrade to a better hotel room after overbooking (Blodgett et al., 1997; Tax et al., 1998). Indeed, compensation is a strategy to restore equity in the relationship between the customer and the firm (A. K. Smith & Bolton, 1998). Using a content analysis of customer evaluations of service complaint experiences, Tax et al. (1998) have demonstrated that issues regarding the compensation received by the firm were the most prevalent in customer evaluations of distributive fairness. Individuals care about the tangible outcomes, because these are perceived of as a form of confession and an admission of guilt on the service provider's side (Goodwin & Ross, 1992; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). Individuals expect the compensation provided to them to be proportional to what they contribute to the relationship with the firm (McCullough et al., 2000). In line with this, evidence suggests that service recovery processes are rated more unfavourably when the compensation does not align with the perceived costs the customer experiences (Blodgett et al., 1997; Sparks & McColl-

Kennedy, 2001). Past research has demonstrated that distributive justice significantly impacts on customer behavioural responses. Several studies have demonstrated that distributive injustice has a negative effect on satisfaction (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001; Tax et al., 1998) and repurchase intentions (Blodgett et al., 1997), resulting in negative word-of-mouth (Blodgett et al., 1997) and third-party complaining (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b). More importantly, negative evaluations of the final outcome have been shown to motivate customer revenge (Funches et al., 2009). Hence, it is hypothesised that:

***H1: Higher (vs lower) perceived distributive unfairness will result in higher (vs lower) likelihood to engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).***

Procedural fairness is associated with customer perceptions about the fairness of the procedures and policies used to reach the decision outcome in the service recovery encounter. Individuals value procedures for two reasons: first, they are instrumental because they enable individuals to have control over positive personal outcomes (Tyler, 1994); and second, they provide signals about whether they are valued members of the group (Tyler, 1989). Consequently, individuals search for cues that show the fairness of the procedures set in place by the firm.

Among the various elements that have been identified as key determinants of procedural justice (Tax et al., 1998), speed of service recovery plays a particularly focal role. Tax et al. (1998) demonstrated that individuals consistently considered the amount of time taken to resolve the customer complaint as an important dimension of customer perceptions of procedural justice. Speed is “reflective of the timeliness, responsiveness, and convenience” of the recovery process (Blodgett et al., 1997, p. 189). Speed of recovery provides a signal about the efficiency and competency of the service provider and affects stability attributions. A delayed service recovery enhances attributions that the cause of the service failure is stable and likely to reoccur in the future (Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). Hence, the speed of recovery response to the service failure influences customer evaluations (A. K. Smith & Bolton, 1998). In particular, having to wait too long has been shown to be aggravating (Blodgett et al., 1997), resulting in customer dissatisfaction and negative evaluations of the service firm (A. K. Smith & Bolton, 1998; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). Researchers have previously demonstrated the significant influence procedural justice has on customer evaluations and behavioural responses (Kim et al., 2009; Tax et al., 1998). As Grégoire et al. (2010, p. 742) argue, processes “are planned in advance,

and they are more diagnostic of what firms truly think of their customers”. Individuals may be outraged by the symbolism of how they are treated by the firm and may be motivated to cause harm to the firm. In line with this, prior studies have suggested that procedural injustice drives customer revenge (Grégoire et al., 2010). Hence, it is hypothesised that:

***H2: Higher (vs lower) perceived procedural unfairness will result in higher (vs lower) likelihood to engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).***

Interactional fairness is associated with the fairness of the manner in which individuals are treated throughout the conflict resolution process. Service recovery processes involve interaction between the customer and frontline employees and hence, customers tend to base their evaluations largely on the behaviour of the service providers (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001). Tax et al. (1998) have identified a number of elements that influence perceptions of interactional justice in service recovery encounters, with empathy being among the most important ones. Empathy or else concern, “tends to be conceived as attentive listening coupled with an attempt to understand the other party’s perspective” (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001, p. 211). Empathy is perceived by customers as a valuable reward, because it redistributes esteem in the relationship with the firm (A. K. Smith & Bolton, 1998). The level of empathy on the part of the service provider has been associated with service quality evaluations and customer satisfaction (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001). Past research has indicated that service recovery incidences will be evaluated less favourably when the service personnel overtly demonstrate lower levels of concern and responsiveness (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001).

There is general agreement in the literature that interactional injustice results in a number of negative customer responses. In particular, prior studies have demonstrated that it results in dissatisfaction (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001), NWOM (Blodgett et al., 1997), third-party complaining (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b) and lower repatronage intentions (Blodgett et al., 1997). More importantly, interactional injustice has been identified as a key driver of customer revenge (Funches et al., 2009; Grégoire et al., 2010). When individuals are disregarded and treated without respect on top of the initial service failure, they feel not only wronged, but also personally affected (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). The personal offence may be perceived by individuals as a self-identity threat, which may activate hot cognitions and



motivate revengeful behaviours (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). Consistent with this, Funches et al. (2009) demonstrated that in the majority of service failure incidences reported by respondents, revenge was incited by the lack of interactional justice. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

*H3: Higher (vs lower) perceived interactional unfairness will result in higher (vs lower) likelihood to engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).*

## **5.2 Moral emotions as mediators in the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge**

Whilst a substantial body of research has examined revenge with respect to its cognitive component (i.e. perceived unfairness), the emotional aspect has been largely disregarded (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Zourrig et al., 2009a). In the widely accepted revenge models revenge is postulated as being primarily driven by the sense of injustice (e.g. Tripp & Bies, 2010). However, service failures, especially when followed by failed service recoveries, are extremely stressful situations that have been shown to generate strong negative emotional reactions (Casado-Díaz et al., 2007). In service failure/recovery encounters customers do not just calculate justice, but “rather experience a justice-related emotion and rather react to their emotion” (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005, p. 665). This is consistent with research that shows that people describe their responses to injustice as hot and emotionally laden (Bies & Moag, 1986). Weiss et al. (1999, p. 786) argue that “by not directly examining discrete emotions, researchers have failed to explicate and measure potentially pivotal mediating variables” that may explain how the sense of unfairness is translated into revengeful behaviour.

Despite some attempts to examine the role of customer emotions in driving customer reactions to service recovery, past research has tended to report diffuse negative emotions and has neglected the role of discrete emotions (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005; del Río-Lanza et al., 2009; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b). Nevertheless, recent evidence suggests that discrete emotions are linked with distinct cognitive and motivational properties (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). Hence, ignoring the role of discrete emotions may reduce the ability to predict specific behaviours (Weiss et al., 1999). As noted above, service failure/recovery encounters can be viewed as moral transgressions where the service firm violates the norms of fairness and

customers' entitlement to fair treatment (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). Evidence from moral psychology indicates that individuals react emotionally to moral and social norm violations and that these moral emotions are key determinants of moral judgments and behaviours (Haidt, 2003; Rozin et al., 1999). Consequently, customer judgments about distributive, procedural and interactional justice serve as cognitive appraisals that result in the elicitation of moral emotions during service recovery encounters (Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). In particular, three moral emotions are postulated to arise when blaming another person, the firm in this case, for the moral transgression: anger, disgust and contempt. These moral emotions can occur independently or jointly to indicate disapproval of the firm's actions, when these violate moral standards (Haidt, 2003).

### **5.2.1 The emotion of anger**

Anger is the most commonly experienced negative emotion in response to service failures (Bougie et al., 2003; Gelbrich, 2010; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009) and prior to revenge (Funches et al., 2009). Anger arises from a sense that the self has been offended or injured (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). In service recovery, anger arises when customers appraise an event as unfair and especially when they believe that they have been intentionally and unjustifiably wronged (Bougie et al., 2003). The key characteristics of anger are responsibility, control and certainty. In particular, anger is associated with appraisals of high service provider responsibility and control over the negative incident and of customer certainty about what happened as well as the cause of the negative event (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006).

Evidence suggests that anger may act as a mediating mechanism between perceived unfairness and customer revenge. More specifically, past research has demonstrated that perceptions of distributive, procedural and interactional injustice give rise to angry feelings (Adams, 1965; Barclay et al., 2005; Weiss et al., 1999). Individuals experiencing anger report feeling 'blood rushing through the body' and 'as if they would explode', while their typical thoughts are 'thinking of how unfair something is' and 'thinking of violence towards others'. Anger has been associated with action tendencies like 'yelling', 'hitting someone' and 'behaving aggressively' (Bougie et al., 2003; Roseman et al., 1994). Haidt (2003, p. 856) argues that anger involves a motivation to "attack, humiliate, or otherwise get back at the person who is perceived as acting unfairly or immorally". Indeed, anger promotes approach tendencies in the form of attack and is considered a key driver of aggression (C. A. Anderson & Bushman, 2002)

and revenge (Grobbink et al., 2015). Research in the service literature is consistent with this idea and has linked anger with the desire for revenge (Grégoire et al., 2010), physical and verbal expressions towards service personnel (McCull-Kennedy et al., 2009) and customer retaliatory behaviours (Bonifield & Cole, 2007). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

***H4: Anger mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness and customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).***

### **5.2.2 The emotion of disgust**

Disgust serves as a response to both physical objects and sociomoral violations. Disgust is a feeling of revulsion towards physical objects, primarily in relation to the sense of taste and to nonphysical objects that may cause a similar feeling (Haidt, 2003; Rozin et al., 1999). Disgust also arises from moral transgressions that involve violations of bodily norms as well as from a wide range of moral transgressions beyond bodily concerns. As Haidt (2003, p. 857) argues, disgust may be “triggered by people who violate local cultural roles for how to use their bodies, particularly in domains of sex, drugs, and body modification”. Disgust in this sense serves as a guardian of the body. However, disgust elicitors may go beyond bodily concerns. In particular, disgust has primarily been associated with violations of the moral code of divinity (i.e. actions that involve contamination or impurity) (Rozin et al., 1999). Disgust also arises from social transgressions, where people behave without dignity (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Here, it is argued that disgust is the primary response to vices such as hypocrisy, cruelty and betrayal (Haidt, 2003). Consequently, the service failure/recovery incident will trigger a feeling of disgust. Service failure/recovery that violates the fairness norm may be perceived as impure and contaminating, with the firm being considered as morally untrustworthy. In line with this, McCull-Kennedy and Smith (2006) demonstrated that a number of customer rage incidences were caused by individuals who felt disgusted by service firms’ actions.

Regarding the action tendencies associated with disgust, the latter has been traditionally associated with tendencies to avoid, distance oneself and refuse contact with the offending party (Moretti & Di Pellegrino, 2010). By socially excluding transgressors, moral disgust serves as a deterrent for culturally inappropriate behaviours and reduces the person’s negative impact on the social group (Haidt, 2003). However, some researchers have argued that when

disgust arises from sociomoral violations it tends to have anger-like approach tendencies. In these cases, individuals may have “the desire to lash out, to get back at someone, and to overcome some obstacle” (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011, p. 723). Consistent with this idea, Moretti and Di Pellegrino (2010) demonstrated that disgusted individuals tended to reject unfair offers and punish transgressors in the ultimatum game. Similarly, Xie, Bagozzi, and Grønhaug (2015) showed that company’s wrongdoing in terms of being irresponsible towards the environment elicited feelings of disgust, which in turn, resulted in a number of punitive consumer responses, such as NWOM, complaining and boycotting. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

***H5: Disgust mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness and customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).***

### **5.2.3 The emotion of contempt**

Contempt is said to be the coldest and most subtle of the three moral emotions (Rozin et al., 1999). Contempt involves “looking down on someone and feeling morally superior” (Haidt, 2003, p. 858). Contempt is characterised by a permanent belief that the person is intrinsically bad because of their character or status and there is no possibility of their changing (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). It involves an element of cool indifference towards others and a signal that someone is undeserving of strong feelings (Haidt, 2003). Rozin et al. (1999) drew a distinction between contempt and the other two moral emotions, which lies in the fact that contempt arises from violations of the ethic of community, namely, when a person does not respect the obligations within the community. Service failure encounters may trigger feelings of contempt, because the service firm fails to carry out its duties in the community regarding respecting the right of individuals to be treated fairly. Hutcherson and Gross (2011) further suggested that contempt is more strongly associated with appraisals of incompetence, where transgressors are judged to be of lower capabilities than oneself and cannot contribute to the group in a meaningful way. Service failures can be appraised as the lack of a firm’s competence to provide adequate standards of service to the customers and thus, may trigger feelings of contempt.

The experience of contempt has been traditionally associated with the tendency to move away and exclude the transgressor from one’s social network (Romani et al., 2013). When changing

the offenders' behaviour is deemed impossible or not worth the effort, then excluding them from one's social life will reduce the risk of exposure to harm. Social exclusion can be accomplished in different ways. One way to accomplish this is by ignoring or avoiding contact with the other party (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Social exclusion may also be achieved "by gossiping and by trying to actively belittle and derogate another person, often behind his or her back" (Fischer & Roseman, 2007, p.105). Contempt aims to cause a change in behaviour, such that transgressors are treated with less warmth and respect in future interactions (Haidt, 2003). Hence, these behaviours may be used in order to mark individuals who are worthy of complete disregard. In a similar vein, the various customer revengeful behaviours may be viewed by customers as a means of social exclusion and may be employed with the intention to derogate the firm and to prevent other customers from using its services. That is, feelings of contempt may be associated with customer revenge. Moreover, Fischer and Roseman (2007) suggest that contempt may co-occur with anger and arise on top of it. When the offender cannot change and reconciliation is impossible, contempt may develop, and hence, hostile intentions along with social exclusion intentions may co-occur. Evidence in a business context suggests that when moral violations on the firm's part occur, contempt results in destructive punitive behaviours, such as NWOM, complaining and boycotting (Romani et al., 2013; Xie et al., 2015). Thus, customers who experience contempt after service failure/recovery may be motivated to take revenge. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

***H6: Contempt mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness and customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).***

### **5.3 The process of forgiveness**

This research further examines an indirect route through which emotional reactions are translated into revengeful behaviours, that of forgiveness. Tsarenko and Tojib (2011) argue that forgiveness marks the transition from a past transgression to a future without revenge. Forgiveness has a healing power and can not only change personal outcomes, such as appraisals and emotional reactions, but also strengthen and heal interpersonal relationships after an interpersonal injury (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2012). Zourrig et al. (2009b) argue that traditional recovery strategies (i.e. restoration of the sense of justice) often fail and that service providers should focus their recovery efforts on ensuring the

relinquishment of negative emotions. The forgiveness process becomes relevant because it involves attempts to overcome and release negative emotions (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999) as well as encompassing motivational changes, whereby the person has decreasing motivation for revenge and increasing motivation for reconciliation (McCullough et al., 1998). When firms have caused significant psychological harm to customers, such as in instances of severe service failures, double deviations as well as when customers attribute negative motives to the firm's actions, the forgiveness process may be activated and hence, reduce customer revengeful behaviours (Joireman, Grégoire, & Tripp, 2016).

Forgiveness is an intentional and conscious process of cognitive, emotional and behavioural progressions that requires significant investment in time and effort at each stage (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Zourrig et al., 2009b). The process is initiated by a transgressing service failure/recovery incident. At the cognitive level, the customer reinterprets the negative event in a more positive way, alters attributions and ceases the revenge thoughts. At the affective level, the individual transforms strong negative emotions into neutral or even positive ones. At the behavioural level, the individual deliberately reduces the motivation to take revenge against the service provider and possibly increases acts of conciliation and goodwill (Aquino et al., 2003).

Perceptions of justice influence the motivation to forgive (Karremans & Van Lange, 2005). Worthington and Scherer (2004) argue that after interpersonal transgressions, individuals experience an injustice gap that arises from the difference between desired and actual outcomes and that the larger the injustice gap, the lower the motivation to forgive will be. When the customers appraise the service failure/recovery incident as severe, intentional and under the control of the service firm, they experience an injustice gap. Perceptions of injustice trigger strong negative emotional reactions, which preclude their replacement by neutral or positive ones (Exline et al., 2003). These emotions will in turn, reduce customers' motivation to forgive and increase the motivation to take revenge (Zourrig et al., 2009b). Conversely, forms of restoration of justice, such as compensation and showing empathy should reduce the injustice gap. In this case, associated negative emotions will be diminished, thus enhancing forgiveness and reducing revenge (Exline et al., 2003). Consistent with this idea, Tsarenko and Tojib's (2012) study in a service context has shown that after a severe service failure, forgiveness had a significant impact on subsequent customer negative responses resulting in a reduction in

NWOM behaviour and the intention to switch to another service provider. Consequently, it is hypothesised that:

*H7: Forgiveness mediates the effect of the three moral emotions (i.e. anger, disgust and contempt) on customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).*

#### **5.4 Customer revenge as an emotion regulation strategy**

After having argued about the role of negative emotions in customer revenge, in this section, the focus is on the role of emotion regulation. Negative emotions have been shown to play a critical role in double deviation scenarios, where the customers are doubly faced with a service failure, the initial service failure and subsequent failed service recovery (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009). Based on appraisal theories, double deviation scenarios constitute highly stressful situations that insistently call for action and redress (Zourrig et al., 2009a). Due to the repetitive nature of the failure, customers experience strong negative emotions, which have a predominant impact on subsequent behaviour over and above the effect of justice elements (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009). Individuals who experience high distress may spontaneously try to regulate their emotions (Gross, 1998b). Bushman et al. (2001) argue that individuals' attempts to regulate affect is the reason why negative emotions are translated into revenge. Consequently, customer revenge may serve as a means of emotion regulation when individuals experience a failed service recovery (Bushman et al., 2001).

Individuals are said to engage in emotion regulation for hedonistic reasons. Past research has demonstrated that people are inherently motivated to maximise pleasure and minimise pain and that hedonic goals are immediately activated upon encountering negative emotional events (Koole, 2009b). Since emotions involve pleasure and pain, individuals seek to engage in behaviours that will decrease negative emotions and/or increase positive ones (Gross, 1998b; Larsen, 2000). At the core of the hedonic emotion regulation principle is that individuals must believe that the forthcoming actions will bring about the desired changes in the current emotional states. Hedonic emotion regulation “predicts that people in negative affective states will be the most likely to engage in cognitive or behavioral activities in anticipation of the mood-lifting consequences of such enterprises, whereas people in a positive mood will be the most likely to avoid thoughts and actions in anticipation of the mood-threatening consequences

associated with them” (Cohen et al., 2008, p. 328). Hence, customers who experience a failed service recovery will engage in revenge, with the intent to regulate their negative emotions, if they believe that the latter activity has such mood-lifting properties that will make them feel better.

Evidence suggests that individuals may have internalised beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge. Psychological research shows that people believe that exacting revenge is an effective way to relieve negative emotions and aggressive impulses (Carlsmith et al., 2008). In fact, this popular belief remains influential, because it is constantly reinforced by mass media and popular psychology (Bushman et al., 2001). Bushman (2002) cited a number of examples of movies and magazine articles that encourage people to vent their emotions and ‘let some steam off’. According to Bushman et al. (1999, p. 367), the mass media “continue to endorse the view that expressing anger or aggressive feelings is healthy, constructive, and relaxing, whereas restraining oneself creates internal tension that is unhealthy and bound to lead to an eventual blowup”.

Furthermore, the theory of catharsis is a popular psychological theory and widely known to the public. According to this theory “anger and aggressive impulses exist inside the psyche and seek to get out by being expressed” (Bushman et al., 2001, p. 18). It is suggested that when negative emotions are not expressed, they build up inside the individual creating an internal pressure that causes psychological damage (Bushman, 2002). Conversely, expressing these emotions will free the psyche of them and remove their harmful effects. Revenge, in this sense, serves as a means of emotional expression, which is considered to bring about this cathartic release and purge negative feelings and hostile impulses (Carlsmith et al., 2008). Therefore, exacting revenge is assumed to reduce further aggressive acts and to ameliorate negative emotions.

Individuals may have internalized these cathartic beliefs through learning. They have learned through experience about the uplifting properties of exacting revenge and these beliefs might, in turn, guide their behaviour (Cohen et al., 2008). Whilst prior studies have failed to find support for the reduction in negative emotions, they have found evidence that revenge can sometimes feel good. In particular, Bushman et al. (2001) demonstrated that aggression is enjoyable and stimulates positive emotions. This result is consistent with neuroscientific evidence showing that contemplating punishment is linked with the reward-related areas of the



brain ,which suggests that revenge may be satisfying (De Quervain et al., 2004). Hence, aggression may not reduce negative emotions and aggressive impulses, but it could be effective in increasing positive emotions. Bushman et al. (2001) suggest that the increase in positive emotions may be enough to sustain people's beliefs in the cathartic properties of aggression and that individuals might be more concerned with the positive rather than the negative effects of aggression.

Regarding revenge, a number of researchers have stressed that its essential purpose is to give the avenger relief from a feeling of discomfort (Grobink et al., 2015; Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). Revenge is assumed to be sweet and this sweetness motivates people to seek revenge (Gollwitzer & Bushman, 2012). Psychological studies have directly tested the assumption that revenge for unfair treatment is driven by emotion regulation goals. Carlsmith et al. (2008) demonstrated that individuals who had been treated unfairly punished the transgressor because they predicted that they will feel better after doing so. Similarly, Bushman et al. (2001) showed that aggression may be undertaken in the service of hedonic emotion regulation. In particular, their findings revealed that when individuals believed that venting anger would make them feel better, they engaged in more aggressive acts than those who did not hold such beliefs. Conversely, Gollwitzer and Bushman (2012), using a social dilemma context, found that revenge arises from justice rather than emotion regulation motives. However, when individuals were asked to focus inwardly on their negative feelings, emotion regulation goals became salient and influenced subsequent motivation for revenge. Hence, whether justice or emotion regulation goals drive revenge may depend on the individual's level of involvement and salience of negative feelings (Carlsmith et al., 2008). While retributive punishment might be primarily driven by justice motives, customer revenge will be primarily influenced by emotion regulation motives. In the case of the failed service recovery encounter, the customer is directly harmed by the firm and thus experiences strong negative emotions due to the repetitive nature of the failure. That is, individuals are highly involved and aware of their negative feelings. When in negative states, individuals are receptive to ways to improve their emotions (Bushman et al., 2001), thereby making emotion regulation goals salient, which subsequently motivates them to engage in the various revengeful behaviours (Gollwitzer & Bushman, 2012).

In support of the argument that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation, the service literature provides indirect evidence that the various forms of customer revenge may be employed by individuals as an emotion regulation strategy to ameliorate their

negative emotions. Huefner and Hunt (2000) suggested that aggressive behaviours may serve as a means to release the anger and frustration arising from dissatisfactory service experiences. In a service context, they showed that after engaging in aggressive behaviours, such as vandalism and trashing, individuals reported feeling more positive emotions and satisfaction. Similarly, Alicke et al. (1992) asked individuals to record in diaries all the complaints they made and they concluded that the desire to vent negative emotions was the most common motivation underlying complaining behaviour. Venting emotions through vindictive complaining was also associated with more conciliatory behaviours and a desire to repurchase from the same firm, thus potentially indicating the cathartic properties of complaining (Bennett, 1997). Moreover, venting negative emotions has been repeatedly reported as a goal for NWOM behaviour. A number of studies have shown that angry individuals engage in NWOM in order to ameliorate their negative emotions (Sundaram et al., 1998; Wetzer et al., 2007). Despite no study having examined third-party complaining behaviour with respect to its affect regulatory properties, it is expected to follow a similar pattern to complaining since it constitutes a public form of complaining according to Singh's (1988) taxonomy. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

***H8: Individuals who believe that their negative emotions will be improved by exacting revenge after unfair treatment, are more likely to engage in customer revengeful acts (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) than individuals who believe that their negative emotions are unchangeable.***

## **5.5 Customer revenge as a self-control goal conflict**

Past research has shown that revenge is only one of the possible strategies customers employ to cope with negative consumption experiences (Yi & Baumgartner, 2004). On some other occasions, customers may decide to be less revengeful and engage in more conciliatory responses to the firm's actions (Bonifield & Cole, 2007) or choose avoidance by exiting the firm (Huefner & Hunt, 2000). Fishbach and Ferguson (2007, p. 2) suggest that "goals guide one's behavioural responses to the social environment, such as whether one responds to a provocation by being competitive, collaborative, or resigned". Indeed, much of consumer behaviour is largely goal-driven (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 1999). Recent evidence suggests that individuals may simultaneously hold various goals, which if seen in isolation may appear conflicting (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005). It is now widely accepted that simultaneous goal pursuit is the norm in daily life (Louro et al., 2007). Fishbach and Ferguson (2007, p. 34) argue that

“in a typical and richly complex social environment, in which there undoubtedly exist multiple cues for different goals, the co-activation of simultaneous goals seems inevitable”. Multiple goal pursuit requires balance between opposing demands since multiple goals compete with each other for the individual’s limited pool of resources, such as attention, energy and time (Louro et al., 2007). Hence, individuals, faced with multiple goals, have to prioritise goal pursuit and resolve conflict to ensure successful goal attainment (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007).

Similarly, when customers experience a failed service recovery they may hold multiple goals that influence their decision to take revenge in opposite directions. This research suggests that the decision to take revenge poses a self-control conflict for customers between short-term emotion regulation and long-term impulse control goals. It is argued that whether individuals will engage in the various revengeful behaviours depends on which goal - emotion regulation or impulse control - is more accessible. Recent evidence suggests that goals can become accessible and guide behaviour without any conscious awareness (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Chartrand et al., 2008). Contextual cues temporarily increase the accessibility of certain goal representations, which in turn, promote goal congruent behaviours without involving any conscious planning (Fishbach & Labroo, 2007).

In turn, when the emotion regulation goal is accessible, individuals are more likely to engage in the various revengeful behaviours. Individuals believe that revengeful behaviour is a means to escape from their psychological discomfort and thus, will seek revenge for the emotional benefits they expect to acquire (Bushman et al., 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008). Customer revenge results in a self-control failure, where individuals seeking to repair their negative emotions in the short-term, fail to control their aggressive impulses, which will bring them long-term benefits. Past research has identified two reasons why this self-regulation failure may occur: false beliefs about what would yield positive results and giving too much priority to emotion regulation (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). First and as noted in the previous section, individuals have internalised beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and mispredict the affective consequences of exacting revenge, thus ending up feeling worse after punishing the transgressor (Carlsmith et al., 2008). Second, negative emotions may be so compelling and salient that individuals give priority to their repair over self-control. When individuals are in emotional distress they seek to feel better instantly, but many ways of feeling better involve indulging in activities that one normally uses self-control to resist. According to Tice et al. (2001, p. 55) emotional distress is so aversive that it “intensifies the motivation to

feel better, and so it may increase the subjective intensity or urgency of hedonistic desires and impulses”. So, even if individuals normally seek to restrain their aggressive impulses and hence, refrain from revengeful behaviours, these goals may be discarded when they are in acute emotional distress in the hope that revenge will make them feel better (Tice et al., 2001).

On some other occasions, the goal to restrict aggressive impulses may become more accessible. In normal human life, aggressive impulses are usually restrained so as to refrain from aggressive behaviours. As DeWall et al. (2007, p. 63) put it “as humans developed culture, aggression ceased to be the only or perhaps even the primary way of settling such disputes, especially with the development of laws, language and negotiation, morality, norms of fairness, third party intervention and judging, and the like”. Since, in a cultural context, aggression became less desired, individuals acquired the capacity to restrain their aggressive impulses in order to be able to peacefully co-exist with others (DeWall et al., 2007). In the same way that cultures are based on rules and norms, marketplace exchange relationships have their own norms and rules of appropriate behaviour. Firms expect the customers to adhere to organisational rules and behave in a compliant manner (Fisk et al., 2010). Hence, customers will normally also seek to restrain their aggressive impulses in the transactions with service firms and refrain from revengeful behaviours.

Activation of the self-control goal should influence customer revenge in opposite direction to that of the emotion regulation goal. Indeed, past studies have demonstrated that self-control decreases aggressive behaviours (Denson, DeWall et al., 2012; DeWall et al., 2007). However, accessibility of the goal to control aggressive impulses will only have an effect on direct rather than indirect customer revengeful behaviours. Direct revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining) involve overt customer behaviours in the form of physical and verbal attack that are directly visible to the firm (Grégoire et al., 2010). These behaviours encompass high personal risk, since the avenger customer is exposed to the firm’s response and there is a high likelihood of counter-revenge (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006). Furthermore, costs may be incurred in the form of social exclusion because, direct revengeful actions may be disapproved of and sanctioned by peers (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Since these behaviours involve high costs for the individual, which oftentimes exceed the benefits, they may indicate a break down in self-control (Baumeister, 1997). Individuals in strong negative emotional states may be primarily driven by the impulsive system, which overrides the reflective one associated with cost-benefit analyses, thus resulting in impulsive behaviours (Archer,

Fernández-Fuertes, & Thanzami, 2010). In line with this, Archer et al. (2010) demonstrated that self-control is a significant predictor of direct aggression resulting in a reduction in direct aggressive behaviours. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

***H9: When the goal of emotion regulation is accessible individuals are more likely to engage in the customer direct revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining) than when the goal to control aggressive impulses is accessible.***

On the other side, indirect revengeful behaviours (i.e. vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining) are covert behaviours that occur behind the firm's back (Grégoire et al., 2010). They constitute a subtle way of indirectly harming the firm by manipulating its reputation or causing social exclusion (Archer & Coyne, 2005). The avenger customer remains unidentified or has the advantage of denying hostile intent. Hence, indirect revenge is a low-cost way of harming the firm because the costs of counter-revenge and disapproval of peers are minimised (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Moreover, since indirect revenge does not involve an immediate response it is not associated with impulsiveness (Archer et al., 2010). In line with this reasoning, Archer et al. (2010) demonstrated that self-control was not associated with indirect aggression. In their study self-control had no impact on indirect aggressive behaviours. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

***H10: When the goal of emotion regulation is accessible individuals are no more likely to engage in customer indirect revengeful behaviours (i.e. vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) than when the goal to control aggressive impulses is accessible.***

## **5.6 The role of goal commitment and goal progress in customer revenge in sequential behaviours**

While the previous section examined the impact of goals - emotion regulation and impulse control - on a single revengeful action, this section investigates the role of multiple conflicting goals in a sequence of revengeful actions that unfold over time. Few goals can be accomplished through a single action, but rather, they require taking several actions over time (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). After a failed service recovery, a number of actions may be required for the accomplishment of the goal of emotion regulation, such as writing a complaining letter, talking to the employees to express negative feelings or aggressive behaviour among others. These

behaviours may occur sequentially rather concurrently. For instance, the service firm may provide aggrieved customers with the opportunity to write a complaint letter to the management of the firm in order to allow them to 'let off steam' and release their negative emotions. After engaging in this initial action, customers have to decide whether they will engage in the various revengeful behaviours, thus pursuing an emotion regulation goal or whether they will refrain from punishing the firm, hence pursuing a self-control goal.

In a multi-goal context, pursuing one goal means the neglect of other conflicting goals. These conflicting goals can subsequently rebound and receive greater priority or alternatively receive a lower priority (Fishbach et al., 2009). Past research has demonstrated that the way individuals interpret the initial action that is congruent with one of the goals influences individual's subsequent goal pursuit (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005). After individuals engage in an initial goal-congruent action they seek to give meaning to their actions and make inferences about whether the initial goal pursuit represents commitment or progress towards the goal (Fishbach et al., 2009). After failed service recovery encounters individuals may engage in an action towards the emotion regulation goal and this may be interpreted as either goal commitment or goal progress. Past research has shown that when individuals interpret the goal action as commitment they infer that the goal is important and subsequently engage in complementary actions towards that goal, highlighting the pursuit of the particular goal relative to conflicting ones (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Conversely, the interpretation of an initial action as goal progress signals the reduction in the discrepancy between current and desired end states. Individuals get a sense of goal accomplishment, which subsequently liberates them to pursue other conflicting goals following a choice balancing strategy (Fishbach et al., 2009).

Fishbach and Dhar (2005) found that subtle cues in the form of framing questions influence the framing of actions as commitment or progress and impact behaviour in sequential choices. In particular, when participants were asked about their commitment to a goal they indicated higher interest in a goal-congruent activity, while those who were asked about their progress towards the goal showed higher interest in a goal-incongruent one. When service firms provide customers with the opportunity to vent their emotions with an initial action (e.g. writing a complaint letter to the manager), this action is congruent with the emotion regulation goal. Following the above mentioned reasoning, customers will subsequently be motivated to take revenge when this initial action is interpreted as goal commitment. However, when the same action is interpreted as goal progress towards the emotion regulation goal, customers will get a

sense of goal fulfilment and will disengage from goal-congruent revengeful actions, turning instead to goal-incongruent self-control actions, thereby reducing revenge. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

***H11: When an initial action towards the goal of emotion regulation is interpreted as goal commitment, individuals are more likely to subsequently engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) than when it is interpreted as goal progress.***

## **5.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter introduced the eleven hypotheses of this thesis that will test the conceptual model outlined in Figure 5.1. As is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, this thesis involves employing five experiments to test the hypotheses. The first experiment will examine H1-H7. It is argued that three moral emotions may act as mediators in the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge, both directly and indirectly, through the mechanism of forgiveness. The second and third experiments will test H8. In particular, it is suggested that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation because of the emotional benefits individuals expect to gain from engaging in such behaviours. The fourth experiment will test H9-H10 of this thesis. It is argued that accessibility of impulse control goals will reduce customer revengeful behaviours compared with accessibility of emotion regulation goals, but this will hold true only for direct and not for indirect revenge. Finally, the fifth experiment will examine H11. In sequential revengeful behaviours individuals' inferences will influence the decision to engage in revenge, such that inferences of goal commitment about an initial action congruent with the goal of emotion regulation will increase subsequent customer revenge compared with inferences of goal progress about the same action.

## Chapter 6

### Methodology

Management research is subject to considerable and ongoing debate about the nature of social reality, the relationship between theory and practice, the role of the researcher and how findings are interpreted (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Of particular importance for management researchers when embarking on a research project is to align themselves with a research philosophy, i.e. a particular view of what is acceptable knowledge and the process by which it is developed. The assumptions the researcher makes about the nature of human knowledge subsequently underpin his or her research strategy and methods used as well as how the research findings will be interpreted. This chapter provides an overview of the philosophical and methodological choices made for this thesis.

#### 6.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to the nature of reality (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). The key issue here is whether social entities are objective entities whose reality is external to the social actors concerned with their existence or whether they are social constructions created from the perceptions and actions of the social actors. The former perspective pertains to the objectivism position and the latter to constructivism (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Objectivism is an ontological position that asserts that “social phenomena confront us as external facts that are beyond our reach or influence” (Bryman, 2016, p.29). For instance, an organisation may be viewed as objective entity. It has its own rules and regulations; there are standardised procedures for getting things done; people are assigned to different jobs and there is hierarchy in the division of labour (Saunders et al., 2007). Similarly, cultures entail a set of widely shared values and standards that are then internalised into the individuals through socialisation processes (Bryman, 2016). Hence, in both cases, the social entity has a reality that is external to the individuals who inhabit it and it has an “almost tangible reality of its own” (Bryman, 2016, p.29).

The alternative ontological position is constructionism which challenges the idea that social entities are pre-given and social actors have no role in influencing reality (Bryman, 2016). Constructivists stress the active role of individuals in the construction of reality through the



interpretations they place on situations and their subsequent actions. Hence, social entities are a social product created through daily social interactions between social actors (Saunders et al., 2007). Since social interactions between actors are a continuous process, social entities are only ephemeral as they undergo constant changes and revisions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For example, social order in the organisation may not strictly adhere to pre-existing rules, procedures, and commands, but rather, may evolve through the agreed-upon rules of conduct that have been generated through negotiations between the involved parties (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Constructionism also suggests that the meaning individuals attach to the social world is also a social product and is constructed through social interaction. Hence, this ontology is concerned with the use of language to represent categories (Bryman, 2016). It is the role of the researcher to understand the meaning social actors attach to the social phenomena in order to uncover their motives, actions and intentions (Saunders et al., 2007). The interpretation researchers provide is also a social construction; one version of the social reality among the many that exist (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

## **6.2 Epistemology**

Epistemology concerns “the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.15). Following Saunders et al. (2007) and Bryman and Bell (2011), I focus on three epistemologies, namely positivism, interpretivism and critical realism, although it is acknowledged that there are other approaches identified in the literature (e.g. pragmatism, subjectivism) (Saunders et al., 2007).

### **6.2.1 Positivism**

Positivism has a long history and its roots can be traced back to the philosophical views of rationalism (Descartes 1637, 1641) and empiricism (John Locke, 1690), the proponents of which argued that knowledge can be acquired from two sources, thinking or observing, respectively. However, positivism is mainly considered a post-Enlightenment philosophical view. The influential works of Immanuel Kant, David Hume (1739-40) and August Comte (1853) formed the foundations of what was called “logical positivism” (Johnson & Duberley, 2000).

The term ‘positivism’ was first coined by Auguste Comte (1853). This conception combined key aspects of rationalism and empiricism to denote the approach which proceeds from

observation of objective facts in the social world to the extraction of some general laws of causal relationships (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Hence, positivism, in its initial conceptualisation, was based on inductive logic, that is, the inference and verification of general laws from empirical observation of a finite number of data.

Inductive logic was famously criticised by Karl Popper (Popper, 1959) as dogmatic and unscientific. He suggested that the principles of induction and verification should be replaced with deduction and falsification. According to Popper, scientific knowledge can never be definitive but only provisional and science can only falsify any knowledge by empirical testing but it can never prove a knowledge claim. In effect, scientific knowledge arises through a continuous process of conjectures based on a hypothetico-deductive logic and elimination of falsified theories. This idea of deduction and falsification provides the foundation of modern positivism.

The positivist epistemology in social sciences follows the logic of natural sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The key idea is that the social world consists of some objective truths that are external to individuals and that knowledge can only be acquired by observing these external realities (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2008). The positivist process of research involves generating some hypotheses that can be tested by gathering data. The main goal of this approach is to find causal relationships between variables and to generate universal laws that will be able to explain as well as predict general patterns of human behaviour (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). This approach is mainly concerned with producing objective knowledge. Hence, it involves employing research methodologies that objectify and standardise measurements in order to remove any subjectivity that might bias the interpretation of the results, but which will also enable replication of the findings and cross-study comparisons. Its main preoccupations are with internal validity, reliability, generalisation and operationalisation of variables, concepts that will be discussed in section 6.7. In this way, the role of the researcher ends up being value-free, since personal intuitions and interpretations are removed and finally, the researcher becomes a detached controller and observer examining the causal relationships (Johnson & Duberley, 2000).

In management research, positivism has been used to generate theories in order to model and predict human behaviour. However, modelling behaviour with as few variables as possible results in oversimplification of the complexity of human behaviour and interrelationships.

Hence, positivism has been accused of lacking relevance in management research, because its complexity cannot be captured by an objective truth (Johnson & Duberley, 2000).

### **6.2.2 Interpretivism**

The main opponent of the positivist tradition was the interpretivist philosophy of science, proponents of which criticised the former for using the model of natural sciences to study the social world. This tradition argues that the human factor involved in management research renders the latter fundamentally different from natural science, because people create and attach their own meanings to the world around them (Saunders et al., 2007). In other words, social reality is not objective and externally given, but rather, is socially constructed by individuals in their daily social interactions. The implication of this is that there is no one reality but instead, a plurality of realities constructed in the mind of individuals and these represent different ways of seeing the world (Burr, 2003). Hence, the main focus of this approach is on understanding the different constructions and meanings individuals place on their experiences, rather than searching for external causes and fundamental laws to explain human behaviour (Bryman, 2016; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The role of the researcher is to gain access to the individuals' sense-making processes that lead to meaning attachment and to interpret their behaviours according to their point of view (Bryman & Bell, 2011; A. S. Lee, 1991). Hence, the researcher is part of what is being observed, while attention is given to the language and discourse that are used to create meanings (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

The foundations of interpretivism were laid by the work of Max Weber (1864-1920) in hermeneutics (Bryman, 2016), and the traditions of phenomenology (Schutz, 1962) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1962). Important works in these traditions have influenced significantly what is now considered the distinct philosophical view of interpretivism (Bryman & Bell, 2011; N. Lee & Lings, 2008).

Proponents of this epistemology argue that because of the complexity inherent in the business world, it cannot be captured by a number of general laws. An interpretivist approach enables researchers to gain a richness of insights into the complex relationships and behaviour (Saunders et al., 2007). Nevertheless, interpretivism has been heavily criticised on the grounds that despite enabling richness of knowledge into the mechanisms that underlie human behaviour, it fails to provide a unified theory. Focusing too much on interpretations of

behaviours and different meanings may lead to a plethora of theories and hence, fragmentation of knowledge. Furthermore, scepticism surrounds the role of the researcher, who biases the results with his or her interpretations, thus not allowing for the validation of the findings of one researcher against another (Johnson & Duberley, 2000).

### 6.2.3 Critical Realism

Critical realism emerged from “attempts to transcend positivism's thesis of a foundational-absolute stance and postmodernism's antithesis of chaotic relativism” (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p.148). Its proponents aim to be both anti-positivists and anti-constructionists at the same time. For critical theorists, “truth must be more than the outputs of a language game yet it cannot be absolute” (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p.151).

A prominent figure in critical realism is Bhaskar whose seminal work provided the grounds for this epistemology (Bhaskar, 1975). The key components of Bhaskar’s critical realism are summarised in the table below, adapted from Johnson and Duberley (2000).

Table 6.1: Components of critical realism (adapted from Johnson and Duberley, 2000)

<b>Four components of Critical Realism</b>
1. Critical realism adopts a metaphysical ontology which suggests that reality exists independently of human knowledge.
2. These objective realities are unobservable and different people may interpret different realities according to the various paradigmatic, metaphorical or discursive conventions deployed.
3. There is no possibility of a “theory-neutral observational language” and a “correspondence theory of truth” (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p.154)
4. Critical realists defend a causal explanation, where causation “is not solely expressed through a constant conjunction of events as in positivism” but rather, it can be identified “by exploring the mechanisms of cause and effect which underlie regular events” (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p.154)

To sum up, critical realism shares some common features with both positivism and interpretivism. As with positivism, it supports the existence of an objective external reality

(Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, in line with interpretivism, it suggests that this reality will be perceived differently depending on researchers' unique sensations (Saunders et al., 2007). As Bhaskar (1975, p.250) has put it "science then, is the systematic attempt to express in thought the structures and ways of acting of things that exist and act independently of thought".

Critical realism has been the least dominant epistemology among the three in management studies. Its critics argue that critical realism leaves questions open as to how we can know that something is real if it is unobservable or we are unable to observe it and how one knowledge claim is preferred over another, since knowledge is socially constructed (Johnson & Duberley, 2000).

### **6.3 Paradigms**

The idea of the paradigm comes from the highly influential work of Kuhn in 'The structure of scientific revolution' (Kuhn, 1962). A paradigm refers to "a set of beliefs, values, assumptions and techniques" that dictate what should be studied, how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted in a particular discipline (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p.68). Kuhn (1962) depicted the progress in scientific knowledge as a process going through revolutions, where the science carried out within the prevailing paradigm (normal science) is challenged when it cannot explain some anomalies that do not fit with the existing theories and patterns. The problems caused by the significant and persistent anomalies cause a crisis. The outcome of this crisis is a scientific revolution, where a new paradigm emerges providing new theories and altering the way individuals view the world as well as the kinds of questions that are important for investigating by scientists (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

An important feature of paradigms is that they are incommensurable. This means that they are inconsistent with each other, because they are based on divergent assumptions and methods. A paradigm serves as a regulative framework of beliefs shared by members of a given community (Kuhn, 1962). Hence, methods that inherently belong to one paradigm cannot be used by competing ones. Whilst the idea of incommensurability has been relaxed in recent years, some ontologies and epistemologies are still primarily associated with particular methodologies (Bryman, 2016), as is discussed below.

## 6.4 Research approach

Research approach refers to the relationship between the theory and research. The key issue here is whether data is collected to test or to build theories (Bryman, 2016). There are two approaches: deductive and inductive.

### 6.4.1 Deduction

In deduction, research is conducted to answer questions posed by theoretical considerations. Bryman and Bell (2011) have provided an outline of the steps in deductive logic as can be seen in figure 6.1. The process of deductive research draws on existing theories in a particular domain in order to deduct specific hypotheses that must then be empirically tested. Since hypotheses involve concepts, the researcher needs to translate these into operational terms and decide on the data collection procedures. The analysis of the findings will indicate if the hypotheses are confirmed or rejected. The last step of the process is inductive, as it involves the placement of findings and their implications back into the already existing theories in the domain (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Deduction usually deals with quantitative data and is linked with positivist epistemology (Saunders et al., 2007).

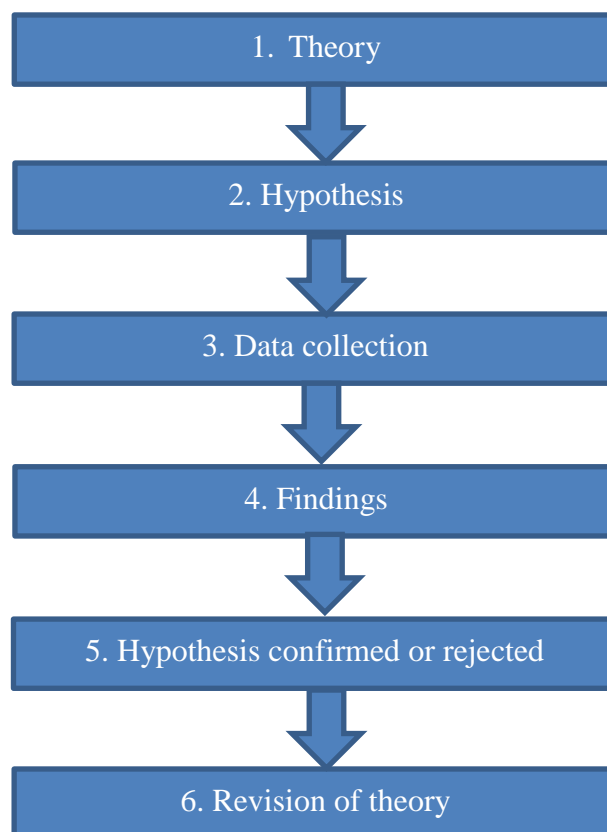


Figure 6.1: Deductive approach to research (sourced from Bryman, 2016)

### 6.4.2 Induction

Inductive logic follows the opposite direction to that of deduction. That is, induction starts with data collection and analysis of observations, out of which theories are drawn and generalised. The inductive process may also entail a deductive element. Sometimes the researcher, after developing a theory from the data, decides to engage in further data collection to further develop the theory. This so-called iterative process entails a back and forth operation between the data and theory and contains both inductive and deductive elements (Bryman & Bell, 2011). An inductive approach usually involves dealing with qualitative data and is associated with the interpretivist tradition (Saunders et al., 2007).

### 6.5 Research strategy: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research

The research strategy refers to a general orientation to the conduct of social research. Most of the writers draw a distinction between quantitative and qualitative research. This distinction mainly relates to whether data are measurable and quantifiable or not. Quantitative data are mainly in the form of numbers, while qualitative data take the form of words (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). However, for many writers the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is deeper and concerns the different epistemological and ontological considerations that underpin them. The table 6.2 below summarises the fundamental differences between the two.

Table 6.2: Fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research (sourced from Bryman, 2016)

	<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>
Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research	Deductive; testing theory	Inductive; generation of theory
Epistemological orientation	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontological orientation	Objectivism	Constructionism

Finally, some researchers choose a mixed method approach for their research project, whereby they combine the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A mixed method approach is used to triangulate data sources in order to find whether findings

from one method corroborate with those from the other or to elaborate and expand on the findings from one method through the use of another (Creswell, 1994).

## **6.6 Philosophical assumptions of this thesis**

According to Creswell (1994), the choice of research paradigm should depend on the research problem under investigation and the philosophical stance adopted by the community of scholars to which the researcher belongs. This thesis seeks to examine the role of emotions, emotion regulation and conflicting goals in customer revenge behaviour. Its main purpose is to find causal relationships between the variables under study and to describe and explain customer revenge behaviour. Hence, this thesis inherently belongs to a positivist stance to research. Drawing on the existing literature, the conceptual model outlined in Chapter 5 was developed and specific hypotheses were derived. Creswell (1994) has suggested that when there is a wealth of literature that enables the development of a framework and hypotheses this more readily follows the deductive logic. This research involves using data to test theory and hence, it is inherently deductive in nature. In addition, quantitative research is deemed appropriate for this thesis since this enables testing of causal relationships between variables. Qualitative research is unsuitable for this purpose, because it is primarily used for exploratory studies that seek to understand underlying mechanisms. Furthermore, the constructs under study are quite well-developed in the literature and previous studies have established measures for them, which enabled the researcher to collect quantitative data.

The choice of paradigm should also mirror the dominant paradigm within the research community in which the research takes place. Creswell (1994) has suggested that the discipline area and the set of beliefs within the research community will shape the worldview of the researcher. This is in line with Kuhn's (1962) idea of "communities of practitioners", arguing that it is important to work in a paradigm commensurable with others in the same field. This thesis is based upon theories that are grounded in the fields of psychology (e.g. Carlsmith et al., 2008; Gross, 1998b), organisational studies (e.g. Bies, 2001; Blodgett et al., 1997) and marketing (e.g. Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005; Tax et al., 1998). In particular, the management (i.e. fairness theory) and psychological theories (i.e. cognitive appraisal theories, emotion regulation theory and goal-conflict theories) and studies upon which this research is based are strongly grounded on a positivist epistemology. Researchers in these fields have used a deductive approach to test hypotheses using experimental and cross-sectional methodologies.



Johnson and Duberley (2000, p.11) have claimed that “positivism’s assumptions remain pervasive and continue to provide the general rationale that underpins most theory and research in the social sciences”. Hence, positivism still remains the dominant epistemology in management research.

Following the dominant paradigm in the fields in which it resides, this research involves taking a positivist stance. Thus, it relies on the assumption of an independent reality and aims to generate causal laws that explain human behaviour. Interpretivism cannot be used in this study, because it is based on subjective reality and inductive logic, while critical realism suggests that the objective reality depends on the way the researcher perceives it. Researcher perceptions, however, will not considerably impact on this research. The measurements and manipulations employed are objectified and taken from previous research, while quantitative analysis is used to analyse research findings. Hence, the researcher is independent of what is being observed, thereby eliminating researcher bias.

To sum up, the choices made for producing this thesis are objectivism, positivist epistemology, deductive approach and a quantitative research strategy.

## **6.7 Quality criteria in quantitative research**

Before examining the different types of research designs it is essential to discuss the criteria for the evaluation of social research. Understanding the concepts of reliability, replication and validity will enable the examination of the strengths and weaknesses of each research design. These concepts mainly apply to the evaluation of quantitative research, which is the focus of this thesis.

Reliability refers to whether the measures that are devised for the concepts used in the research are consistent. First, reliability is concerned with whether a measure is stable over time. In other words, if a measure is administered on two different occasions in a specific sample, there should be little fluctuation in the results obtained over time. Second, reliability is concerned with whether the items used to make up the scale are consistent. That is, the respondents’ scores on one item should be related to their scores in other items (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Replication concerns the ability of the findings of a study to be replicated. Sometimes researchers seek to replicate the findings of other researchers especially in cases where the results are inconsistent with existing evidence. In order for replication to be feasible, the procedures used in the study must be described in great detail.

Validity mainly entails the integrity of the conclusions of the study. There are various forms of validity that are of relevance in social research. Measurement validity relates to the question of whether the measure that is devised for a concept actually reflects the concept which it is supposed to be representing. If the measures do not represent the concept they intend to denote then the findings of the study will be questionable. Measurement validity is associated with reliability. If a measure of a concept is not reliable and fluctuates over time, it cannot be valid, since it cannot reflect the concept it is supposed to be measuring.

Internal validity is concerned with the question of whether causality between two or more variables can be established. That is, the question is whether it can be ensured that it is the hypothesised independent variable that is responsible for variation in the dependent variable and not another variable.

External validity refers to whether the findings of the study are context specific or they can be generalised to other contexts as well. The key issue here is for the research findings to be able to be applied to the general population beyond the sample under study. For this reason, quantitative researchers seek to find representative samples so that their findings can be generalised to a wider population.

Ecological validity is about whether the research findings can be applied in real-life and natural settings. The more the researcher intervenes in the natural setting or creates unnatural settings, the more likely it is that findings will not represent what is happening in people's everyday lives. Data collection processes, such as experiments and questionnaires that entail unnatural settings may produce ecologically invalid results even if they meet other criteria of validity (e.g. internal validity, measurement validity) (Bryman, 2016).

## **6.8 Research design**

The research design refers to the structure for the collection and analysis of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The various research designs are discussed below.

### **6.8.1 Experiments**

Experiments constitute the main method employed in natural sciences and also in social sciences, especially in psychology. Experiments can take place either in the laboratory (laboratory experiments) or in a real life setting (field experiments), such as an organisation or a retailer (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The main aim of the experiment is to test causal relationships between an independent and a dependent variable (Saunders et al., 2007). For this reason, experiments involve a manipulation of the independent variable by intervening in a situation to determine any variations in the dependent variable. In the simplest form, experimental participants are allocated to two groups, one that receives the experimental treatment and one that serves as a control group and receives no treatment. The procedure usually starts with the random assignment of the participants to the experimental groups. Randomisation indicates that participants in each group are assigned by chance and hence, there are no systematic differences in the sample assigned to the experimental conditions. The treatment group is then compared against the control group in terms of their effect on the dependent variable. Randomisation is a crucial element of experimental designs. There will be many individual differences among participants (e.g. age, gender, education) which may impact on the dependent variable and thus, interfere with the influence of the treatment variable. Randomization ensures that any detected differences in the dependent variable are due to the manipulation of the independent variable and not to differences between the groups at the start of the study (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

Laboratory experiments ensure internal validity, whereby the random assignment of participants to experimental conditions and the presence of a control group can establish that the effect on the dependent variable is due to the independent variable manipulated. Furthermore, because experimental procedures are usually outlined in detail, there is a high level of replicability. The main disadvantages of experiments are that they lack external and ecological validity. In order to test cause-effect relationships, experiments are based on the construction of a situation that is artificial and low in mundane realism. In addition, they usually employ convenience samples (e.g. university students) rather than representative of the general

population ones. Hence, experiments cannot establish the generalisability of results in other populations and settings and their applicability in real world settings. Their emphasis on control places people out of their everyday contexts, rendering it impossible to generalise from experimental findings to the real world because the latter is usually more complex than laboratory experimental settings. By contrast, field experiments have ecological validity since they occur in a natural setting, but they cannot ensure random assignment and hence, do not guarantee internal validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### **6.8.2 Cross-sectional**

Cross-sectional designs involve the “collection of data on more than one case (usually quite a lot more than one) and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables (usually many more than two), which are then examined to detect patterns of association” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.53). Whilst usually associated with surveys, cross-sectional designs can involve employing a number of other methods as well, such as structured interviews, structured observation, and content analysis.

Cross-sectional designs aim to examine variation. For this reason, researchers usually select a large number of cases in order to achieve variation and representativeness of the sample to the general population. What cross-sectional studies can indicate are the associations between variables. In contrast with experimental designs, cross-sectional designs cannot establish causality since the variables are measured at a single point in time. Consequently, there is ambiguity about the direction of the causality and hence, a lack of internal validity. Furthermore, due to the fact that the research instruments are administered in an unnatural setting, they lack ecological validity. However, cross-sectional studies do have some strengths, such as replicability (i.e. research procedures followed are usually specified) and external validity, because they involve random selection sampling procedures (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### **6.8.3 Longitudinal**

Longitudinal designs are best employed when researchers need to investigate the underlying mechanisms and processes that generate changes over time. Such a design involves the study of the same variables with the same sample (e.g. organisations, individuals) for at least two different points in time (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Samples used in longitudinal designs can be

either a random national sample (panel study) or a cohort of people that share specific characteristics (cohort study). The main problem of longitudinal designs is sample attrition, which can occur because of death, moving or when subjects decide to withdraw from the study. This design can be employed both in quantitative and qualitative research (e.g. ethnography). In contrast to cross-sectional designs, longitudinal designs offer greater confidence about the causal relationship between variables due to the time order of the variables. Because certain independent variables are identified in the first wave of data collection, the researcher will be better able to infer that the effects in the second phase are due to these variables. When used with quantitative data, this design shares the same strengths and weaknesses as with cross-sectional studies regarding reliability, replicability and validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

#### **6.8.4 Case study**

The case study approach involves the intensive examination of a single or multiple cases. The cases under investigation can be a single community, organisation (e.g. factory), individual or event. The main characteristic of the case study design that distinguishes it from other research designs is that the ultimate goal of the researcher is to provide an in-depth examination of the case(s) and to illustrate its/their unique qualities. The key issue in case study design is the selection of appropriate cases to investigate. Cases should be selected according to the expected learning that will occur from their investigation. Sometimes, a case study will enable investigation of the particularities of a single situation or will enable the understanding of a broader issue or even of a general phenomenon. Case studies are primarily associated with qualitative methods and hence, an inductive approach is usually adopted, but may involve quantitative methods as well. The main weakness of case study design is that it lacks external validity since the examination of a single case is unlikely have generalisability to other contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

#### **6.9 Research methods**

Research methods refer to the tools for collecting data. These can be questionnaires, interviews, observation and secondary data.

### **6.9.1 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires involve asking people to answer the same set of questions and they can be collected online, by post, or via telephone. Questions can be close-ended (i.e. provide a number of alternative answers from which the respondent has to choose) or open-ended (i.e. allowing respondents to answer in the way they want) and hence, data can be analysed either with quantitative or qualitative data analysis procedures, respectively. They are often designed with certain hypotheses in mind (Saunders et al., 2007).

### **6.9.2 Interviews**

Interviews involve purposeful conversation between two or more people, where questions are asked and being answered verbally. These are usually recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Interviews differ in terms of the standardisation and structure and can be unstructured, semi-structured or structured depending on the purpose of the research. They can be conducted face-to-face, via telephone or the internet and they can also be conducted in groups, so-called focus groups. Interviews can generate a wealth of insights and data and can facilitate the formulation of research questions and objectives where these are not yet known (Saunders et al., 2007).

### **6.9.3 Observation**

Observation involves “the systematic observation, recording, description, analysis and interpretation of people’s behaviour” (Saunders et al., 2007, p.282). It can be either qualitative or quantitative and is concerned with either the understanding of the meaning of people’s actions (participant observation) or the frequency of those actions (structured observation). In participant observation, researchers can take an active role as participants or remain as mere observers, while their identity may be revealed or concealed. The data collected through observation must be systematically recorded and coded for further analysis and interpretation (Saunders et al., 2007).

### **6.9.4 Secondary data collection**

Secondary analysis is “the analysis of data by researchers who will probably not have been involved in the collection of those data, for purposes that may not have been envisaged by those responsible for the data collection” (Bryman, 2016, p.309). It can include quantitative or qualitative data. Secondary data pertains to such items as a company’s minutes, government

official surveys and newspapers, among many others. Secondary data are primarily used when the research purpose requires large datasets, which are usually difficult and costly to collect as primary data. Whilst analysing already existing data has the advantage of saving resources, particularly time, effort and financial resources, the main drawback is that they may have been collected for a different purpose that does not match the study's research objectives and also they may be of ambiguous quality (Saunders et al., 2007).

## **6.10 Choice of research design and methods for this thesis**

Despite their drawbacks, as outlined in section 6.8.1, the experimental method is the most appropriate research method for this thesis. The hypotheses developed in this research are based on the factors that drive customer revenge and, in particular, on the role of moral emotions, emotion regulation and conflicting goals. Hence, this research aims to test cause-effect relationships between the variables. Experiments leave little ambiguity about the direction of causation since the manipulation of the cause precedes the observation of its effect on the outcome variable (Shadish et al., 2002). Furthermore, the controlled environment in which they occur enables the isolation of the psychological process. Human behaviour is complex and may be guided by a wide range of contributing factors. By providing sufficient control over the environment in which the psychological process occurs, experimental designs enable the observation of the effect of an event on the behaviour of participants by restricting the sources of variation arising from extraneous variables (Shadish et al., 2002).

More specifically this thesis has employed an experimental vignette methodology. This involves presenting participants with carefully constructed and realistic scenarios in order to evaluate their emotional and behavioural responses (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). A vignette is “a short, carefully constructed description of a person, object, or situation, representing a systematic combination of characteristics” (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010, p. 128). Typically, vignettes exist in written form and participants are asked to read them and make explicit evaluations or indicate their behavioural preferences. In service research, a number of methodologies have been employed to study customer revenge. In particular, some studies have employed retrospective recall survey methodology (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2010; Tax et al., 1998), others have utilised experimental vignette design (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Blodgett et al., 1997), while still others have deployed qualitative interviewing (Funches et al., 2009).

Experimental vignette methodology comes with many advantages. Similarly to experimental design, vignette methodology allows for manipulation and control of variables and hence, can establish the directionality and causality of effects. Moreover, by providing experimental realism, vignette methodology overcomes some of the criticisms associated with experimental designs, especially the lack of external validity, thereby enhancing both internal and external validity (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). Aguinis and Bradley (2014) have suggested that in cases where the behaviour under investigation in the research is unethical and less observable in real life, such as with customer revenge, vignette methodology can facilitate the examination of the factors that drive such behaviours. Scenarios allow for the operationalisation of otherwise difficult and expensive manipulations and enable compression of time by summarizing situations that in naturalistic environments would require days or weeks to unfold. In addition, this methodology overcomes ethical considerations related to the enactment of actual service failures when studying customer behaviour in a field study (McCullough et al., 2000). Finally, vignette methodology avoids any memory lapses and rationalisation of the incident that occurs in the retrospective recall methodology.

The main drawbacks of the vignette methodology are that there is a higher likelihood of demand effects and lower external validity of the findings when compared to the retrospective recall methodology. Participants may find it difficult to project their behaviour and respond in the same way as they would in reality. In fact, a major challenge for vignette methodology is to enhance realism and hence, the generalisability of results. Aguinis and Bradley (2014) propose a number of ways in which the external validity of vignette methodology can be enhanced. This can be achieved by increasing the similarity between the experimental and natural settings. Furthermore, when the scenarios increase the immersion of participants and the situations presented to them are familiar, their responses will be more likely to closely represent responses in real life. In order to increase the external validity of the scenarios, a number of steps were taken. First, before constructing the scenarios, the website [www.customeraffairs.com](http://www.customeraffairs.com) was consulted. This is a customer complaints website with numerous customer reviews related to a wide range of products and services. This website was used in order to find stories for the scenarios that had actually happened to customers before. In fact, Zourrig et al. (2009a) argue that use of scenarios borrowed from real life episodes can limit the lack of external validity. Second, the participants were instructed to immerse themselves as much as possible into the situation described in the scenario by trying to imagine all of the details of the situation as if it was happening to them at that point. Third, questions



were included in the questionnaires that asked the participants about their familiarity with the service contexts of the scenarios in order to ensure that participants could identify with the stories described in the scenarios.

In sum, experimental vignette design was employed in this thesis. Cross-sectional designs were not deemed appropriate because they can only ensure associations between variables and do not establish causality. Also, a longitudinal study is unsuitable because it aims to investigate relationships over time, while case study is limited to one or a few cases rather than investigating general behavioural patterns for the wider population, which is the aim of this research.

Finally, due to the experimental design, the participants had to complete a questionnaire at the end of the experimental process. The self-completion questionnaires are primarily associated with the positivist epistemology and the deductive approach. Following the guidelines about how to design a good questionnaire outlined by Hair, Celsi, Money, Samouel, and Page (2011), the researcher paid great attention to the wording, question order and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire in order to avoid any ambiguity in the questions and to minimise measurement error. Furthermore, the questionnaires were pretested using a small sample of respondents (n=10) in order to ensure that they were clearly worded, unambiguous and easy to follow by the participants. Where appropriate, original questions and instructions were modified based on the feedback from the pilot test. The software tool that was used to collect data was Qualtrics ([www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com)), which is the preferred option for the University of Bath School of Management. This tool enables researchers to create their questionnaires using custom templates and to download the answers into a database for further analysis (Creswell, 1994).

### **6.11 Assessment of quality criteria in this thesis**

As noted in section 6.7, experimental designs are preoccupied with issues of internal, external and ecological validity, measurement reliability and validity, and replication. The table below shows how these issues are addressed in the thesis.

Table 6.3: Quality criteria in this research

<b>Issues of experimental designs</b>	<b>Addressed in this research</b>
Internal validity	<p>The research design of this thesis is associated with high levels of internal validity. Shadish et al. (2002) outline a number of threats to internal validity, such as history, maturation, instrumentation. However, the inclusion of a control group and the randomisation employed in this research eliminate rival explanations and threats to internal validity.</p>
External validity	<p>Generalisability and hence, external validity in experimental designs are low because they are highly particularistic and localised. A number of threats have been identified that can influence external validity. In particular, those of interaction of selection, treatment and interaction of setting and reactive effects of experimental arrangements are relevant to this research (see Shadish et al., 2002). In this research, experiments were conducted in a restricted range of settings (i.e. airline and hotel service failures), with particular treatments, and with a convenience (i.e. university students), rather than a representative sample. Consequently, it is difficult to generalise the findings of this research to other settings, treatments and populations. Furthermore, participant reactivity may have been an issue in this research. Participants were aware that they were taking part in an experiment, which may have influenced how they responded to the questions. However, debriefing at the end of the experiments showed that participants had not guessed the hypotheses of the studies, thus reducing the risk of reactivity.</p>

Issues of experimental designs	Addressed in this research
Ecological validity	<p>Since the experiments were highly controlled and involved fictitious scenarios, it is uncertain whether the findings are applicable to real life situations. However, the stories for the scenarios were carefully written after visiting customer complaining websites and reading real life incidences of service failures and customer complaining. This procedure was followed in order to ensure that the scenarios used in the experiments would reflect as much as possible real-life situations that the participants could identify with. Hence, the issue of ecological validity was partially addressed.</p>
Measurement reliability and validity	<p>Pre-existing scales were used to measure constructs and these have been previously tested for their reliability and validity. Furthermore, the questionnaire was tested with a small pilot sample in order to ensure face validity (i.e. whether the measure reflects the content of the concept examined). Cronbach's alpha test was employed to test measurement reliability. Further statistical tests were used to assess convergent (i.e. the extent to which a measure correlates positively with alternative measures of the construct) and discriminant validity (i.e. the extent to which a construct does not correlate with measures of other constructs) using the PLS-SEM procedures that will be explained in Chapter 7.</p>
Replicability	<p>The experimental procedures and the measurements employed in this research are described in detail, thus rendering the findings replicable.</p>

## 6.12 Summary

Thus far, this chapter has discussed the various philosophical and methodological considerations and the choices for this thesis. These are summarised in the table below.

Table 6.4: Summary of philosophical and methodological choices

<b>Choices</b>	
Ontology	Objectivism
Epistemology	Positivism
Research Approach	Deductive
Research Strategy	Quantitative
Research Design	Experimental vignette
Research Method	Questionnaire

### 6.13 Ethics

Ethical considerations are important for experimental designs, because they signify the integrity of a piece of research. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), ethical concerns in business research revolve around four areas: harm to participants, lack of consent, invasion of privacy and deception. These are discussed in the table below.

Table 6.5: Ethical considerations for experimental designs

Area	Issues concerned
Harm to participants	It may involve physical or psychological harm (e.g. stress and harm to participants' development) and inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts. It also pertains to issues of confidentiality. Records of participants should remain confidential and individuals should not be identifiable through the presentation of the research findings (Bryman, 2016).
Lack of informed consent	This principle “means that prospective research participants should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study” (Bryman, 2016, p.129). In other words, this principle dictates that participants should be aware that they are participating in research and that even when they are aware of that, they should be fully informed about the research process and objectives.
Invasion of privacy	This is partly linked with issues of informed consent and confidentiality of records. It mainly pertains to the idea that personal information and sensitive data concerning the research participants should not be revealed.
Deception	It occurs when researchers represent their work as something it is not in order to disguise the true nature of their research purpose.

This research has addressed each of these concerns. First, the experimental manipulations induced negative emotions in the participants, which could partly have violated the “harm to participants” ethical concern. However, since the experiments involved hypothetical and not real situations participants were not expected to undergo severe psychological stress that would cause significant harm. Furthermore, a vast number of psychological and marketing studies have employed similar manipulations for emotion elicitation (e.g. Gelbrich, 2010; Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b) with no reported negative psychological

consequences for the participants. Regarding confidentiality and privacy concerns, these were ensured by the fact that the records were anonymous and the analysis and reporting of findings focused on the whole group of participants, which precluded individuals from being identified.

Second, to address lack of consent issues, the participants were informed as fully as possible about the details of the research (i.e. research process, research purpose, and who is undertaking the research) prior to the experimental procedure. Furthermore, they were informed that they could decide to withdraw their participation at any stage of the experimental procedure. Third, questions posed to the participants involved mainly perceptions, emotional reactions and behavioural responses to hypothetical service experiences, so issues of invasion of privacy to sensitive personal data were not considered to be violated in this research.

Finally, deception could partly be involved in this research. Some experimental manipulations required a cover story that would conceal the real purpose of the research. However, providing full information about the purpose of the study would contaminate participants' responses. Bryman (2016) suggests that deception in experimental designs sometimes justifies the means, because researchers seek to limit participants' understanding of the research objectives so that they respond more naturally to the experimental treatment. For this reason, the participants were given a general description of the research purpose at the beginning of the study, while at the end they were debriefed and informed about the real purpose of the study. Furthermore, the experimental manipulations employed in this research were taken from previous research studies and hence, are considered common and widely accepted experimental procedures.

In sum, a great deal of attention was given to the ethical codes of practice provided by the British Psychological Society and it was deemed that no significant ethical violations were involved in the experimental procedures employed in this research.

## 6.14 Research outline

Table 6.6: Research outline

	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Hypotheses tested</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
Experiment 1 (N=200)	To test the role of 1. the various dimensions of fairness, 2. moral emotions and 3. forgiveness, in customer revenge.	H1-H7	CB-SEM, PLS-SEM
Experiment 2 (N=98)	To test whether the various customer revengeful behaviours are employed by individuals as emotion regulation strategies (manipulation used: chocolates)	H8	ANOVA, ANCOVA, MANCOVA
Experiment 3 (N=100)	To test whether the various customer revengeful behaviours are employed by individuals as emotion regulation strategies (manipulation used: memory recall)	H8	ANOVA, ANCOVA, MANCOVA
Experiment 4 (N=90)	To test whether two conflicting goals-emotion regulation vs impulse control goals-differentially impact direct and indirect customer revenge	H9-H10	ANOVA, ANCOVA, MANCOVA
Experiment 5 (N=91)	To test how inferences of goal commitment or goal progress that individuals make about an initial action towards the goal of emotion regulation influence subsequent revengeful behaviour	H11	ANOVA

## 6.15 Measurement of the constructs

Quantitative research is preoccupied with devising measurements for the theoretical concepts under study, a process which is often referred to as operationalisation. For concepts to be employed in quantitative research, they must have a measurement in order to be quantified (Bryman, 2016). In contrast to concepts, such as age and income that are directly observable, most of the concepts in social research can only be measured indirectly. That is, when we need to measure individuals' perceptions, attitudes and behavioural intentions these are more abstract in nature and less directly quantifiable. In these cases, researchers need to specify indicators or items that represent the concept, which are then used as if they are a measure of the concept. Researchers usually use multiple indicators in order to ensure that they reflect different aspects of the concept and hence, the measurement is more reliable. Each respondent's replies for each item are scored and the individual scores are then aggregated to form an overall measure of the concept (Hair et al., 2011).

Hair et al. (2011) suggest that for multi-item measurements, a minimum of three items is required to achieve reliability. Accordingly, it was ensured that most of the measurements for the constructs of this research had at least three items. All of the measurements were reflective apart from aggression which was formative. The difference between the two lies in the fact that reflective indicators represent the effects of a construct and are highly correlated, while formative ones cause the construct and are not interchangeable, because they capture a specific aspect of it not captured by the other indicators. If this could be depicted diagrammatically, in reflective measures the causality is from the construct to its indicators, while in formative measures from the indicators to the construct (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). Furthermore, following Bryman's (2016) suggestions, some variation in the wording of items was employed so that some items were worded as being positive, whilst others were presented in a negative way. This is useful for identifying respondents who exhibit response sets, i.e. the tendency of participants to reply in the same way to all the items of a measurement.

For this research, most of the constructs were measured using 10-point Likert scales. Hair et al. (2011) suggest that the more points in a scale allow for more precision in the measurement scale, because they can measure greater variability in the respondents' answers. Likert scales measure intensity, whereby high scores indicate strong feelings/perceptions/intentions and low ones pertain to low feelings/perceptions/intentions. Also, in Likert scales, the difference



between the scale points is considered to be equal and hence, allows for comparisons of the differences between the measured variables. An even number of categories was used so that there was no neutral point. This is because the interest lay in the revenge behaviours of individuals, whereby it was considered that participants should not be neutral about their behavioural intentions. This way, it was possible to force a choice in one of the two directions (positive vs negative) in order to measure their revengeful tendencies.

Finally, in order to ensure that measurements were reliable and valid the procedures outlined in section 7.7.3 were followed.

### **6.16 Sampling strategy**

For this thesis, the sample comprised university students aged 18-27. More specifically, the participants for experiments 1 and 2 were students from the University of Bath, while those for experiments 3, 4, and 5 were students from various UK universities that were recruited through an online participant recruitment platform called Prolific.ac, as will be discussed in section 6.17. This sampling method is known as convenience sampling. A convenience sample is “one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility” (Bryman, 2016, p.187). This means that the participants were not selected randomly and that some of the population was more likely to be selected than others.

This sampling procedure has been criticised because it cannot produce results that are generalisable to a wider population. University students usually have certain characteristics, such as youth, above average intelligence and high socioeconomic status, that may make them respond in different ways than other samples of the population, hence limiting the external validity of the findings. This restriction of experimental designs is usually contrasted with other quantitative non-experimental procedures (e.g. surveys), where participants are randomly selected from a clearly defined population, which ultimately provides generalisable results. However, as Crano and Brewer (2002, p. 34) argue, “the cost and impracticality of true random sampling usually make this limitation a necessity” in experimental designs. In fact, limited resources and participant availability make random sampling in experimental designs impossible. Moreover, Shadish et al. (2002, p. 24) argue that random sampling is not always desirable in experiments and that “packing so many sources of variation into a single experimental study is rarely practical and will almost certainly conflict with other goals of the

experiment”. In other words, if the author aimed for a representative UK sample, a number of sources of variation would influence the experimental results. For instance, previous literature has suggested that age and education are negatively associated with revengeful behaviour (Huefner & Hunt, 2000). Furthermore, cultural background can account for differences in revenge behaviour (Zourrig et al., 2009a). These and many other factors may insert too many sources of variation that would be difficult to control and thus, would threaten the internal validity of the experiments.

For these reasons, the usual procedure in experimental designs is to sample randomly from the readily available population (i.e. university students) and generalise to other populations with similar characteristics. Indeed, most of the studies regarding which this research was based upon have employed a convenience sample for their research (e.g. Bushman et al., 2001; Fishbach & Labroo, 2007; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005). Consequently, whilst the researcher acknowledges that convenience sampling places limitations on the generalisability of the results, this sampling procedure was deemed the only practical and feasible solution for this thesis (Crano & Brewer, 2002).

Another important issue in sampling is the appropriate sample size. This is an important consideration, because usually statistical power increases with larger sample sizes, but at the same time, large sample sizes render almost any effect significant. Following the guidelines provided by Saunders et al. (2007) and Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2014), at least 25 participants in each experimental condition were used, which is the recommended rule of thumb for experimental designs in order to achieve adequate statistical power. This sample size would ensure high statistical power, whilst at the same time extracting significant relationships that make sense.

### **6.17 Participant recruitment**

Participants for experiments 1 and 2 were students at the University of Bath. The strategies used to recruit these participants are outlined in sections 7.2 and 8.1.2. For experiments 3, 4, and 5, participants were recruited through the Prolific Academic, which is an online participant recruitment platform. Over the past few years a number of crowdsourcing websites have emerged, such as Amazon Mechanical Turk, Clickworker, Crowdfunder, and Prolific Academic. The main role of such websites is to match people who require small tasks with

people who are willing to complete them. In other words, these platforms are primarily used to recruit and pay participants to perform certain tasks (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). Crowdsourcing has created great opportunities for conducting social research and has had a significant impact on the speed, scale and costs regarding which research can be conducted (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016). Consequently, an increasing number of scholars are using these platforms as a means to recruit convenience samples.

These platforms provide several advantages. They allow for the reaching out to a large and diverse sample. Whilst these samples are far from representative of the general population and hence, sharing the same disadvantages as convenience samples, they are more representative than other convenience samples frequently used in social research, such as college students from a particular university (Berinsky et al., 2012). Also, they offer quick response rates at costs lower than when recruiting university students (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016).

Concerns surrounding crowdsourcing platforms usually revolve around the quality of data and issues with participants such as deception, lack of attention being paid to the research studies and lack of naivety (i.e. participants in these platforms are gaining experience in social research studies, which as a consequence biases their responses) (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016). A number of studies have examined whether these concerns hold true (Berinsky et al., 2012; Chandler & Shapiro, 2016). Regarding the quality of the data, prior studies have demonstrated that crowdsourcing platforms can produce high-quality data comparable to those obtained by other sampling methods. In respect of which, data from studies using crowdsourcing platforms have shown that measures were reliable and valid, while the effects that have been obtained from other research studies have been replicated by using samples from crowdsourcing platforms (Berinsky et al., 2012). Furthermore, participants on these platforms have been found to pay high attention to the tasks, while the rates of deception and lack of naivety do not seem to have had a significant impact on the study results (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016).

Amazon MTurk is the most widely used platform for recruiting research participants. However, it has recently stopped serving international requesters and researchers can now be only US based. On the other hand, Prolific Academic is open to all researchers. It is more recent platform, which was launched in 2014 by a group of graduates from Oxford and Sheffield Universities (Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017). Prolific Academic has been suggested as being the best alternative to MTurk. It is simple and easy to use and involves using

a prescreening system that determines participant eligibility in advance, thus eliminating those individuals who do not fulfil the criteria for participating in the study. This feature is very convenient and distinguishes this platform from other conventional crowdsourcing websites, where researchers have either to state explicitly in the consent form what they are looking for or to create filters with the criteria within the study, which are not revealed in advance (Prolific, 2015).

Compared to MTurk, Prolific Academic has been demonstrated to be of equal or sometimes superior quality. More specifically, Peer et al. (2017) compared the two platforms and found that in Prolific Academic participants indicated equally high attention, while the data were of equally high-quality, thus resulting in measures of high reliability and replication of the findings obtained in previous studies. In addition, Prolific's participants were more naïve and had lower propensity to engage in dishonest behaviour than those in MTurk (Peer et al., 2017). For these reasons, this platform was selected as the means for participant recruitment for the three experiments of this thesis. Furthermore, Prolific's sample characteristics would provide the researcher access to the population required for these experiments. In order to keep the results of all the experiments comparable, it was deemed appropriate to retain the consistency in the sample chosen across all of them. Since experiments 1 and 2 involved students at the University of Bath, participants who were UK-based students were desired for experiments 3, 4, and 5. Prolific's pool of participants could provide such a sample because it consists of 29% of British nationals, 33% of UK country of residence and about 50% being students (Prolific, 2017). Using the prescreening system of Prolific the criteria of age (18-28), student status (students only), and current location (UK-based) were selected for eligibility of the participants.

## **6.18 Statistical Analysis**

To analyse the results of experiment 1, structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis was employed. SEM is a multivariate technique that allows the examination of relationships among multiple variables. It is particularly useful when the researcher seeks to test an entire conceptual framework where some variables serve as both independent and dependent variables, such as when there are some mediating relationships to examine. In contrast to most of the multivariate techniques that allow examination of a single relationship at a time, SEM estimates a series of

separate, but interdependent, multiple regressions simultaneously by specifying a series of structural equations (Hair, Black et al., 2014).

SEM not only enables researchers to investigate a series of dependence relationships simultaneously, for it also incorporates multi-item scales in the model, which represent the relationships between unobserved constructs and their associated items. Specifically, SEM has two components: the structural model, which involves the relationships between independent and dependent variables and the measurement model, which relates the variables with their corresponding indicators (Hair, Black et al., 2014). In this way, it can account for the measurement error in the constructs (i.e. the difference between the true value of the construct and the value obtained by a measurement) and provide better statistical estimates of the relationships between constructs (Hair, Black et al., 2014).

There are two types of SEM: the covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) and the partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM). The CB-SEM is primarily used to confirm or reject hypothesised relationships between variables (Hair, Hult et al., 2014). Essentially, the researcher specifies a model comprising a set of relationships and uses the CB-SEM to assess how well the model fits the data. This is determined by examining how the proposed model can estimate the observed covariance matrix for a sample data set. By assessing the goodness-of-fit and the absolute fit indices the researcher decides whether there is evidence for acceptable fit of that model to the data (Kline, 2016). The sample size plays a critical role in CB-SEM, which is basically a large-sample technique. Hair, Black et al. (2014) suggest that the sample size CB-SEM requires in order to provide reliable estimates when the constructs are more than seven is 500 respondents. Furthermore, Kline (2016) recommends the rule of 20:1 in the sample size-to parameter ratio. However, the model tested in the first experiment included 13 constructs, while the sample size acquired was 200 respondents, which is below the above mentioned recommended sample sizes. CB-SEM has been further criticised because it cannot provide reliable estimates with non-normal data, complex models and also it cannot handle formative measurements.

These limitations are overcome by the PLS-SEM, which is primarily used to develop theories in exploratory research when researchers seek to discover latent patterns in the data or when there is limited a priori knowledge on how variables are associated. Hair, Hult et al. (2014) suggest that even when researchers test specific theories they can use PLS-SEM when they

seek to explore whether additional independent variables are important predictors of the dependent variable. The main purpose of PLS-SEM is prediction and explanation of dependent variables, which is achieved by focusing on explaining the variance in the dependent variables when examining the model.

PLS-SEM is effective with a small sample size, complex models and non-normal data. At the same time, it can easily handle both reflective and formative measurements as well as achieving greater statistical power than CB-SEM. On the downside, it cannot be used for theory testing and confirmation, because it does not provide goodness-of-fit measures (Hair, Hult et al., 2014). Since, none of the two types of SEM is outright superior and both come with strengths and weaknesses, Hair, Hult et al. (2014) suggest that researchers should consider using both for their analyses. Accordingly, it was deemed appropriate to use both for the analysis of the results of the first experiment.

For the rest of the experiments (i.e. experiments 2, 3, 4, and 5), a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) test as well as its variants - univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), and multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) - were used. These tests assess differences between the means of two or more groups and hence, allowed examining the differences in the various customer revengeful behaviours caused by the experimental manipulations.

## **6.19 Chapter summary**

This chapter has addressed the epistemological and methodological considerations for this thesis. The research involves adopting a positivist stance to research and a deductive approach. The research strategy followed is purely quantitative. In particular, five experimental vignette studies are conducted to test the hypotheses of this research. These are discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 7

### Study 1: The role of fairness, moral emotions and forgiveness in customer revenge

This chapter focuses on the role of fairness and emotions in driving customer revenge and examines both a direct and indirect route through which emotions influence the various revengeful behaviours. More specifically, it involves testing the mediating role of three discrete emotions, i.e. anger, disgust and contempt in the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge (i.e. direct route) as well as the influence of these three discrete emotions on customer revenge through the mediating mechanism of forgiveness (i.e. indirect route).

Past research has categorised anger, disgust and contempt under the moral emotion family. These emotions arise from perceived moral transgressions and influence moral judgment and behaviour (Haidt, 2003). Service failure/recovery encounters constitute moral transgressions where the firm violates norms of fairness. Hence, customer perceptions of unfair treatment during service failure/recovery incidences may give rise to these moral emotions and, in turn, influence subsequent revenge behaviour. However, on some occasions customers may be more forgiving towards a firm's misbehaviour. Forgiveness is the mechanism through which the individual deliberately decides to abandon the negative emotions and the motivation to take revenge (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). Whilst forgiveness may be granted even when justice has not been restored, it is predicted that the higher the perceptions of unfairness and the associated negative emotions are, the more difficult it will be for forgiveness to be granted and the more individuals will be motivated to take revenge (Exline et al., 2003). The following hypotheses of this thesis are examined in this chapter.

Table 7.1: Hypotheses tested in Study 1

	Hypotheses
<b>H1</b>	<b>H1:</b> <i>Higher (vs lower) perceived distributive unfairness will result in higher (vs lower) likelihood to engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>

	<b>Hypotheses</b>
<b>H2</b>	<i><b>H2:</b> Higher (vs lower) perceived procedural unfairness will result in higher (vs lower) likelihood to engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>
<b>H3</b>	<i><b>H3:</b> The higher (vs lower) perceived interactional unfairness will result in higher (vs lower) likelihood to engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and/or third-party complaining).</i>
<b>H4</b>	<i><b>H4:</b> Anger mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness and customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>
<b>H5</b>	<i><b>H5:</b> Disgust mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness and customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>
<b>H6</b>	<i><b>H6:</b> Contempt mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness and customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>
<b>H7</b>	<i><b>H7:</b> Forgiveness mediates the effect of the three moral emotions (i.e. anger, disgust and contempt) on customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>



## 7.1 Participants

Two hundred participants ( $n=25$  participants in each condition) were recruited for this experiment. The study lasted about 15 minutes and the participants were given £5 for their participation. Participants were students at the University of Bath. The sample consisted of 48% males and 52% females and the average age was  $M_{\text{age}} = 21.27$  ( $SD=5.02$ ).

## 7.2 Recruitment

In order to recruit participants for this experiment four strategies were followed:

1. Flyers: One of the researcher's friends distributed flyers in four places at the University: the main University Library, the Student's Union, the main coffee shop (Tiki) and the restaurant (Limetree). These places are usually the most crowded and hence, it was anticipated that this would increase the chances of having a more diverse sample and of finding participants from various departments of the University. Participant recruitment was undertaken at peak hours, from 11am-2pm, and lasted for two weeks. Students were initially approached and informed that we were conducting research on how customers respond to service experiences and that participation in this study would involve reading a hypothetical scenario about a service experience and answering a questionnaire. The study would last about 15 minutes and they would be paid £5 for their participation. They were told that they would need to come to the Management School's lab in 8W 1.25, on that day, between 11:00 and 17:00, to complete the study. Those who indicated their interest in participating in the study were given a flyer with all the information about the study including the purpose, duration, the amount of money they would receive, the location of the study and the contact details of the researcher. The flyers used can be seen in Appendix H. This strategy of recruiting participants was the most effective among the four deployed.
2. Posters: Posters were placed in various locations around the university, which were carefully chosen so that they were visible to students. That is, posters were put up in the University Library, the Student's Union, the Limetree Restaurant, the Psychology Department and the School of Management Reception as well as on various notice boards around the University that allowed posting of advertisements for participant recruitment to research studies. The posters included the same information as the flyers. Students could take the email of the researcher and contact her in order to arrange a day and time to complete the study. The posters used can be seen in Appendix H.

3. University website: An advertisement was placed on the University's website, where there is a specific section devoted to participant recruitment for research studies. The ad contained a short description of the purpose of the study and stated its duration as well as the amount of money a participant would receive. Finally, it provided a doodle link where interested parties could book a session from the available days and times. The participants were informed that they should come at the Management School's lab for the session they had booked.
4. Class: Since participant recruitment initially proved quite slow, the researcher decided to ask students from the seminars she was delivering at the School of Management to participate in her study. Specifically, in one of her seminars, she informed her students about the study she was conducting and asked them to come at the Management School's lab after the seminar. This strategy was also quite efficient since roughly 30 students were recruited on this one occasion.

### **7.3 Research Design**

The experiment was a 2 (distributive fairness: high vs low) X 2 (procedural fairness: high vs low) X 2 (interactional fairness: high vs low) between-subjects factorial design. There were three independent variables, i.e. the three dimensions of fairness, while the dependent variables were the four revengeful behaviours, i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining. The three moral emotions, i.e. anger, disgust and contempt as well as forgiveness were used as mediators.

### **7.4 Procedure**

The experiment took place in the Management School's lab (8W 1.25). The study was designed on Qualtrics and separate Qualtrics links for the various experimental conditions had been produced. Participants entering the lab were seated in front of a computer and were randomly assigned to the eight conditions of the experiment. Each participant was assigned to a condition sequentially, such that the first participant was assigned to the first condition, the second to the second condition, and so on. Furthermore, since sometimes participants who were sitting next to each other were friends, they were informed that they should not collaborate or discuss about their answers to the main questionnaire, because they were given different information and were expected to respond differently to the questionnaire. The researcher stayed in the lab and was sitting at a desk in the middle of the room.

The first page of the study informed the participants about the purpose of the study. The study was introduced as investigating customer responses to service experiences. Participants were told that they should answer all the questions openly and truthfully as there were no right or wrong answers. They were also informed that their responses would be kept anonymous and that had the right to withdraw from the study at any point they wanted to.

All participants were informed that they would have to read a scenario regarding a service experience with ABC hotel. The instructions were as follows: “We ask you to put yourself in this situation, which you can do by going step by step through the described situation and imagining all the details of the situation. Try to imagine yourself in this situation as vividly as you can, as if it were happening right now to you”. These instructions were put with the intention of making the scenarios more vivid and realistic by prompting the individuals to become more involved in the scenario story. The more vividly participants could imagine the scenarios, the more their reported emotional and behavioural responses would be closely associated with those they would experience had this situation happened in reality.

The hotel scenario involved a hotel overbooking service failure. Specifically, the customer had booked a hotel in Edinburgh, but when he or she reached the destination he/she was informed that the hotel was overbooked and he/she could not have the room he/she had initially booked. Instead, the hotel had arranged another room for him/her in one of the other ABC hotels, which was located three miles away from the current one. The scenario then described the service recovery experience, where the various dimensions of fairness were manipulated. Distributive fairness was manipulated as the compensation offered to the customer. Procedural fairness was manipulated with regards to the speed of recovery. Past research has demonstrated that procedural fairness involves various aspects, such as process control, voice, flexibility, and speed of recovery among others. Examining the aspects of procedural fairness in a service context, Tax et al. (1998) demonstrated that the aspect of speed of recovery has the largest impact on customer evaluations of the service experience. Time is a valuable resource for individuals and hence, having to wait for too long is aggravating and results in negative customer responses (Blodgett et al., 1997). For this reason, speed of recovery was employed to manipulate procedural fairness. Interactional fairness was associated with the level of concern and politeness the hotel employee showed to the customer. Specifically, the following manipulations were employed:

Distributive fairness: In one condition, the customer is not offered a room upgrade (low distributive fairness), while in the other, he/she is offered a room upgrade to a better quality room for the same price (high distributive fairness);

Procedural fairness: In one condition, the customer has to wait for 30 minutes until the hotel employee figures out what can be done to address his/her problem (low procedural fairness), while in the other he/she only has to wait for a few moments (high procedural fairness);

Interactional fairness: In one condition, the hotel employee appears unconcerned about the customer's problem, treats him/her in a very unfriendly and rude manner and seems to be in a hurry to serve the next customer (low interactional fairness), while in the other, the employee shows understanding of the customer's problem, addresses him/her in a polite and friendly manner and assumes responsibility for the inconvenience caused (high interactional fairness).

The scenario employed in this study can be seen in the Appendix B. After reading the scenario, all the participants moved on to the main questionnaire of the study. Questionnaire completion was followed with the ending of the session, where participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

## **7.5 Pre-tests**

### **7.5.1 Pre-test 1 - Scenarios**

As mentioned before, in order to create the stories of the scenarios, the customer complaints website [www.customeraffairs.com](http://www.customeraffairs.com) was first reviewed. This is a website with thousands customer reviews for various types of service offerings. This procedure enabled the researcher to create scenarios that are realistic and representative of real life experiences customers had had with service firms in the past. The researcher read a number of customer complaints, which were quite diverse in terms of the type of failure and failure severity involved. After reading online customer complaints, the researcher reviewed past research studies in service literature that have employed scenario-based experimental methodologies (e.g. Blodgett et al., 1997; McCollough et al., 2000) in order to understand how past research has manipulated the various dimensions of fairness and what type of service failures have been previously used. After reviewing the customer complaint sites and the literature, five scenarios were written. In order to cover a wide range of services, five different service contexts were used, i.e. airline, hotel,

bank, telecommunication company, and retail, shop. The scenarios described a different service failure and the service failure stories can be seen below:

- Airline - flight delay: the flight the customer has booked has a three hour delay due to crew unavailability, which makes him/her miss his/her connecting flight.
- Hotel - overbooking: the hotel is overbooked and the customer is offered another room in one of the other hotels of the hotel chain, which is located three miles away from the one he/she had initially booked.
- Telecommunications company - hidden charges: the customer signs up with the telecommunication company, but when he/she receives the first bill he/she realises that there are hidden costs that the company did not inform him/her about and the bill is significantly higher than initially expected.
- Bank - increase in interest rate: the customer decides to take on a student loan, but when he/she returns to the bank to sign up the papers the interest rate has been intentionally increased compared to the one he/she was initially offered by the bank.
- Retail shop - false advertising: the customer sees a tablet with a keyboard dock on offer advertised on television, but when he/she visits the retail shop he/she realises that the advertisement was false and the price indicated in the offer was only for the tablet.

The scenarios used in this pre-test can be seen in Appendix A. After the scenarios were written, the next step was to pre-test them. The main purpose of this was to find the scenario(s) that would produce higher negative emotions and perceptions of unfairness that could trigger customer revenge. Nineteen students from the University of Bath were recruited for this pre-test and were paid £5 for their participation. Two versions of each service scenario were pretested; the low and the high fairness scenarios. For instance, in the hotel scenario, participants read one version where all elements were low in fairness (i.e. low distributive/low procedural/low interactional fairness) and another version where all elements were high in fairness (high distributive/high procedural/high interactional fairness). The same was followed for all five service scenarios, making a total of 10. Since it was cumbersome for each participant to read all ten scenarios they were split into two groups. One group (n=10 participants) read the scenarios for the telecommunications company, retail shop and the bank, whilst the other group (n=9 participants) read the scenarios for the airline and the hotel. Consequently,

participants in the first group read six scenarios each, whereas those in the second group read four scenarios each.

After reading each one scenario the participants had to answer the same set of questions. First, they were asked about their felt negative emotions. Ten negative emotions taken from the PANAS scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) were used to measure the participants' negative emotions. Next, the three dimensions of fairness were measured and an overall score of fairness was created by summing all the dimensions of fairness. The dimensions of fairness were measured in the same way as in the main experiment. These measures will be discussed in section 7.6. Finally, scenario realism was measured using two items, as in the main experiment.

T-tests were employed to compare the mean scores of negative emotions, unfairness perceptions, and scenario realism between the scenarios. All t-tests were non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), which indicates that all the scenarios created similar intensities of negative emotions, perceptions of unfairness and scenario realism. Hence, the researcher decided to choose scenarios based on the means. Below, the tables with the means can be seen. Negative emotions was the most important variable for this thesis since the focus is predominantly on the emotional aspect of revenge. For this reason, the decision as to which scenarios would be further used in the main experiments was primarily based on the negative emotions these scenarios would trigger. As can be seen from the tables, the airline and hotel scenarios triggered the highest negative emotions in both the low and high fairness conditions. They also triggered high perceptions of unfairness and received high ratings of scenario realism. Moreover, significant differences were found in negative emotions and perceptions of unfairness between the two versions of scenarios (i.e. low fairness and high fairness) for both the airline and the hotel scenarios ( $p < 0.05$ ). Accordingly, these two scenarios were chosen to be used in the main experiments.

Table 7.2: Descriptive Statistics for negative emotions

		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Telecommunications	Low fairness	5.26	1.04
	High Fairness	3.36	1.47
Retail shop	Low fairness	4.81	1.86
	High Fairness	2.75	1.70
Bank	Low fairness	5.49	1.71
	High Fairness	3.49	1.96
Airline	Low fairness	6.14	1.28
	High Fairness	4.01	1.77
Hotel	Low fairness	6.19	0.98
	High Fairness	4.95	1.34

Table 7.3: Descriptive statistics for overall fairness perceptions

		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Telecommunications	Low fairness	1.86	1.09
	High Fairness	8.52	1.25
Retail shop	Low fairness	2.46	0.92
	High Fairness	9.08	0.75
Bank	Low fairness	2.96	1.71
	High Fairness	9.26	1.15
Airline	Low fairness	2.48	1.21
	High Fairness	8.40	1.11
Hotel	Low fairness	2.51	0.93
	High Fairness	7.36	1.21

Table 7.4: Descriptive statistics for scenario realism

		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Telecommunications	Low fairness	6.45	1.86
	High Fairness	6.75	1.60
Retail shop	Low fairness	5.30	2.12
	High Fairness	7.25	2.03
Bank	Low fairness	5.30	2.38
	High Fairness	5.95	2.01
Airline	Low fairness	8.39	1.52
	High Fairness	7.06	1.86
Hotel	Low fairness	6.28	1.94
	High Fairness	6.78	1.30

### **7.5.2 Pre-test 2 - Waiting time for procedural fairness**

As indicated above, procedural fairness was manipulated with regards to the speed of recovery. In order to decide on the time that customers in the low procedural fairness condition would have to wait until the hotel employee figured out what could be done to address the service failure a pre-test was employed. Five university students at the University of Bath (three females and two males) participated in this pre-test. They were asked to read the hotel scenario which described the service failure as in the main experiment but eliminated the service recovery. After describing the failure, the following text was inserted: “The receptionist listens to you and says that you should wait until he figures out what can be done to address your case. You finally end up waiting for \_\_\_\_\_ which seems like an age to you”. There was no mention of the other aspects of fairness. The participants were asked to fill in the gap, with the question pertaining to this being: “What is the waiting time the receptionist would ask you to wait that would make it unfair for you to wait and would make you feel negative emotions?”. Responses of the five participants produced an average waiting time of  $M_{\text{waitingtime}} = 27$  minutes. Rounding this number up, 30 minutes was deemed as the appropriate waiting time that would increase unfairness perceptions and negative emotions. Hence, 30 minutes was the waiting time employed in the low procedural fairness scenario.

## **7.6 Measurement**

The questionnaire assessed the following (see Appendix C):

1. Emotions;
2. Fairness perceptions;
3. Forgiveness;
4. Customer revengeful behaviours

Although only three emotions were the focus of this study, i.e. anger, disgust and contempt, it was deemed appropriate to embed these three emotions within the measurement of various other emotions. This approach was preferred since it would reduce the participants’ speculation and any demand effects. In other words, if only the three emotions were measured it would be quite obvious to them that these were the focus of the study and hence, they might have adjusted their reported level of felt emotions to what they thought the researcher was aiming to find. In sum, the decision was made to measure a range of emotions beyond the focal three to reduce



any biased responses. To measure emotions, the emotion scale developed specifically for service failures by Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008a) was employed. Specifically, nine positive emotions ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ) and seven negative emotions were taken from their scale, while for the negative emotions, those of disgust and contempt were added ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ). Hence, in total, nine positive and nine negative emotions were measured, whereby participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt this way on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 10 (Very much).

Next, the three dimensions of fairness were measured. More specifically, distributive fairness was measured with four items taken from Blodgett et al. (1997), two of which were reverse coded ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ). Procedural fairness was measured using three items, two taken from Wirtz and Mattila (2004) and one from Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008b). One of the items was reverse coded ( $\alpha = 0.60$ ). Interactional fairness involved four items adopted from Smith et al. (1999), two of which were reverse coded ( $\alpha = 0.41$ ). Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed/disagreed with the statements given on a 10-point scale ranging from 1-Strongly Disagree to 10-Strongly Agree.

Forgiveness was measured by adapting a shorter version of Wade (1989) and McCullough et al.'s (1998) scales, using only 10 items of the original scales ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ). Participants were asked: "If the incident described in the scenario had happened to you, please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the statements below". Responses were recorded using 10-point scales ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree). Three items were reverse coded to avoid acquiescence bias (respondents' tendency to agree with all the questions or to indicate a positive connotation).

The scales for the various revengeful acts, i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining were taken from Grégoire et al. (2010). Aggression was a four-item formative measurement. This stands in contrast with prior studies that have primarily used reflective scales to measure aggression (e.g. Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). However, this scale was preferred over others for three reasons. First, a number of scales of aggression can be found in literature on workplace aggression (e.g. Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). While these are more relevant to workplace aggression, Grégoire et al.'s (2010) scale is specifically adapted to a service context and hence, is more relevant to this research. Second, the aggression scales

employed in workplace literature involve a number of items (usually at least nine) while my goal was to shorten the questionnaire in order to avoid respondent fatigue and to measure all customer revengeful behaviours with an equal number of items (3 or four items). Third, in line with the definition followed in this thesis, marketplace aggression is multifaceted involving actions such as damaging firm's properties, violating its policies or making personal attacks on its employees. Hence, a formative measurement was deemed appropriate because these aggressive behaviours can be independent of each other. For instance, customers may violate firm's policies without damaging its properties. Diamantopoulos, Riefler, and Roth (2008) stress the importance of correctly specifying the measurement model. They note that one third of the studies suffer from model misspecification where reflective indicators are adopted when formative are more appropriate and vice versa. Model misspecification, in turn, adversely impacts on model estimates and fit statistics influencing the validity of the study findings. Taking the above into consideration, the formative measurement of marketplace aggression taken from Grégoire et al. (2010) was deemed more suitable for this thesis.

Vindictive complaining had three items ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ); vindictive NWOM was measured with three items ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ); and third-party complaining was a four-item scale ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with the statements given on a 10-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree/10-Strongly Agree).

Scenario realism was measured with two items taken from Bechwati and Morrin (2003) ( $\alpha = 0.76$ ). One asked participants whether they thought the incident described in the above scenario was very unrealistic (1) to very realistic (10) on a 10-point scale. The other item asked whether they believed that such an incident could happen to someone in real life, with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree) on a 10-point scale.

In order to figure out whether participants were speculative about the true purpose of the study, they were asked about what they thought the purpose of the study was. This question was open-ended and they were asked to explain in as much detail as possible their thoughts. Finally, demographic questions involved asking participants about their sex, age and nationality.

## **7.7 Findings**

### **7.7.1 Manipulation check**

To examine whether the manipulation of the various dimensions of fairness was effective an ANOVA test was conducted to test the differences in fairness perceptions between conditions. The manipulation checks showed that perceptions of unfairness differed significantly between the low and the high fairness conditions for the distributive fairness ( $M_{low} = 2.78$  vs  $M_{high} = 6.57$ ;  $F(1,198) = 296.02$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), the procedural fairness ( $M_{low} = 3.58$  vs  $M_{high} = 6.10$ ;  $F(1,198) = 75.75$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and the interactional fairness ( $M_{low} = 2.22$  vs  $M_{high} = 7.07$ ;  $F(1,198) = 660.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In sum, the manipulation of the various dimensions of fairness was successful.

### **7.7.2 Tests of normality**

In this study, the three dimensions of fairness, i.e. distributive, procedural and interactional fairness, served as the independent variables and the four revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining) were the dependent variables, while the three moral emotions (i.e. anger, disgust and contempt) along with forgiveness served as mediators. Parametric tests like ANOVA are based on the assumptions of normal distribution of the data. For this reason, it was deemed appropriate to examine first whether the data collected satisfied the conditions of normality. A Kolmogorov test that examines the normality of the data was conducted. The results of the Kolmogorov test can be seen in the table below. These indicate that all the variables deviate from the normal distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 7.5: Tests of Normality for Experiment 1

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
	Statistic	Significance
Forgiveness	0.085	0.001
Aggression	0.15	0.000
Vindictive complaining	0.134	0.000
NWOM	0.103	0.000
Third-party complaining	0.068	0.027
Anger	0.161	0.000
Disgust	0.142	0.000
Contempt	0.111	0.000

### 7.7.3 Main Analysis

The main analysis used for this experiment is the Structural Equation Modelling technique (SEM). SEM allows for the testing of several simultaneous regression equations, while at the same time accounting for measurement error (Hair, Black et al., 2014). As was explained in section 6.18, there are two types of SEM: covariance-based CB-SEM and PLS-SEM. The main aim of the latter is to explain the variance in individual constructs and it is mainly used when the aim is to predict target constructs or to identify key driver constructs. Hair, Hult et al. (2014) suggest using PLS-SEM when the model is complex, the sample size is small (N=200 in this study), the data are non-normally distributed, formative measurements are included in the model (i.e. aggression in this study) and there are single-item constructs (i.e. anger, disgust, contempt). PLS-SEM also offers high efficiency in parameter estimation and greater statistical power than CB-SEM. For these reasons PLS-SEM was employed first.

The first PLS-SEM was used to examine hypotheses H1-H3 of this thesis and more specifically, the relationships between the three dimensions of fairness and the four revengeful behaviours. Following the guidelines provided by Hair, Hult et al. (2014), collinearity between independent variables was assessed first. The VIF's of the three independent variables for all the regression paths were  $VIF < 5$  and hence, no collinearity was detected. Next, using the bootstrapping

technique (5,000 subsamples used) the path coefficients were estimated. The results can be seen in the table and figure below.

Table 7.6: Main results for H1-H3

	<b>Path Coefficients</b>	<b>t Values</b>	<b>p Values</b>	<b>f<sup>2</sup> effect size</b>
Distributive fairness → Aggression	-0.186	2.165	0.030	0.037
Distributive fairness → Vindictive complaining	-0.312	5.024	0.000	0.118
Distributive fairness → NWOM	-0.323	5.547	0.000	0.143
Distributive fairness → Third-party complaining	-0.260	4.175	0.000	0.085
Procedural fairness → Aggression	0.116	1.491	0.136	0.014
Procedural fairness → Vindictive complaining	-0.000	0.001	0.999	0.000
Procedural fairness → NWOM	-0.057	1.169	0.242	0.005
Procedural fairness → Third-party complaining	-0.024	0.582	0.561	0.001
Interactional fairness → Aggression	-0.175	2.084	0.037	0.033
Interactional fairness → Vindictive complaining	-0.273	4.152	0.000	0.090
Interactional fairness → NWOM	-0.400	7.022	0.000	0.143
Interactional fairness → Third-party complaining	-0.377	6.274	0.000	0.085

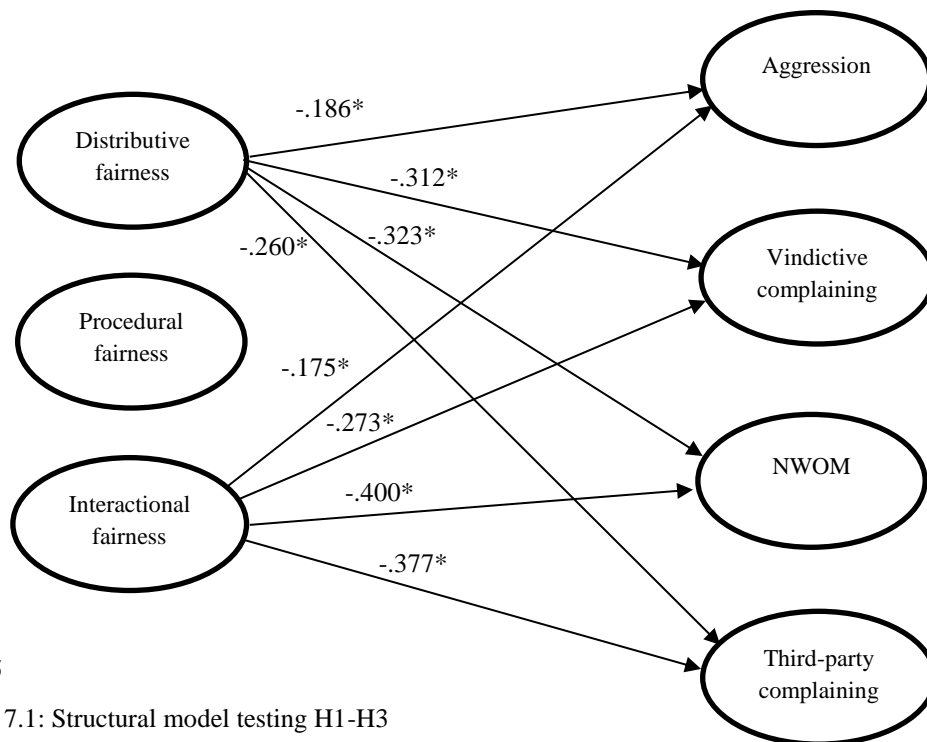


Figure 7.1: Structural model testing H1-H3

As is evident from the table and figure above, distributive fairness had a significant effect on aggression, vindictive complaining, NWOM and third-party complaining ( $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the effect of interactional fairness on the four revengeful behaviours was also significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, procedural fairness did not affect any of the revengeful behaviours, with the effects being non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). To sum up, the results of the PLS-SEM analysis show that distributive and interactional, but not procedural unfairness, increase the likelihood of customer revenge. Hence, H1, and H3 are supported while H2 is rejected. This model explained a significant amount of variance in aggression (7.8%), vindictive complaining (17.2%), NWOM (26.8%), and third-party complaining (21.0%).

To test hypotheses H4-H6, i.e. the mediating role of the three moral emotions in the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge, PLS-SEM was employed with the three dimensions of fairness as independent variables, the four revengeful behaviours as dependent variables and the three moral emotions as mediators. VIFs were calculated to examine for collinearity between the independent variables and it was found that collinearity was not an issue in this model (VIFs  $< 5$  for all variables).

Next, the path coefficients were estimated using bootstrapping procedures (5,000 subsamples) to test the relevant direct and indirect effects. The table below shows the path coefficients and whether the mediation is full or partial, according to the steps outlined in Baron and Kenny

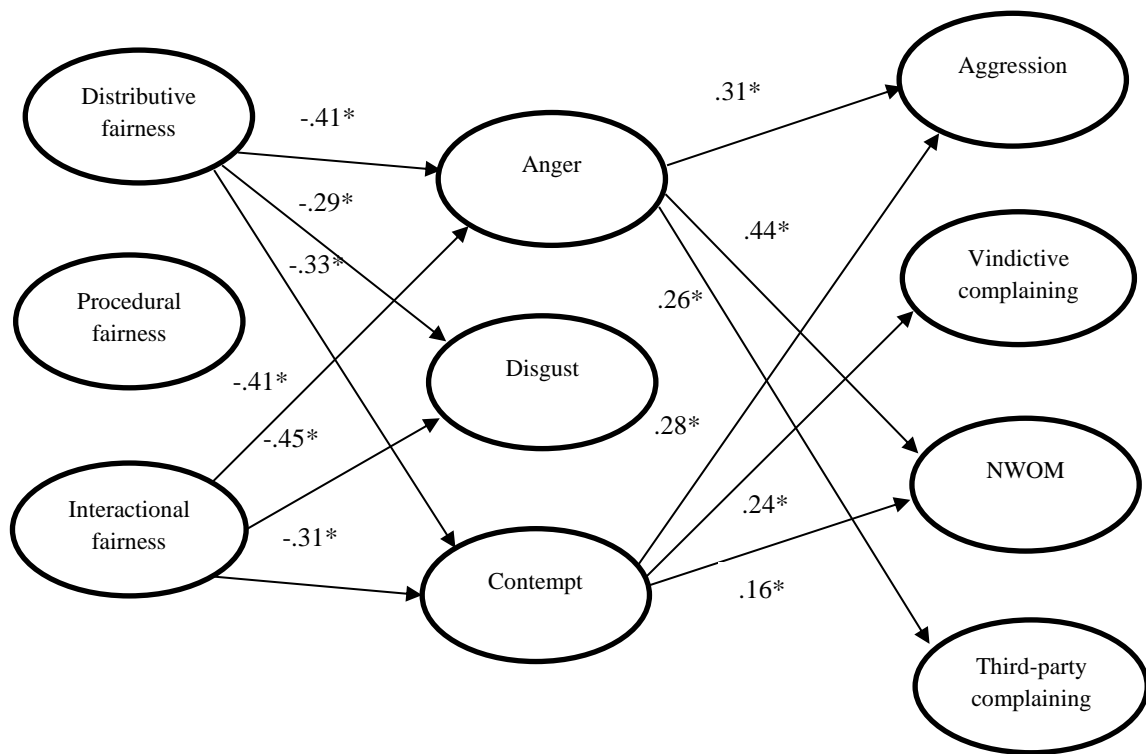
(1986). The results for procedural fairness are not reported, because they were all non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

The results indicate that anger mediates the effect of distributive and interactional fairness on aggression, NWOM and third-party complaining, but not vindictive complaining. Hence, H4 is partially supported. Moreover, contempt mediates the effect of distributive and interactional fairness on aggression, vindictive complaining, and NWOM, but not third-party complaining. Hence, H6 is partially supported. Disgust did not seem to play a role since all the effects were nonsignificant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, H5 is rejected.

Table 7.7: Main results for H4-H6

	Path A <sup>a</sup> (X->M)		Path B (M->Y)		Path C (X->Y)		Type of mediation
	B	t-value	B	t-value	B	t-value	
DF <sup>b</sup> -> Anger -> Aggression	-0.41	(7.38)*	0.31	(3.16)*	0.05	0.51(ns)	Full
DF-> Disgust-> Aggression	-0.29	(5.08)*	-0.11	0.76(ns)	0.05	0.51(ns)	No mediation
DF -> Contempt -> Aggression	-0.33	(5.25)*	0.28	(2.07)*	0.05	0.51(ns)	Full
DF -> Anger -> Vindictive complaining	-0.41	(7.38)*	0.14	1.60(ns)	-0.19	(2.42)*	No mediation
DF -> Disgust -> Vindictive complaining	-0.29	(5.08)*	-0.07	0.66(ns)	-0.19	(2.42)*	No mediation
DF -> Contempt -> Vindictive complaining	-0.33	(5.25)*	0.24	(2.37)*	-0.19	(2.42)*	Partial
DF -> Anger -> NWOM	-0.41	(7.38)*	0.44	(5.41)*	-0.13	(2.10)*	Partial
DF -> Disgust -> NWOM	-0.29	(5.08)*	-0.12	1.24(ns)	-0.13	(2.10)*	No mediation
DF -> Contempt-> NWOM	-0.33	(5.25)*	0.16	(2.16)*	-0.13	(2.10)*	Partial
DF -> Anger -> Third-party complaining	-0.41	(7.38)*	0.26	(3.11)*	-0.09	1.24(ns)	Full
DF -> Disgust -> Third-party complaining	-0.29	(5.08)*	0.08	0.79(ns)	-0.09	1.24(ns)	No mediation
DF -> Contempt -> Third-party complaining	-0.33	(5.25)*	0.13	1.56(ns)	-0.09	1.24(ns)	No mediation
IF <sup>c</sup> -> Anger -> Aggression	-0.41	(7.36)*	0.31	(3.16)*	-0.02	0.19(ns)	Full
IF -> Disgust -> Aggression	-0.45	(8.01)*	-0.11	0.76(ns)	-0.02	0.19(ns)	No mediation
IF -> Contempt -> Aggression	-0.31	(5.31)*	0.28	(2.07)*	-0.02	0.19(ns)	Full
IF -> Anger -> Vindictive complaining	-0.41	(7.36)*	0.14	1.60(ns)	-0.18	(2.51)*	No mediation
IF -> Disgust-> Vindictive complaining	-0.45	(8.01)*	-0.07	0.66(ns)	-0.18	(2.51)*	No mediation
IF -> Contempt -> Vindictive complaining	-0.31	(5.31)*	0.24	(2.37)*	-0.18	(2.51)*	Partial
IF -> Anger -> NWOM	-0.41	(7.36)*	0.44	(5.41)*	-0.22	(3.31)*	Partial
IF -> Disgust -> NWOM	-0.45	(8.01)*	-0.12	1.24(ns)	-0.22	(3.31)*	No mediation
IF -> Contempt -> NWOM	-0.31	(5.31)*	0.16	(2.16)*	-0.22	(3.31)*	Partial
IF -> Anger -> Third-party complaining	-0.41	(7.36)*	0.26	(3.11)*	-0.19	(2.63)*	Partial
IF -> Disgust -> Third-party complaining	-0.45	(8.01)*	0.08	0.79(ns)	-0.19	(2.63)*	No mediation
IF -> Contempt -> Third-party complaining	-0.31	(5.31)*	0.13	1.56(ns)	-0.19	(2.63)*	No mediation

\* $p < 0.05$



\* $p < 0.05$

Figure 7.2: Structural model testing H4-H6



The table below shows the effect sizes for the tested relationships.

Table 7.8: Effect sizes of the relationships testing H4-H6

	f <sup>2</sup>		f <sup>2</sup>
DF->Anger	0.246	Disgust ->Third-party complaining	0.003
PF->Anger	0.002	Contempt->Aggression	0.041
IF->Anger	0.246	Contempt ->Vindictive complaining	0.030
DF->Disgust	0.121	Contempt ->NWOM	0.018
PF->Disgust	0.001	Contempt ->Third-party complaining	0.011
IF->Disgust	0.290	DF->Aggression	0.003
DF->Contempt	0.133	DF ->Vindictive complaining	0.036
PF->Contempt	0.003	DF ->NWOM	0.022
IF->Contempt	0.124	DF ->Third-party complaining	0.009
Anger->Aggression	0.054	PF->Aggression	0.021
Anger->Vindictive complaining	0.011	PF ->Vindictive complaining	0.001
Anger->NWOM	0.139	PF ->NWOM	0.002
Anger->Third-party complaining	0.042	PF ->Third-party complaining	0.000
Disgust->Aggression	0.005	IF->Aggression	0.000
Disgust ->Vindictive complaining	0.002	IF ->Vindictive complaining	0.030
Disgust ->NWOM	0.008	IF ->NWOM	0.064
		IF ->Third-party complaining	0.041

This model explains a significant amount of variance for aggression (21%), vindictive complaining (23.1%), NWOM (41.8%), third-party complaining (32.3%), anger (33%), disgust (29.2%) and contempt (20.7%).

Next, H7 was examined which involves testing the indirect route through which emotions influence customer revenge. In particular, in order to test whether forgiveness mediates the effect of the three moral emotions in customer revenge, a combination of PLS-SEM and CB-SEM was employed. In this model, the three dimensions of fairness served as independent variables, the four revengeful behaviours were dependent variables, while the three moral emotions and forgiveness were sequential mediators. Following Hair, Hult et al.'s (2014)

guidelines, the measurement model was first tested. This step should have also been done for the previous PLS-SEM models that were used to test H1-H6. But since the PLS-SEM model used for H7 involves the variables of the previous models plus forgiveness, it was decided to demonstrate only one measurement model in order to avoid repetition.

For reflective measurements, reliability as well as convergent and discriminant validity were assessed. This assessment is relevant only for multi-item and not single-item constructs and hence, it was carried out for the constructs of forgiveness, vindictive complaining, NWOM and third-party complaining. The internal consistency reliabilities and composite reliabilities are satisfactory for all variables and  $> 0.80$ . Item reliability was assessed by examining the factor loading of each item on its corresponding variable. Item reliabilities were greater than the 0.70 guideline for all variables besides forgiveness. Four out of ten items on the forgiveness scale had a factor loading of  $< 0.70$ . These items represented primarily the behavioural component of forgiveness, i.e. the willingness of individuals to abandon their motivation for revenge, while the rest of the items, with factor loading  $> 0.70$ , were related to the emotional aspect of forgiveness, i.e. their willingness to abandon their negative feelings. Because both aspects of forgiveness were relevant for the operationalisation of such a construct, it was deemed appropriate to keep the items in the measurement model. Hair, Hult et al. (2014) also suggest that when indicator loadings are between 0.40 and 0.70 they should be removed only when deletion of the indicators leads to an increase in the composite reliability above the suggested threshold value. This is not the case with forgiveness which already produces an above threshold composite reliability value ( $CR = 0.89$ ), and hence items were not removed. In addition, the variables had an average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.50, with the exception of forgiveness ( $AVE = 0.46$ ), thus providing evidence of convergent validity. The Fornell-Lacker criterion was employed to assess discriminant validity and for all variables besides forgiveness, the square root of each construct AVE was higher than any of its correlations with other constructs. The table 7.8 shows the results of the measurement model analysis.

The measurement model also includes the formative measure of aggression. For this, collinearity between the formative indicators and the significance of the outer weights was examined. To assess collinearity, a regression model was examined in SPSS with the four formative indicators as independent variables and another indicator which was not part of the specific measurement model, as the dependent variable. The results indicate that all the VIFs

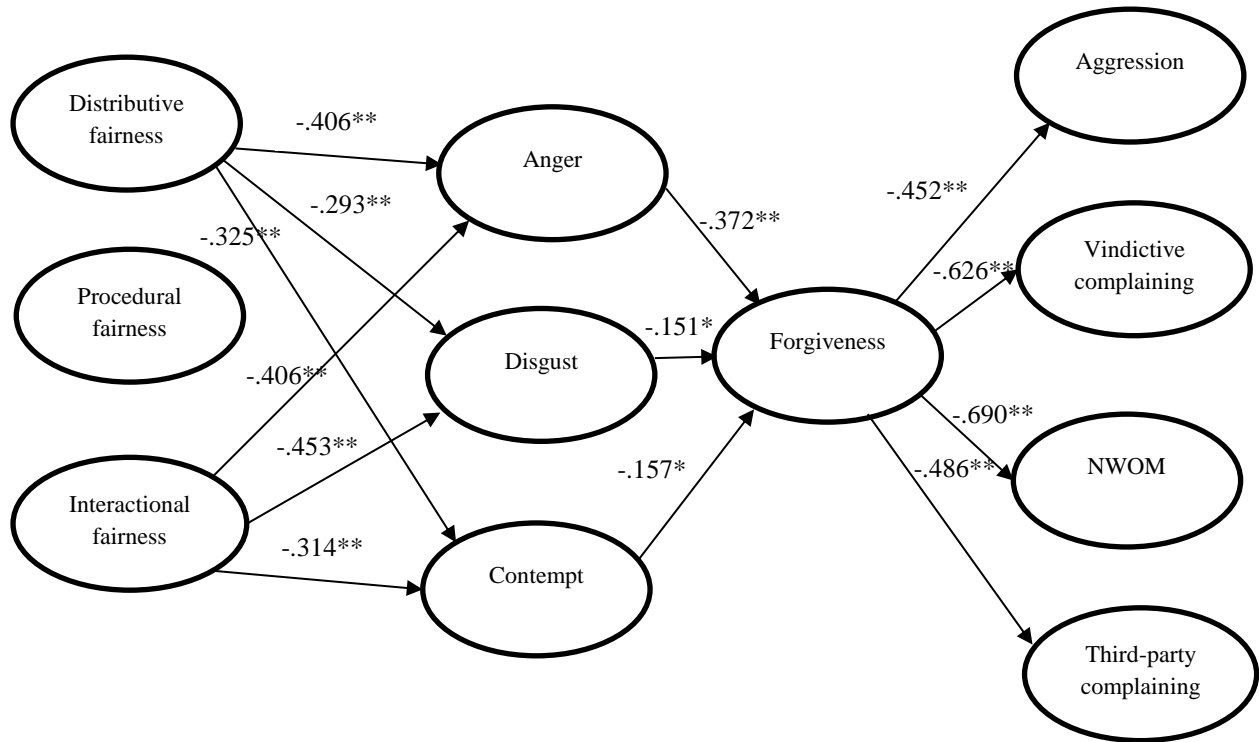
are less than 5 so there is no problem of collinearity. Next, the significance of the indicator outer weights was examined. Three out of four indicators were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, since a pre-existing scale was used it was decided not to eliminate the one formative item that had an insignificant outer weight, since elimination may have threatened content validity of the formative construct.

Table 7.9: Measurement model analysis

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Forgiveness	6.75	1.66	0.86	0.89	<b>0.68</b>	-0.45	-0.63	-0.69	-0.49	-0.58	-0.52	-0.51	0.31	0.10	0.43
2. Aggression			Formative	Formative		-	0.31	0.41	0.21	0.38	0.29	0.33	-0.16	0.12	-0.18
3. Vindictive complaining	3.60	2.26	0.81	0.89			<b>0.85</b>	0.52	0.40	0.39	0.34	0.39	-0.30	0.01	-0.28
4. NWOM	6.54	2.51	0.91	0.95				<b>0.92</b>	0.50	0.60	0.44	0.47	-0.32	-0.06	-0.40
5. Third-party complaining	5.05	2.57	0.91	0.93					<b>0.88</b>	0.51	0.47	0.45	-0.25	-0.02	-0.38
6. Anger	6.89	2.27	Single-item	Single-item						-	0.69	0.65	-0.41	-0.03	-0.41
7. Disgust	5.23	2.94	Single-item	Single-item							-	0.74	-0.29	0.02	-0.45
8. Contempt	5.16	2.62	Single-item	Single-item								-	-0.33	-0.05	-0.31
9. Distributive fairness			Categorical	Categorical									-		
10. Procedural fairness			Categorical	Categorical										-	
11. Interactional fairness			Categorical	Categorical											-

Note: the diagonal values in bold are the square root of the AVE values.

After having examined the measurement model, the structural model was assessed. Collinearity was not an issue in this model since all the VIFs were  $< 5$ . The results of the analysis can be seen in the figure and table below. The results provide support for H7 of this thesis, demonstrating that forgiveness mediated the effect of anger on the various revengeful behaviours while for disgust and contempt the result approached significance ( $p < 0.08$ ).



\* $p < 0.08$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$

Figure 7.3: Structural model testing H7

Table 7.10: Main results for H7

	<b>Path coefficient</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>f<sup>2</sup></b>
Distributive fairness → Anger	-0.406	(7.188)**	0.246
Distributive fairness → Contempt	-0.325	(5.206)**	0.133
Distributive fairness → Disgust	-0.293	(4.899)**	0.121
Interactional fairness → Anger	-0.406	(7.201)**	0.246
Interactional fairness → Contempt	-0.314	(5.268)**	0.124
Interactional fairness → Disgust	-0.453	(7.994)**	0.290
Procedural fairness → Anger	-0.034	0.834 (ns)	0.002
Procedural fairness → Contempt	-0.050	1.032 (ns)	0.003
Procedural fairness → Disgust	0.024	0.619 (ns)	0.001
Anger → Forgiveness	-0.372	(5.131)**	0.107
Contempt → Forgiveness	-0.157	(1.855)*	0.017
Disgust → Forgiveness	-0.151	(1.796)*	0.014
Forgiveness → Aggression	-0.452	(7.259)**	0.256
Forgiveness → Vindictive complaining	-0.626	(13.200)**	0.646
Forgiveness → NWOM	-0.690	(18.928)**	0.908
Forgiveness → Third-party complaining	-0.486	(9.316)**	0.309

\*p < 0.08; \*\*p < 0.05

This model explains a significant amount of the variance in aggression (20.4%), vindictive complaining (39.2%), NWOM (47.6%), third-party complaining (23.6%), anger (33%), contempt (20.7%), disgust (29.2%), and forgiveness (37.4%).

After having tested the hypothesized relationships with PLS-SEM, CB-SEM was further employed. The CB-SEM comes with certain advantages that cannot be found in PLS-SEM. First, the former is particularly useful for the overall testing of the theory because it provides measures of overall fit that are not available with PLS-SEM. By assessing the goodness-of-fit and the absolute fit indices the researcher decides whether there is evidence for acceptable fit of the proposed model to the data (Kline, 2016). Second, this type of SEM also provides procedures to account for common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). This refers to the variance that arises from the measurement method rather than the construct that the measure represents. In experimental designs, common method variance can arise because both the mediating and the dependent variables are obtained from the same source, i.e. the same respondent, at the same time. For these reasons, CB-SEM was additionally employed. Two CB-SEM models were tested: one without accounting for common method bias and another accounting for it. Distributive and interactional fairness were the independent variables, the four revengeful behaviours were the dependent variables and the three moral emotions as well as forgiveness served as the mediators. Procedural fairness was not included in the model because the results from the PLS-SEM had indicated that its effect was insignificant.

Examination of the fit indices of the first model (i.e. without accounting for common method variance) indicated that the model did not provide adequate model fit. The fit indices of the model were as follows:

Table 7.11: Fit indices of the model without accounting for common method variance

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Finding</b>
CFI	0.788
GFI	0.712
TLI	0.763
RMSEA	0.094
X <sup>2</sup>	1070.44
Df	389
P	0.000

Next, the second CB-SEM model that accounted for the common method variance was examined. Following the procedures suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003), a first-order common method construct was created that reflected all the indicators of the proposed revenge model. The fit indices of this model are as follows:

Table 7.12: Fit indices of the model when accounting for common method variance

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Finding</b>
CFI	0.867
GFI	0.791
TLI	0.842
RMSEA	0.077
$\chi^2$	795.049
Df	366
P	0.000

By accounting for common method variance, there is a significant increase in the model fit. However, the model provides a mediocre fit. CFI, GFI and TLI are below but somewhat close to the threshold of  $> 0.90$  while RMSEA is  $< 0.08$ . Hence, the model fit is mediocre according to the fit indices generally accepted in the literature (Byrne, 2010; Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008).

## 7.8 Discussion

For this study, the first seven hypotheses of this research have been tested. The findings indicate that distributive and interactional, but not procedural unfairness, affect the various revengeful behaviours. That is, procedural unfairness does not seem to play a role in customer revenge since the effect did not reach significance. The findings further show various mediational effects. In particular, the effect of the two dimensions of fairness in aggression was fully mediated by anger and contempt. Anger further mediated the relationship between distributive and interactional fairness in NWOM and third-party complaining, but not vindictive complaining, while contempt acted as a mediator between the two dimensions of fairness and vindictive complaining as well as NWOM, but not third-party complaining. The emotion of disgust did not affect the various customer revengeful behaviours. Moreover, the findings



provide strong evidence for the role of forgiveness. The three moral emotions, i.e. anger, disgust and contempt, and forgiveness, appear to act as sequential mediators between fairness and the various revengeful behaviours. More specifically, the distributive and interactional unfairness increased the felt emotions of anger, disgust and contempt, which in turn, had a negative relationship with forgiveness. Forgiveness also exhibited a negative association with the various customer revengeful behaviours, thus demonstrating that the less forgiveness individuals are willing to grant, the higher the likelihood that they will engage in revenge.

## **7.9 Limitations**

### **7.9.1 Manipulation of procedural fairness**

Procedural fairness was manipulated as speed of recovery. This was in line with past research that has suggested that speed of recovery is one of the most important elements that influence customer evaluations of procedural fairness of service recovery encounters (Tax et al., 1998). Nevertheless, procedural fairness did not seem to affect customer revenge in this research. This finding may be due to the specific manipulation. If another manipulation had been used, such as giving the customer voice, the results may have been different. However, there are various studies that have failed to find a significant relationship between procedural fairness and customer post-recovery responses (Blodgett et al., 1997; Funches et al., 2009) and hence, this finding could solely reflect the fact that customers are not concerned with procedural fairness when they evaluate and react to service recovery incidences.

### **7.9.2 Measurement of the moral emotions**

To measure moral emotions, single-item scales were used, which were embedded in a larger scale that measured various positive and negative emotions. This strategy was chosen in order to reduce any demand effects that would bias the findings of the current study. As aforementioned, by measuring a range of emotions, the participants could not guess which ones were the focus of the current study. However, the literature suggests that three items or more should be used when measuring constructs in order to increase the reliability of construct measurement (Hair et al., 2014). Hence, a multi-item scale that would involve at least three items for each moral emotion would probably have been a more statistically reliable way to measure these emotions.

## Chapter 8

### **Studies 2 and 3: The role of emotion regulation in customer revenge**

The previous chapter has provided evidence about the key role of emotions in motivating customer revenge. In particular, it has demonstrated that the discrete emotions of anger and contempt mediate the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge. These emotions influence customer revenge both directly and indirectly through the mechanism of forgiveness. After establishing the pivotal role of emotional factors as drivers of customer revenge, this chapter will examine the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge.

After experiencing a service failure followed by a failed service recovery, customers are left to cope with severe stress due to the repetitive nature of the failure. Individuals are inherently motivated to approach pleasure and avoid pain and hence, spontaneously seek to increase their positive emotions and decrease the negative ones (Gross, 1998b; Larsen, 2000). For this reason, they have developed a repertoire of emotion regulation strategies that they employ with the intent to feel better (Gross, 1998b; Koole, 2009b). The prediction for the next two studies (Experiments 2 and 3) is that the various customer revengeful behaviours serve as emotion regulation strategies that individuals employ to cope with their negative emotions after service failure/recovery encounters.

Evidence corroborates to the idea that revenge may be employed in the service of hedonic emotion regulation. Beliefs in catharsis theory are so widespread that they have become ingrained in today's culture. Messages in the media and popular psychology constantly reinforce the idea that exacting revenge provides an emotional release of negative emotions that otherwise build up and influence the psyche (Bushman et al., 2001; Bushman et al., 1999). Consequently, individuals seem to have internalised the beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and engage in such behaviours because they expect to feel better (Carlsmith et al., 2008). This chapter addresses the following hypothesis of this thesis.

Table 8.1: Hypotheses tested in Studies 2 and 3

	<b>Hypothesis</b>
<b>H8</b>	<b>H8:</b> <i>Individuals who believe that their negative emotions will be improved by exacting revenge after unfair treatment, are more likely to engage in customer revengeful acts (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) than individuals who believe that their negative emotions are unchangeable.</i>

## 8.1 Study 2

### 8.1.1 Participants

Ninety eight participants were recruited for this experiment. The study lasted about 17 minutes and participants were paid £5 for their participation. The participants were students at the University of Bath. One was removed from the study, because she had correctly identified the real purpose of the study and her responses could have biased the findings. Hence, the final sample consisted of 97 participants ( $n = 49$  for condition 1 and  $n = 48$  for condition 2), 34% males and 66% females and, with an average age of  $M_{\text{age}} = 20.77$  ( $SD = 1.92$ ).

### 8.1.2 Recruitment

In order to recruit participants for this experiment two strategies were followed:

1. Two people - two of the researcher's friends - distributed flyers at three points at the University of Bath, i.e. the main University Library, Student's Union and the main coffee shop (Tiki). Students were initially approached and informed that we were conducting research on how customers respond to service experiences. They were told that for this study they would have to read a scenario and answer a questionnaire. This would last about 15 minutes and they would receive £5. Finally, they were told that if they decided to participate they should come to the Management School's lab in 8W 1.25 on that day, from 11:00-17:00, to complete the study. If students indicated their interest to participate, they were given a flyer stating the purpose of the study, its duration, its location and the contact details of the researcher. The flyers used can be seen in Appendix H. This recruitment procedure lasted for four consecutive days until

the threshold number of participants required for the experiment was reached. Furthermore, this strategy of recruiting participants was the most effective of the two.

2. Posters were placed in various locations around the University of Bath so that they were visible to students, including in the: University Library, Student's Union, Limetree Restaurant, Psychology Department, School of Management Reception and on various other boards around the University that allowed posting of ads for recruiting participants for research studies. The posters included the same information as the flyers, with the difference being that students had to take the email of the researcher and contact her in order to arrange a day and time to complete the study. The posters used can be seen in Appendix H.

The other two strategies that had been employed in Experiment 1 (i.e. university website, recruiting students from the researcher's taught class) were not employed in this experiment. The university website had not proved successful in attracting participants, while students from class were not recruited, since the researcher preferred to engage those from diverse departments in order to have a more representative sample. That is, the aim was to avoid having too high a proportion of students from the School of Management.

### **8.1.3 Research Design**

The experiment was a 2 (mood change beliefs: present vs control) between-subjects design. The independent variable was mood change beliefs, while the dependent ones were the four revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).

### **8.1.4 Procedure**

This experiment took place in two rooms, one being the Management School's lab (8W 1.25), where the main experiment took place and the other was the room with the chocolates (8W 1.29). The door of the room with the chocolates was kept closed so that participants in the study could not see the chocolates before entering the lab and completing the first part of the study, as is explained below.

When the students entered the lab they were seated in front of a computer. There were two separate links for experimental conditions, one and two, that were linked with Qualtrics. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions, such that the first participant

was assigned to the first condition, the second to the second condition and so on. Furthermore, those who were sitting next to each other were told that they should respond to the questionnaire without collaborating with the person next to them, because they had to read and respond to different information. The researcher stayed in the lab and was observing participants in order to make sure that all of them actually read the scenario carefully and responded to the questions without referring to the responses of the people next to them. This eliminated any possibility of a repeat of the participants cheating, which had been observed in the first experiment, whereby a few participants had not read the scenario, having instead moved straight to the questionnaire.

The first page of Qualtrics informed the participants about the purpose of the study. Those in the treatment condition were told that they would participate in two unrelated studies that would be used for two different research projects. The purpose of the first study was introduced as examining customer responses to service experiences, while the aim of the second study was explained as being an investigation into brand attitudes and purchase intention. The participants in the control condition were informed that they would participate in one study examining customer responses to service experiences. All the participants were told that their responses would be kept anonymous and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point they wanted.

All the participants first read the airline scenario. As in experiment 1, they were asked to try to imagine themselves in the situation described in the scenario as vividly as possible by imagining all the details of the situation, as if it was happening to them at that point in time. After these instructions, they had to spend some time reading the scenario. The timing setting in Qualtrics was used and set to 40 seconds, which ensured that the participants spend at least this duration reading the scenario before moving on to the next sections.

The scenario described a flight delay service failure. The customer had booked a flight from London to Rome via Geneva, but a three hour flight delay for the first flight due to crew unavailability made the customer miss his/her connecting flight. The scenario then described a failed service recovery (double deviation scenario) with the following elements:

- The customer had to wait for 30 minutes until the airline employee figured out what could be done to address his/her problem (low procedural fairness);

- No compensation was received for the flight delay and the customer had to book another connecting flight, the price difference of which he/she had to pay for his/herself, because the airline worked as a point-to-point carrier (low distributive fairness);
- The employee was very rude and unconcerned about the customer's problem (low interactional fairness).

The scenario employed in this study can be seen in the Appendix D.

After reading the scenario, the participants in the mood change belief condition were told that they would have a small break before moving to the main questionnaire and in the meanwhile, they would be given the instructions of the second, supposedly unrelated study, which they would complete after they have completed the first one. The chocolate eating manipulation of mood change beliefs was introduced, as explained in section 8.1.4.1. The control group did not receive any instructions and moved directly to the main questionnaire, as discussed later.

Participants in both conditions then moved on to the main questionnaire of the study. After the completion of the questionnaire, those in the chocolate eating condition were informed that the first study had ended and they would participate in the second. For the participants in the control condition, the session ended there and they were debriefed and thanked for their participation. Those in the chocolate eating condition were then escorted to another room (8W 1.29), where they would taste the chocolates. A number of chocolates of various shapes and flavours had been purchased by the researcher from Sainsbury's supermarket. They were cut in small pieces and placed on plastic plates. The participants were told these were chocolates from an unknown brand and that they could try as many as they wanted. In order to maintain the cover story, they were finally asked to answer a paper-based questionnaire about their attitudes and purchase intentions regarding the chocolates and their opinions about the unknown brand. This questionnaire was not relevant to the hypotheses of the research and hence, it was not used for further analyses. After completing this questionnaire, the participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

#### **8.1.4.1 Manipulation of mood change beliefs - eating chocolates**

Past research has involved using various manipulations to demonstrate that certain behaviours are undertaken in the service of emotion regulation. The logic behind these manipulations is that if individuals engage in these behaviours in order to improve their negative emotions, then

when made to believe that their emotions are either temporarily frozen or going to be positive by engaging in another unrelated activity (e.g. eating chocolates), the behaviours employed in the service of affect regulation should be eliminated. This is because that belief should make any emotion regulation efforts seemingly useless (Bushman et al., 2001). Hence, the mood change beliefs manipulations employed in prior studies aim to change individuals' expectations about either the presence of their emotions or the valence of these emotions. Most studies have employed mood-freezing manipulations, such as pill taking (Bushman et al., 2001), and aromatherapy (Tice et al., 2001), where individuals were made to believe that by taking a pill or smelling a lit scented candle their emotions would be temporarily frozen and unchanged. Others have manipulated individual's expectation about the valence of their emotions. For instance, Andrade (2005) used chocolate bars as a mood-lifting cue (i.e. positive emotions) and a 12-min questionnaire as a mood-threatening cue (i.e. negative emotions). These procedures were effectively employed to demonstrate that a number of behaviours, such as eating (Tice et al., 2001), procrastination (Tice et al., 2001), helping (Manucia, Baumann, & Cialdini, 1984) and aggression (Bushman et al., 2001) are used by distressed individuals in order to improve their negative emotions.

For the current study, a chocolate treatment was deployed to manipulate individuals' mood change beliefs. This was chosen, because past studies have documented that when individuals are in negative emotional states they tend to indulge in order to regulate their emotions (Andrade, 2005; Garg, Wansink, & Inman, 2007; Salerno, Laran, & Janiszewski, 2014). That is, a number of studies have shown that when individuals experience negative emotions they increase the consumption of fattening foods, such as snacks (Tice et al., 2001) and chocolates (Andrade 2005). In fact, it has been found that the consumption of fattening food increases positive emotions and alleviates negative emotions (Macht & Dettmer, 2006). Hence, it would appear that individuals in negative affective states consider the mood-lifting properties of fattening food and overconsume them. In a study that provided direct evidence for the assumption that eating fattening food is employed in the service of emotion regulation, Tice et al. (2001) demonstrated that when individuals were made to believe that their emotions were temporarily frozen, and hence, unchangeable, they ate less fattening food than when they believed that their emotions were changeable. That is, these authors found that individuals in negative emotional states indulge themselves, because they expect that doing so will regulate their negative emotions.

Taking the above into consideration the chocolate eating manipulation was deemed appropriate for this study. As noted in section 8.1.4, the participants in the mood change belief condition received the relevant manipulation after reading the scenario. They were told that for the second study they would be escorted to another room (8W 1.29), where they would find chocolates to consume. The instructions were as follows: “You will be asked to taste various types of chocolates, of various sizes and flavours, from an unknown brand and you will be required to rate them with regards to their attractiveness and your intention to purchase them in the future”. In order to stress the mood-lifting properties of chocolate eating the following text was included: “Scientific evidence suggests that eating chocolates makes people feel better. According to the results of a study published in 2015 in Science, eating chocolate improves individuals’ moods even when they are in intense negative emotional states. So, whatever emotional state you are in now and after the end of the first study you are very likely to feel better after eating the chocolates”. Similar instructions have been used by Bushman et al. (2001) in order to make their mood change beliefs manipulations more credible. It was expected that if individuals engaged in revengeful behaviours, because they believed that this way they would alleviate their negative emotions, then when told that they would consume chocolates and hence, have positive emotions at the end of the session, this should decrease their motivation for customer revenge when compared to the control group. This logic follows the procedures previously used by Gollwitzer and Bushman (2012) and Andrade (2005).

Other manipulations employed in past research were considered inappropriate for this study. For instance, Gollwitzer and Bushman (2012) argued that the pill taking manipulation was problematic, because a number of participants in their study refused to take the pill that would supposedly temporarily freeze their emotions. In addition, the pill manipulation would create ethical concerns for this research. On the other hand, employing the aromatherapy cover story of Tice et al. (2001) and using lit scented candles to make individuals believe that their emotions would be temporarily frozen may have been dangerous or requiring special permission from the university to use in the school’s laboratory. Hence, the chocolate eating manipulation was employed in this study.

### **8.1.5 Pre-test**

A pre-test was conducted to ascertain whether the chocolate eating manipulation would influence individuals’ expectations about the change of their emotions in the intended way.



Twenty-eight students from the University of Bath were recruited through the University of Bath Noticeboard. An ad was posted on the noticeboard asking participants to complete the study in order to enter a prize draw for a £10 Amazon Voucher. The sample consisted of 64.3% males and 35.7% females, with an average age  $M_{age} = 22.93$  ( $SD = 8.04$ ). As in the main experiment, there were two conditions, the mood change belief condition ( $n = 13$  students) and the control condition ( $n = 15$  students). Participants in both conditions had to first read the airline scenario. Then, those who were assigned to the mood change belief condition were asked to imagine that they would participate in a second supposedly unrelated study which involved a real sampling promotion scenario. They would be asked to taste various chocolates of an unknown brand and required to rate them with regards to their attractiveness and their intention to purchase them in the future. The participants in the control condition did not receive such instructions. All participants were then asked to rate the extent to which they expected themselves to feel angry, outraged and annoyed by the end of the session ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ) on a 10-point scale (1-Not at all, 10-Very much). The results indicate that individuals in the chocolate eating condition expected their emotions to be significantly less negative than those in the control condition group ( $M_{chocolates} = 3.67$  vs  $M_{control} = 5.96$ ;  $F(1, 26) = 5.90$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the manipulation was effective in changing individuals' expectations and was subsequently employed in the main experiment.

### **8.1.6 Measurement**

The questionnaire assessed the following (see Appendix E):

1. Four customer revengeful behaviours;
2. Emotions;
3. Fairness perceptions;
4. Anger-out tendencies;
5. Cultural orientation.

The scales for the various revengeful acts, i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining were taken from Grégoire et al. (2010). Aggression was measured using four items ( $\alpha = 0.55$ /formative measure); vindictive complaining had three items ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ); vindictive NWOM was measured with three items ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ); and third-party complaining was a four-item scale ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ). The participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with the statements on a 10-point scale (1-Strongly

Disagree/10-Strongly Agree). A general customer revenge score was also created by summing the four revengeful behaviours ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ).

To measure emotions, the emotion scale developed specifically for service failures by Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008a) was employed. Specifically, nine positive emotions ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ) and seven negative ones were taken from this scale, while regarding negative emotions, those of disgust and contempt were added ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) to keep consistency with the emotions that were the focus of experiment 1. Hence, in total nine positive and nine negative emotions were measured, while participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt each particular way on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 10 (Very much).

Next, the three dimensions of fairness were measured. Distributive fairness was measured with four items taken from Blodgett et al., 1997), two of which were reverse coded ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ). Procedural fairness was measured using three items, two taken from Wirtz and Mattila (2004) and one from Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008b), with one item being reverse coded ( $\alpha = 0.60$ ). Interactional fairness involved four items adopted from Smith et al. (1999), two of which were reverse coded ( $\alpha = 0.41$ ). The participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a 10-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 10-Strongly Agree).

Next, two personality traits, the anger-out tendencies and the cultural orientation, were measured. These two personality traits have been shown to influence revenge behaviour and hence, were chosen as control variables in this study. These will be discussed in detail in sections 8.1.6.1 and 8.1.6.2. The anger-out tendencies were measured using the eight items from the Anger-out subscale of Spielberger's (1999) State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory-2 (STAXI-2) ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ). Cultural orientation was measured using the 16 items from Triandis and Gelfand's (1998) scale. The participants were asked to indicate how well the statements given describe them on a 9-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 9-Strongly Agree) (Individualism,  $\alpha = 0.70$ ; Collectivism,  $\alpha = 0.75$ ).

As a manipulation check, the participants were asked to indicate on a 10-point scale (1-Not at all, 10-Very much) the extent to which they expected themselves to be in a negative emotional state by the end of the session. Furthermore, to check whether the manipulation was effective, individuals' perceptions about the hedonic properties of chocolates were examined using a 4-item scale taken from Garg et al. (2007) where they had to indicate their level of agreement on

a 10-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 10-Strongly Agree) ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ). Scenario realism was assessed using two questions taken from Bechwati and Morrin (2003). One asked the participants the extent to which they thought the scenario was realistic, for which the responses were recorded on a 10-point scale (1-Very unrealistic, 10-Very realistic). The other item asked whether they believe that such an incident could happen to someone in real life, with the responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree) on a 10-point scale. The scale reliability was  $\alpha = 0.76$ . In order to figure out those participants who were suspicious of the true purpose of the study, they were asked about what they thought the aim was for carrying out the research. This question was open-ended and they were asked to explain in as much detail as possible their thoughts. Finally, some demographic questions regarding sex, age and nationality were put to the participants.

#### **8.1.6.1 Anger-out tendencies**

The anger-out tendencies personality trait was used as a control variable in this study. As Spielberger (1979, p. 5) points out, individuals high in anger-out tendencies “frequently experience anger which they express in aggressive behaviour directed towards other persons or objects in the environment. Anger-out may be expressed in physical acts such as assaulting other persons or slamming doors, or it may be expressed verbally in the form of criticism, sarcasm, insults, threats, and the extreme use of profanity”.

These individual chronic tendencies to express anger may have an impact on whether individuals employ revenge in the service of emotion regulation. “People who habitually favour venting (such as by expressing their anger in a vigorous, aggressive fashion) may do so out of some personal belief or recognition that aggression makes them feel better” (Bushman et al., 2001, p.21). In line with this assumption, Bushman et al. (2001) showed that anger out individuals aggress in the hope that their emotional state will be improved. In particular, it was shown that individuals who scored high in the anger-out tendencies aggressed less when made to believe that their emotional states were temporarily frozen by taking a pill than when their moods were changeable. However, this manipulation had no effect for low anger-out participants. This finding implies a close association between anger-out tendencies and the belief about the mood-lifting properties of aggression. For this reason, anger-out tendencies were measured in this study.

### **8.1.6.2 Cultural orientation**

For his study, cultural orientation as an individual trait was also measured and used as a control variable. Past research has suggested that cultures differ on certain attributes. While Hofstede's (1980) initial conceptualisation of individualist-collectivist cultures referred to differences in cultural values at the national level, it was later found that individuals within the same culture may hold different values. Accordingly, more recent conceptualisations of cultural variability have emphasised the individual-level orientations that reflect these cultural values.

These orientations differ according to how an individual views his/herself in relation to others. Those that have an individualist orientation are independent and autonomous from others and seek to discover as well as express their own unique qualities (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Such individuals "give priority to their personal goals, they behave primarily on the basis of their attitudes, and exchange theory adequately predicts their social behaviour" (Triandis, 2001, p. 909). In contrast, individuals with a collectivist orientation maintain their connectedness and interdependence to others in the group (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These individuals give priority to the goals of their in-groups over their personal goals; their behaviour is determined by the thoughts feelings and actions of others in the group and they behave in a communal way (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998).

These cultural values influence how individuals behave. Zourrig et al. (2009b, p. 411) argue that "interdependent persons are sensitive to social bonds, and more concerned about maintaining a good relationship with others". In addition, collectivists discourage the expression of negative emotions, because they disrupt the maintenance of good interpersonal relationships (Zourrig et al., 2009b). For this reason, it is expected that collectivists are more likely to restore social relationships that have been previously betrayed and less likely to take revenge. Conversely, independent persons "who have less attachment to the group, and are more concerned about protecting their self welfare and one's rights over those of group are likely to have less interest in restoring social relationships and to forgive" (Zourrig et al., 2009b, p. 411). Individualists encourage the outward expression of emotions since these may re-establish the sense of self-esteem and hence, are expected to be more revengeful (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998).

## 8.1.7 Findings - Examination of the whole dataset

### 8.1.7.1 Manipulation check

The manipulation check showed that there was no significant difference in the expected negative emotions at the end of the session for participants in the chocolate eating condition and the control group ( $M_{\text{chocolate}} = 3.27$  vs  $M_{\text{control}} = 3.00$ ;  $F(1, 95) = 0.41$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ). This result indicates that the manipulation of the mood change beliefs was not successful. Furthermore, those participants in the eating chocolate condition had been asked about their perceptions of the hedonic properties of eating chocolate. The responses had a mean  $M = 7.20$  ( $SD = 1.76$ ), which is above the midpoint, thus indicating that they were aware of the mood-lifting properties of eating chocolates.

### 8.1.7.2 Tests of normality

In this study, the independent variable was individuals' mood change beliefs, while the dependent ones were the four revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining). The Kolmogorov test was conducted first to examine the normality of the data. This was undertaken for the two conditions, rather than the whole dataset, and the results can be seen in the table below. These indicate that aggression, NWOM and revenge deviate from the normal distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ) for at least one of the two conditions.

Table 8.2: Tests of Normality for Experiment 2 (whole dataset)

	Condition	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
		Statistic	Significance
Aggression	Chocolate eating	0.127	0.048
	Control	0.103	0.200
Vindictive complaining	Chocolate eating	0.084	0.200
	Control	0.092	0.200
NWOM	Chocolate eating	0.163	0.002
	Control	0.188	0.000
Third-party complaining	Chocolate eating	0.110	0.192
	Control	0.095	0.200
Revenge	Chocolate eating	0.069	0.200
	Control	0.134	0.031

### 8.1.7.3 Descriptive statistics

The table below shows the descriptive statistics of the main variables used for analysis, with their means and standards deviations. Anger-out tendencies was a summated scale of the individuals' scores for the items. For individualism/collectivism, an index was created by taking the sum of the scores in the individual items and dividing by the total number of items in the scale.

Table 8.3: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 2 (whole dataset)

	Condition	Mean	Standard Deviation
Aggression	Chocolate eating	2.80	1.27
	Control	2.92	1.52
Vindictive complaining	Chocolate eating	4.50	2.43
	Control	4.91	2.50
NWOM	Chocolate eating	7.97	2.00
	Control	7.80	1.90
Third-party complaining	Chocolate eating	6.24	2.32
	Control	6.97	2.21
Revenge	Chocolate eating	5.26	1.39
	Control	5.55	1.60
Anger-out tendencies	Chocolate eating	14.57	3.52
	Control	15.85	4.18
Cultural orientation	Chocolate eating	4.62	0.73
	Control	4.59	0.93

### 8.1.7.4 Main Analysis

The analysis in this section tests H8 of this thesis, i.e. whether customers employ the various revengeful behaviours, because they believe that doing so will ameliorate their negative emotions. Parametric tests, like ANOVA, are based on the assumption of a normal distribution. Since aggression, NWOM and revenge were found to deviate from normal distribution, the non-parametric Mann-Witney test was first employed for these three variables and then the results were compared with those taken from an ANOVA. This test is usually used when the assumption of normality is violated. The Mann-Witney test indicates that there was no

significant difference between the two conditions for aggression ( $U = 1126.00$ ,  $z = -0.36$ ,  $p = 0.72$ ), NWOM ( $U = 1063.0$ ,  $z = -0.82$ ,  $p = 0.41$ ) and revenge ( $U = 1041.50$ ,  $z = -0.97$ ,  $p = 0.33$ ).

Next, an ANOVA test was conducted with all the revengeful behaviours as dependent variables and the mood change beliefs condition as the independent variable. This was conducted to examine whether its results would be similar to those of the Mann-Whitney test. The results indicate that the difference between the groups did not reach significance for aggression ( $F(1,95) = 0.18$ ,  $p = 0.67$ ), vindictive complaining ( $F(1,95) = 0.66$ ,  $p = 0.42$ ), NWOM ( $F(1,95) = 0.19$ ,  $p = 0.66$ ), third-party complaining ( $F(1,95) = 2.51$ ,  $p = 0.12$ ), and revenge ( $F(1,95) = 0.93$ ,  $p = 0.34$ ). Thus, the ANOVA provided similar results to the Mann-Witney test and hence, it is evident that the former is robust to violations of normality, as has been previously suggested in the literature (Field 2009). According to these findings, H8 is rejected.

The scenario realism measure was high and above the midpoint ( $M = 7.72$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ) which means that individuals could identify with the story described in the scenario and believed that this could happen in real life.

The findings so far indicate that there is no significant effect of mood change beliefs on customer revenge. That is, the result indicates that revengeful behaviours are not employed by individuals as an emotion regulation strategy. However, the lack of findings may also be due to the specific manipulation that was used in this study (i.e. the chocolate eating). Indeed, the manipulation check showed that individuals in the chocolate eating condition did not expect to have significantly less negative emotions than individuals in the control group. There is debate in the literature about whether eating chocolates has the same mood-lifting properties among men and women. A number of studies have demonstrated that both men and women acknowledge the mood-lifting properties of eating fattening food when in negative emotional states and tend to consume more in order to regulate their emotions (Tice et al., 2001; Garg et al., 2007). Conversely, other studies have shown a gender effect. In particular, Dubé, LeBel, and Lu (2005) have demonstrated that, for men, eating fattening food is motivated by positive emotions, while for women it is triggered by negative ones. Consistent with this idea, Macht, Roth, and Ellgring (2002) showed that men tended to consume fewer chocolates, and reported that it tasted less pleasant and was less stimulating when in a negative rather than positive emotional state. In contrast, women tended to consume more chocolates when in negative

emotional states (Andrade 2005) and they reported more positive emotions after consuming them (Macht and Dettmer 2006). Thus, men would appear to be more likely to consume fattening food to maintain or increase positive emotions, whilst women would seem to do so to alleviate negative ones (Dubé et al., 2005).

If only women believe in the mood-lifting properties of eating chocolates and acknowledge eating chocolates as an attempt to alleviate negative emotions, then the manipulation of mood change beliefs that was employed in this study may have only worked for them. Indeed, comparing the perceptions of the hedonic properties of chocolates among men and women in this study showed a significant difference between the two ( $M_{\text{male}} = 6.46$  vs  $M_{\text{female}} = 7.64$ ,  $F(1,47) = 5.57$ ,  $p = 0.023 < 0.05$ ). This shows that women believed significantly more in the hedonic properties of the chocolates than men. Hence, it was decided to examine the hypothesis H8 of this study further using only the female dataset this time.

### **8.1.8 Findings - Examination of the female-only dataset**

In this section, only the responses of women are examined while men's responses have been removed. The dataset now has 64 women ( $n = 31$  for the chocolate condition,  $n = 33$  for the control condition).

#### **8.1.8.1 Manipulation check**

The results for the manipulation check again show that the manipulation employed in this study did not effectively change individuals' beliefs about their emotions. That is, women in the chocolate eating condition did not expect to experience significantly less negative emotions than in the control group ( $M_{\text{chocolate}} = 3.18$  vs  $M_{\text{control}} = 3.19$ ;  $F(1, 62) = 0.00$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ).

#### **8.1.8.2 Tests of normality**

Kolmogorov's test was employed to examine the normality of the data and this was done for the two conditions separately rather than the whole dataset. It was found that NWOM violated the assumptions of normality only in one of the two conditions ( $p < 0.05$ ) while aggression, vindictive complaining, third-party complaining, and revenge followed the normal distribution. Since the violation occurs only in one group of the two for NWOM and it has now been evident that ANOVA is robust to violations of normality, ANOVA tests were employed further for the analysis of the results.



### 8.1.8.3 Descriptive Statistics

The table below provides some descriptive statistics for the dependent variables and the two personality traits that will be used as covariates in the analysis.

Table 8.4: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 2 (women-only dataset)

	Condition	Mean	Standard Deviation
Aggression	Chocolate eating	2.52	1.10
	Control	3.14	1.41
Vindictive complaining	Chocolate eating	4.43	2.58
	Control	5.25	2.36
NWOM	Chocolate eating	8.06	1.88
	Control	8.36	1.36
Third-party complaining	Chocolate eating	6.42	2.18
	Control	7.60	1.93
Revenge	Chocolate eating	5.23	1.33
	Control	5.98	1.29
Anger-out tendencies	Chocolate eating	14.55	3.88
	Control	16.27	4.26
Cultural orientation	Chocolate eating	4.43	0.61
	Control	4.60	1.05

### 8.1.8.4 Main results

An ANOVA was conducted to test H8 of this thesis but this time only using the women's dataset. That is, it was tested whether customers engage in revengeful behaviours for affect regulation purposes. Mood change beliefs was the independent variable and the various revengeful behaviours served as the dependent ones. The results indicate that women in the chocolate eating condition engaged in significantly less aggression ( $F(1,62) = 3.84, p = 0.05$ ) and third-party complaining ( $F(1,62) = 5.25, p = 0.025$ ) but not less vindictive complaining ( $F(1,62) = 1.77, p = 0.19$ ) nor NWOM ( $F(1,62) = 0.54, p = 0.47$ ). For customer revenge as a whole, significant differences between the groups were found ( $F(1,62) = 5.29, p = 0.025$ ). Finally, no significant differences were found for anger-out tendencies ( $F(1,62) = 2.86, p =$

0.10) or cultural orientation  $F(1,62) = 0.62, p = 0.43$ ). These results are depicted in the table below.

Table 8.5: ANOVA results for Experiment 2 (women-only dataset)

	$M_{\text{chocolate}}$	$M_{\text{control}}$	F-value	Significance
Aggression	2.52	3.14	3.84*	0.05
Vindictive complaining	4.43	5.25	1.77 (ns)	0.19
NWOM	8.06	8.36	0.54 (ns)	0.47
Third-party complaining	6.42	7.60	5.25*	0.025
Revenge	5.23	5.98	5.29*	0.025

\* $p < 0.05$

As aforementioned, it was expected that the two personality traits - anger-out tendencies and cultural orientation - would influence the effect of the mood change beliefs on the dependent variables of this study. Accordingly, as a next step, a MANCOVA was conducted to test the effect of the independent variable on the four dependent ones, taking into consideration the effect of anger-out tendencies and cultural orientation. A MANCOVA is used when a number of dependent variables have been measured and there is a relationship between these and when the effect of covariates is taken into consideration (Field, 2009). For the anger-out tendencies a median-split procedure was performed to categorise individuals as high anger-out or low anger-out individuals. Hence, anger-out tendencies was deployed as a categorical variable following the procedure used by Bushman et al. (2001). A median split procedure was also used for the individualism/collectivism covariate in order to categorise individuals into individualists or collectivists. This procedure has been also used in previous studies (Gregory, Munch, & Peterson, 2002; Zourrig, Chebat, & Toffoli, 2015).

A MANCOVA is based on the assumption of homogeneity of variances between groups and homogeneity of covariance matrices across groups. Levene's tests were conducted for all the dependent variables and were found non-significant, with the exception of NWOM ( $p = 0.031 < 0.05$ ). This result shows that the variances in each group were equal and this held true for aggression, vindictive complaining and third-party complaining, but not for NWOM. Furthermore, the Box's M statistic was non-significant ( $p = 0.199$ ), thus demonstrating that the assumption of homogeneity of the covariance matrices is met.

The results from the MANCOVA demonstrate that the effect of mood change beliefs on the customer revengeful behaviours was not significant ( $F(5,56) = 0.92, p = 0.48, \eta^2 = 0.08$ ), whilst the anger-out covariate had a significant effect on the dependent variables ( $F(5,56) = 4.15, p = 0.003, \eta^2 = 0.27$ ). The effect of the individualism/collectivism cultural orientation was also significant ( $F(5,56) = 2.66, p = 0.03, \eta^2 = 0.19$ ). Next, the effect of the mood change beliefs on the individual dependent variables was examined and the findings indicate that after controlling for the two personality traits, the effect of the mood change beliefs on the various dependent variables is insignificant. In particular, no significant differences were found for aggression ( $F(1,60) = 1.66, p > 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ), vindictive complaining ( $F(1,60) = 0.92, p > 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.02$ ), NWOM ( $F(1,60) = 0.00, p > 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.00$ ) and third-party complaining ( $F(1,60) = 1.55, p > 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ). An ANCOVA was further conducted to test the effect of the mood change beliefs on the summated customer revenge variable taking into consideration the two personality traits. The findings indicate that women in the chocolate eating condition were not significantly less likely to take revenge than the control group ( $F(1,60) = 1.87, p > 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ). The results of the MANCOVA and ANCOVA can be seen in the table below.

Table 8.6: MANCOVA and ANCOVA results for Experiment 2 (women-only dataset)

	<b>M<sub>chocolate</sub></b>	<b>M<sub>control</sub></b>	<b>F-value</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Aggression	2.52	3.14	1.66 (ns)	0.20
Vindictive complaining	4.43	5.25	0.92 (ns)	0.34
NWOM	8.06	8.36	0.00 (ns)	0.97
Third-party complaining	6.42	7.60	1.55 (ns)	0.22
Revenge	5.23	5.98	1.87 (ns)	0.18

A one-way ANOVA was also conducted to test whether the chocolate eating manipulation influenced emotions and fairness perceptions. If the manipulation of eating chocolates had resulted in an increase in positive emotions/decrease in negative emotions and a decrease in perceptions of unfairness, the findings of the study may have been due to changes in the emotions and fairness perceptions and not because customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. The fairness perceptions measure was made by summing the individual scores of the items on the various dimensions of fairness (i.e. distributive, procedural and interactional) and dividing this total by the number of items. The results indicate that the manipulation of chocolate eating did not influence positive emotions ( $M_{\text{chocolate}} = 1.37$  vs

$M_{\text{control}} = 1.34$ ;  $F(1, 62) = 0.02$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ), negative emotions ( $M_{\text{chocolate}} = 7.69$  vs  $M_{\text{control}} = 8.20$ ;  $F(1, 62) = 1.46$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ) and unfairness perceptions ( $M_{\text{chocolate}} = 8.43$  vs  $M_{\text{control}} = 8.42$ ;  $F(1, 62) = 0.00$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ). Hence, there were no significant differences between the conditions, as was hoped would be case. Finally, scenario realism was high and above the midpoint ( $M = 7.79$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) which means that women could identify with the story described in the scenario and believed this could happen in real life.

### **8.1.9 Discussion**

The findings from this study are mixed. When looking at the sample as a whole, the results indicate that the various revengeful behaviours are not employed by individuals in the service of emotion regulation. In particular, the effect of mood change beliefs had no significant effect on aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining. Hence, these behaviours do not seem to be employed as emotion regulation strategies because individuals expect to feel better.

As a second step and taking into consideration evidence from the literature that suggests that women, but not men, acknowledge the mood-lifting properties of chocolates and tend to consume more when they are in negative emotional states, only the dataset for women was examined. Now, the effect of mood change beliefs becomes significant for aggression and third-party complaining, but not for vindictive complaining and NWOM. Furthermore, the effect was significant for customer revenge as a whole. That is, taking into consideration women's responses, aggression, third-party complaining and revenge, as a whole, seem to be employed in the service of emotion regulation. These effects occurred when the two personality traits, i.e. anger-out tendencies and cultural orientation, were not employed as covariates in the analysis. However, these effects were rendered insignificant when accounting for the effects of two personality traits. The findings from the MANCOVA indicate that while anger-out tendencies and individualist/collectivist cultural orientation significantly predict customer revenge, the effect of mood-change beliefs on the various customer revengeful behaviours becomes insignificant.

In sum, this study provided mixed results. Furthermore, the manipulation checks showed that the chocolate eating manipulation did not effectively change individuals' expectations about their mood improvement after eating them. However, women perceived significantly more than

men that chocolates had hedonic qualities. For this reason, it was deemed appropriate to replicate the same experimental design using a different manipulation that would effectively manipulate individuals' beliefs about their mood improvement for both men and women. This was the purpose of study 3.

### **8.1.10 Limitation**

The main limitation of this study is the manipulation used to change individuals' expectations about their mood improvement. Further limitations of the study will be discussed in the limitation section of the next study (section 8.2.8), which is a replication of this study but with a different manipulation. As discussed above, the manipulation checks showed that individuals in the chocolate eating condition did not expect to have significantly less negative emotions than those in the control condition. This held true when examining both the whole dataset and the women's dataset. Hence, it is uncertain whether the manipulation really worked the way it was intended. Furthermore, women were more likely than men to perceive chocolates as hedonic. When examining the women's dataset but without accounting for the covariates, they showed less motivation to take revenge when expecting to eat chocolates than when not. This demonstrates that when women considered the mood-lifting properties of chocolates, revenge was reduced compared to the control group, thus indicating that revenge may be employed by individuals in order to alleviate their negative emotions. No such patterns of behaviour were observed in men's responses. These findings show that the chocolate manipulation used in this study may be gender specific. Hence, the specific manipulation may account for the mixed results this study offered.

## **8.2 Study 3**

### **8.2.1 Participants**

One hundred participants (50 for each condition) were recruited through the Prolific Academic platform for this experiment. The pre-screening criteria used to identify eligible participants were:

- Age: 18-28
- Student status: yes
- Country of residence: United Kingdom
- Participation in other studies by the researcher of this thesis: none.

The experiment lasted about 12 minutes and the participants were paid £1.20 for their participation. Two participants were removed from the treatment condition because they guessed the purpose of the study. The elimination of their contribution was so as to avoid any demand effects that could bias the responses and subsequently affect the experimental results. The final sample consisted of 98 university students, 53.1% of whom were females and 46.9% males and the average age was  $M_{age} = 25.97$  ( $SD = 8.23$ ).

### **8.2.2 Research Design**

The experiment was a 2 (mood change beliefs: present vs control) between-subjects design. The independent variable was individuals' beliefs regarding whether their mood would be improved at the end of the experiment or not. The dependent variables were the four customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).

### **8.2.3 Procedure**

Individuals were randomly assigned to the two experimental conditions. Those who were assigned to the mood change belief condition were informed that they would participate in two supposedly unrelated research studies that would provide insights for two different research projects. The purpose of the first study was introduced as examining customer responses to service experiences, while the second was explained as investigating individuals' autobiographical memory. Participants in the control condition were informed that they would participate in one study probing customer responses to service experiences. All the participants were told that their responses would be kept anonymous and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, if they wished to do so.

All the participants were then informed that they would have to read a scenario regarding a service experience with ABC airline and that they would have to spend at least 40 seconds reading it. The instructions asked them to imagine the situation as vividly as possible by taking in all the details as if it was happening right to them at that point in time. All participants then read the airline scenario. In order to ensure that they actually spent some time reading the scenario, the timing setting option in Qualtrics was used, being set to 40 seconds, meaning that they had to focus on the details before being able to move on to the next section.

The scenario was the same as that used in experiment 2 (see Appendix D). It described a flight delay service failure, where the customer had booked a flight from London to Rome via Geneva, but a three hour delay in the first flight due to crew unavailability made the customer miss his/her connecting flight. The scenario then described a failed service recovery (double deviation scenario) with the following elements:

- The customer had to wait for 30 minutes until the airline employee figured out what could be done to address his/her problem (low procedural fairness);
- The customer received no compensation for the flight delay and had to book another connecting flight, the onus for paying the price difference of this change resting with him/her since the airline worked as a point-to-point carrier (low distributive fairness);
- The employee was very rude and unconcerned about the customer's problem (low interactional justice).

After reading the scenario, the participants in the mood change belief condition were told that they would have a small break before moving on to the main questionnaire and meanwhile, they were given the instructions of the second supposedly unrelated study, which they would complete after the end of the first. The happy memory recall manipulation of mood change belief was then introduced, which is discussed in detail in section 8.2.3.1. The control group did not receive any instructions. The participants in both conditions then all moved on to the questionnaire of the study. After completing the questionnaire, the participants in the mood change belief condition were informed that they had been randomly selected by the computer not to participate in the happy memory recall study. Hence, the session ended at the same time in both conditions.

### **8.2.3.1 Manipulation of mood change beliefs - happy memory recall**

For this study, a happy memory recall manipulation was employed. Following the studies of Andrade (2005) and Gollwitzer and Bushman (2012), who deployed similar manipulations, the purpose was to make individuals believe that at the end of the session they would have positive emotions. If they believed that by exacting their revenge they would feel better, then, when they would be given another opportunity to feel better (i.e. recall a happy experience), emotion regulation through taking revenge should be less desirable. Accordingly, it was expected that individuals in the expected happy memory recall condition would be less likely to take revenge compared to the control group which received no such instructions.

Prior studies have shown that individuals deliberately recruit happy memories to regulate negative emotions (Josephson, 1996). This idea was first introduced when studies demonstrated that the mood-congruency effect was more robust on positive rather than negative affective states. In other words, individuals in positive moods are more likely to recall positive memories than those in negative moods bringing up negative memories (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Isen et al. (1978) suggested that this asymmetry may be due to processes of emotion regulation, whereby individuals in negative affective states may be motivated to retrieve pleasant memories in order to feel better. In line with this, participants in Josephson's (1996) study explicitly indicated their conscious intention to lift their moods by recalling happy memories. What is more, evidence indicates that recall of positive memories increases individuals' positive emotions (Joormann & Siemer, 2004; Josephson, 1996). In sum, this evidence suggests that individuals retrieve pleasant memories because they expect to regulate their negative emotions.

Given the above, a happy memory recall was deemed appropriate for this study. As indicated in the previous section, participants in the mood change belief condition were given the manipulation after reading the airline scenario. They were told that in the second study they would be asked to recall an extremely happy event in their life (e.g. personal accomplishment, winning the lottery, starting a new relationship, etc) and to write down a description of the event in detail, expressing all the feelings and thoughts they had had. To strengthen the manipulation of mood change beliefs further, the following instruction was added: "Previous studies have shown that recalling past happy personal experiences improves individuals' moods even when they are in intense negative emotional states. So, whatever emotional state you are in now and after the end of the first study you are very likely to feel better after the second study". These instructions are in line with those used in Tice et al.'s (2001) in order to make the mood-change belief manipulation more credible and effective.

#### **8.2.4 Pre-test**

A pre-test was conducted to determine whether the happy memory recall manipulation would effectively change individuals' expectations about their emotions. Twenty-four UK university students were recruited through the Prolific Academic platform. The criteria for participant eligibility were kept the same as with the main experiment (i.e. Age: 18-28, Student status: yes, Country of residence: United Kingdom). Those eligible were assigned to two conditions, one



that received the happy memory recall manipulation and the control group (12 participants in each group). The participants in both groups first read the airline scenario and then half of them received the happy memory recall instructions (see section 8.2.3.1 for more details), while the other half received no such instructions. Finally, participants in both groups were asked three questions about the extent to which they expected themselves to feel angry, outraged and annoyed by the end the session. A 10-point scale was used for the responses (1-Not at all, 10-Very much). The scale reliability was measured and Cronbach's alpha was 0.98. To test for differences of the means of expected negative emotions between the two groups a one-way ANOVA was employed. The findings indicate that the happy memory recall manipulation led participants to expect that their emotions would be less negative than those in the control group ( $M_{\text{happy}} = 3.27$  vs  $M_{\text{control}} = 7.38$ ;  $F(1, 22) = 13.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Hence, the manipulation was effective and was further employed in the main experiment.

### 8.2.5 Measurement

The questionnaire assessed the following (see Appendices E and F):

1. Various revengeful behaviours;
2. Emotions;
3. Fairness perceptions;
4. Motives;
5. Anger mood improvement inventory;
6. Cultural orientation.

The scales for the various revengeful acts, i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining, were taken from Grégoire et al. (2010). Aggression was measured using four items ( $\alpha = 0.58$ /formative measure); vindictive complaining had three items ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ); vindictive NWOM was measured with three items ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ); and third-party complaining involved a four-item scale ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with the statements on a 10-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree/10-Strongly Agree). Furthermore, a summated scale with all four revengeful behaviours to denote customer revenge as a whole was created and the Cronbach's alpha for this was  $\alpha = 0.83$ .

To measure emotions, the emotion scale developed specifically for service failures by Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008a) was employed. Specifically, nine positive emotions ( $\alpha = 0.97$ ) and seven negative ones were taken from their scale, while for the negative emotions, the emotions of disgust and contempt were added ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) to keep consistency with the emotions that were the focus of experiment 1. Hence, in total, nine positive and nine negative emotions were measured, while the participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt this way on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 10 (Very much).

Next, the three dimensions of fairness were measured. More specifically, distributive fairness was measured with four items taken from Blodgett et al. (1997), two of which were reverse coded ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ). Procedural fairness was measured using three items, two taken from Wirtz and Mattila (2004) and one from Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008b), with one of the items being reverse coded ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ). Interactional fairness covered four items adopted from Smith et al. (1999), two of which were reverse coded ( $\alpha = 0.54$ ). Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed/disagreed with the statements on a 10-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 10-Strongly Agree).

The participants were also asked about their motives when they engage in the various revengeful behaviours using questions adopted from Kähr et al. (2016). First, they were asked to indicate to what degree they had the following three motives: to cause harm to the firm, to vent their negative emotions and to restore equity. Responses were recorded on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 10 (Very much). Second, they had to rank these three motives with the most dominant being listed first and the least dominant being the third.

Next, two personality traits, mood improvement beliefs and cultural orientation, were measured. These two traits have been shown to influence revenge behaviour and hence, were used as control variables in the analysis. The former trait will be discussed in detail in section 8.2.5.1 while cultural orientation has already been discussed in section 8.1.6.2. The angry mood improvement inventory scale was taken from Bushman et al. (2001). It consists of eight items and responses were recorded on 4-point scale ranging from 1 (Almost never) to 4 (Almost always) ( $\alpha = .74$ ). Cultural orientation was measured using the sixteen items from Triandis and Gelfand's (1998) scale. The participants were asked to indicate how well the statements described them on a 9-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 9-Strongly Agree) (Individualism,  $\alpha = 0.67$ ; Collectivism,  $\alpha = 0.78$ )

As a manipulation check, participants were asked to indicate on a 10-point scale (1-Not at all, 10-Very much) the extent to which they expected themselves to be in a negative emotional state by the end of the session. Scenario realism was assessed with two questions taken from Bechwati and Morrin (2003). One asked the participants the extent to which they thought the scenario was realistic, with the responses being recorded on a 10-point scale (1-Very unrealistic, 10-Very realistic), whilst the other probed whether they believed that such an incident could happen to someone in real life, with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree) on a 10-point scale. The scale reliability was  $\alpha = 0.82$ . To test the effectiveness of the manipulation instructions, the participants in the mood change belief condition were asked three questions taken from Bushman et al. (2001). They had to indicate how scientifically credible, believable and persuasive the instructions for the second study examining the autobiographical memory were on a 10-point scale (1-Not at all, 10-Very much) ( $\alpha = 0.74$ ).

Participants were also asked about their familiarity with airline bookings with two questions. The first asked them to indicate whether they had travelled with an airline before, with a yes/no response. The second asked them how often they travelled with airline companies, where the answers were recorded on a 10-point scale (1-Not often at all, 10-Very often). In order to figure out whether there were participants who were suspicious about the true purpose of the study, they were asked what they thought its purpose was. This question was open-ended and they were asked to explain in as much detail as possible their thoughts. Finally, some demographic questions asked the participants about their sex, age and nationality.

#### **8.2.5.1 Mood improvement beliefs**

The angry mood improvement personality trait was measured in this study and used as a control variable in the analysis. The latter measures individuals' beliefs about whether their moods can be improved by expressing anger. Bushman et al. (2001) found high correlations between the mood improvement inventory and the anger expression inventory scales (i.e. the one used as a control variable in experiment 2). In other words, "people who believe that venting will make them feel better are also the ones more likely to express their anger" (Bushman et al. 2001, p.25). Their findings demonstrate that those individuals who believe that they will feel better by venting their emotions showed lower aggression when they were made to believe that their moods were temporarily frozen by taking a pill than those who believed that their emotions

were changeable. It was concluded that individuals who believe in the mood-lifting properties of anger-out expressions are more likely to engage in aggression. Hence, this personality trait may influence customer revenge and for this reason it is measured in this study.

## 8.2.6 Findings

### 8.2.6.1 Manipulation check

The manipulation check showed that participants in the happy memory condition expected significantly less to be in negative emotional state by the end of the session compared to the control group ( $M_{\text{happy}}=4.23$  vs  $M_{\text{control}}=7.26$ ;  $F(1, 96)=37.10$ ,  $p<.001$ ). This result indicates that the manipulation of the mood change beliefs was successful. Furthermore, memory instructions seem to be quite effective in being scientifically credible, believable and persuasive, with the mean score being above the scale midpoint ( $M = 5.76$ ,  $SD = 1.79$ ).

### 8.2.6.2 Tests of normality

As noted above, the independent variable was the manipulated mood change beliefs (happy memory recall vs control) while the dependent variables were aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed to examine the assumption of normal distribution within conditions, with the table below showing the results. The test demonstrates that aggression, NWOM, and third-party complaining deviate from the normal distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 8.7: Tests of Normality for Experiment 3

	Condition	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
		Statistic	Significance
Aggression	Happy memory	0.135	0.029
	Control	0.195	0.000
Vindictive complaining	Happy memory	0.093	0.200
	Control	0.113	0.135
NWOM	Happy memory	0.151	0.008
	Control	0.204	0.000
Third-party complaining	Happy memory	0.155	0.006
	Control	0.142	0.013
Revenge	Happy memory	0.094	0.200
	Control	0.063	0.200

### 8.2.6.3 Descriptive Statistics

The table below shows some descriptive statistics for the dependent variables and the two personality traits that will be used as covariates in the analysis. Mood-improvement beliefs was a summated scale of the individuals' scores for the individual items. For individualism/collectivism, an index was created by taking the sum of the scores in the individual items and dividing by the total number of items in the scale.

Table 8.8: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 3

	Condition	Mean	Standard Deviation
Aggression	Happy memory	3.35	1.28
	Control	3.55	1.24
Vindictive complaining	Happy memory	4.33	2.33
	Control	5.63	2.30
NWOM	Happy memory	8.33	1.62
	Control	8.87	1.37
Third-party complaining	Happy memory	7.13	2.17
	Control	8.17	1.71
Revenge	Happy memory	5.70	1.25
	Control	6.45	1.15
Mood-improvement beliefs	Happy memory	16.40	4.70
	Control	16.58	4.08
Cultural orientation	Happy memory	4.64	0.80
	Control	4.88	0.58

### 8.2.6.4 Main results

The main analysis seeks to test H8, i.e. whether customers engage in the various revengeful behaviours, because they believe that doing so will alleviate their negative emotions. Parametric tests, like ANOVA, are based on the assumptions of normality. As illustrated above, aggression, NWOM, and third-party complaining deviate from the normal distribution. For this reason, the non-parametric test of Mann-Whitney will be employed first and the results will be subsequently compared with those from ANOVA. The Mann-Whitney test is usually used when the assumption of normality is violated. Results demonstrate that there were no

significant differences between the groups for aggression ( $U = 1098.50$ ,  $z = -0.73$ ,  $p = 0.47$ ), while for NWOM ( $U = 928.0$ ,  $z = -1.96$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ) and third-party complaining ( $U = 857.50$ ,  $z = -2.45$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) they were significant. However, the Mann-Witney test does not allow for the inclusion of covariates. It was expected that trait levels of mood-improvement beliefs and cultural values could cause changes in the levels of customer revenge. For this reason, a parametric test was used next to control for these two variables.

An ANOVA test has been proven to be quite robust with violations of the assumptions of normality (Field 2009). It was first conducted to examine whether its results would be similar to those of the Mann-Whitney test. As can be seen in the table below, the results for the ANOVA are quite similar to the findings from the Mann-Witney test, which indicates that the former test is quite robust to the violations of normality. The findings indicate that there was no significant difference between the two groups for aggression, but there were significant differences for vindictive complaining, third-party complaining and revenge. NWOM approached statistical significance with the ANOVA test ( $p = 0.077$ ), while it was significant ( $p = 0.05$ ) with the Mann-Witney test. Hence, H8 is partially supported.

Table 8.9: ANOVA results for Experiment 3

	$M_{\text{happy}}$	$M_{\text{control}}$	F-value
Aggression	3.35	3.55	0.62 (ns)
Vindictive complaining	4.33	5.63	7.74**
NWOM	8.33	8.87	3.19*
Third-party complaining	7.13	8.17	7.04**
Revenge	5.70	6.45	9.58**

\* $p < 0.08$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$

Since ANOVA was proven to be robust against the violations of normality, a MANCOVA was conducted with angry mood-improvement beliefs and individualism/collectivism cultural orientation as covariates. A MANCOVA is used when a number of dependent variables have been measured and there is a relationship between them (Field 2009). For the angry mood-improvement beliefs, a median-split procedure was performed to categorise individuals as high anger-out or low anger-out individuals. Hence, anger-out tendencies was a categorical variable following the procedure used by Bushman et al. (2001). For the individualism/collectivism covariate an index was created by taking the sum of the scores in the individual items and

dividing by the total number of items in the scale. Then, a median split procedure was used to categorise individuals into individualists or collectivists, a procedure followed in previous studies (Gregory et al., 2002; Zourrig et al., 2015).

A MANCOVA is based on the assumption of the homogeneity of variances between groups and homogeneity of the covariance matrices across groups. Levene's tests were conducted for all the dependent variables and were found non-significant, with the exception of third-party complaining ( $p = 0.026$ ). This result shows that the variances in each group were equal and this held true for aggression, vindictive complaining and negative word-of-mouth, but not for third-party complaining. Furthermore, the Box's M statistic was non-significant ( $p = 0.23$ ), thus demonstrating that the assumption of the homogeneity of the covariance matrices is met.

The results from the MANCOVA demonstrate that there was a significant effect of mood change beliefs in the customer revengeful behaviours ( $F(5,90) = 3.34, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.16$ ). Furthermore, the anger-out tendencies had a significant effect on the dependent variables ( $F(5,90) = 3.67, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.17$ ), whilst the effect of the individualism/collectivism cultural orientation was non-significant ( $F(5,90) = 0.45, p > 0.10, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ). Next, the effect of the mood change beliefs in the individual dependent variables was examined. The findings indicate that after controlling for the two personality traits, there was a significant effect of the mood change beliefs in relation to vindictive complaining ( $F(1,94) = 7.49, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.07$ ) and third-party complaining ( $F(1,94) = 7.17, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.07$ ), while it approached significance for NWOM ( $F(1,94) = 3.34, p = 0.07, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ). However, the effect on aggression was not significant ( $F(1,94) = 0.69, p > 0.10, \eta^2 = 0.00$ ). An ANCOVA was further conducted to test the effect of the manipulation on the summated customer revenge accounting for the effect of the two personality traits. Results indicate that the effect was significant ( $F(1,94) = 10.10, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.10$ ). Again, these findings indicate that even after controlling for personality characteristics the effects remain the same. Hence, H8 is partially supported.

Table 8.10: MANCOVA and ANCOVA results for Experiment 3

	$M_{\text{happy}}$	$M_{\text{control}}$	F-value
Aggression	3.35	3.55	0.69 (ns)
Vindictive complaining	4.33	5.63	7.49**
NWOM	8.33	8.87	3.34*
Third-party complaining	7.13	8.17	7.17**
Revenge	5.70	6.45	10.10**

\* $p < 0.08$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$

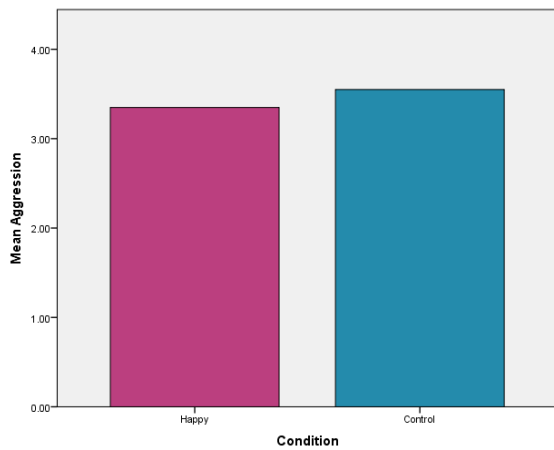


Figure 8.1: Mean aggression across conditions

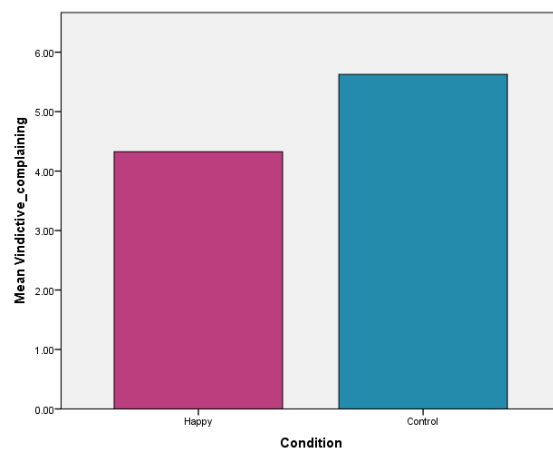


Figure 8.2: Mean vindictive complaining across conditions

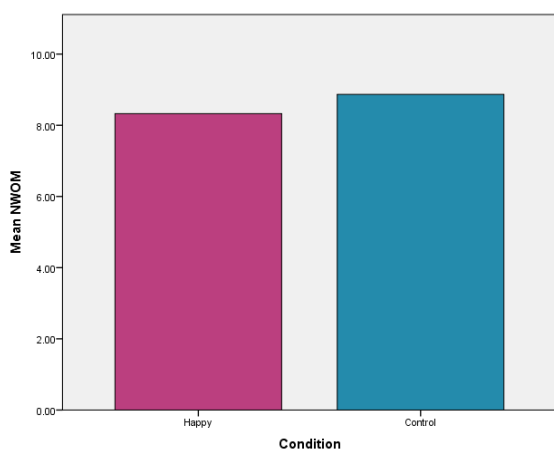


Figure 8.3: Mean NWOM across conditions

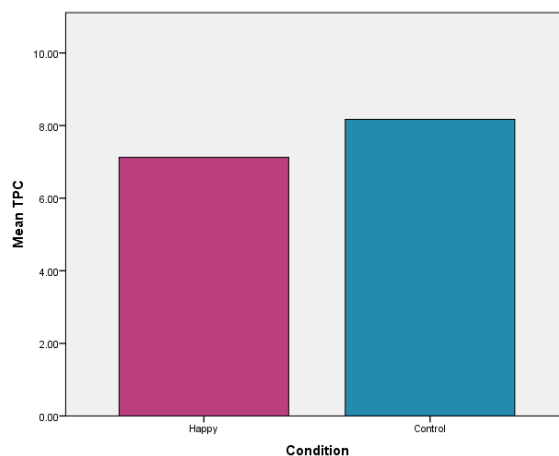


Figure 8.4: Mean third-party complaining across conditions



To examine whether the happy memory manipulation influenced emotions and fairness perceptions a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Fairness perceptions was extracted by summing the individual scores of the items on the various dimensions of fairness (i.e. distributive, procedural and interactional) and dividing this total by the number of items. The results indicate that the manipulation of happy memory recall did not influence positive emotions ( $M_{\text{happy}} = 1.73$  vs  $M_{\text{control}} = 1.59$ ;  $F(1, 96) = 0.31$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ), negative emotions ( $M_{\text{happy}} = 7.54$  vs  $M_{\text{control}} = 7.92$ ;  $F(1, 62) = 1.58$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ) and fairness perceptions ( $M_{\text{happy}} = 2.52$  vs  $M_{\text{control}} = 2.23$ ;  $F(1, 62) = 1.59$ ,  $p > 0.10$ ). This finding is significant because if the manipulation of happy memory recall had resulted in an increase in positive emotions/decrease in negative emotions and a decrease in perceptions of unfairness, the findings of the study could have been due to changes in emotions and fairness perceptions and not due to the fact that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation.

Finally, the participants reported engaging in these revengeful acts with the motive of venting their emotions ( $M_{\text{venting}} = 7.47$ ) which was significantly higher than that of causing harm to the firm ( $M_{\text{causeharm}} = 2.84$ ,  $t(97) = 15.03$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and the motive of restoring equity ( $M_{\text{restoreequity}} = 5.59$ ,  $t(97) = 5.41$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, the majority of participants indicated that their primary motive for engaging in these revengeful behaviours was to vent their emotions (64.3%), followed by those with the motives to restore equity (31.6%) and cause harm to the firm (4.1%).

The scenario realism was high ( $M = 8.19$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ), which means that the individuals could identify with the story described in the scenario and believed this could happen in real life. Finally, students seem to have had experience with airline bookings since the majority (94.9%) indicated that they had travelled with an airline before, in fact, reporting a high frequency of travelling with airlines ( $M = 7.76$ ,  $SD = 5.38$ ).

### **8.2.7 Discussion**

The findings from this study provide support for hypothesis H8 of this thesis. In particular, they demonstrate that when individuals were made to believe that they would have positive emotions at the end of the experimental session, they were less likely to take revenge than when they did not have such expectations (i.e. control group). Examination of the various customer revengeful behaviours, individually, suggests that this finding holds true for vindictive

complaining and third-party complaining, while it also approached significance for NWOM. Conversely, this effect was not significant for aggression.

As noted before, the happy memory recall manipulation was used to demonstrate that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. The logic of this manipulation is to make individuals expect that they will ultimately have positive emotions. If they engage in the various revengeful behaviours because they expect to feel better, then providing them with another opportunity to feel good (i.e. the happy memory recall) should render their emotion regulation efforts useless, thus reducing their motivation to take revenge. Consequently, the outcomes of this study provide evidence that vindictive complaining and third-party complaining are used as emotion regulation strategies to alleviate customer negative emotions. Regarding NWOM, a number of studies have documented that individuals repeatedly report employing it in order to get emotional relief (Sundaram et al., 1998; Wetzer et al., 2007). Since there is support from theory and also the effect was marginally significant as well as being in the correct direction in the current study, it is concluded that NWOM is also employed as an emotion regulation strategy. However, the findings indicate that emotion regulation may not be the primary motive for aggression and hence, other motives may generate such behaviour.

## **8.2.8 Limitations**

### **8.2.8.1 Confound effects**

The main limitation of studies 2 and 3 is that the manipulations employed may have created confound effects. The instructions about eating chocolates and the happy memory recall were inserted after the scenario and before the main questionnaire. It may have been the case that even the mere expectation that participants would have to eat chocolates or recall a positive memory later in the experiment would have created positive emotions at that point. Hence, the increase in positive emotions may have subsequently decreased the motivation to take revenge. Hence, the effect may have been due to the increase in the positive emotions and not due to emotion regulation.

In order to rule out this possibility, the positive and negative emotions that the participants were experiencing as well as their fairness perceptions were measured. The findings indicate that participants' positive and negative emotions did not differ between the conditions of the chocolate eating/happy memory recall and the control group. The same held true for fairness

perceptions, which were equally low in both conditions. These results indicate that the chocolate eating and happy memory recall manipulations did not affect emotions and fairness perceptions. This provides more confidence in the prediction that the change in the motivation for revenge in the treatment conditions was due to the operation of emotion regulation processes. Furthermore, a number of studies have used similar manipulations to demonstrate that certain behaviours (e.g. aggression and retribution) are used to regulate negative emotions (Bushman et al., 2001; Gollwitzer & Bushman, 2012). These studies have also found that such manipulations did not affect participants' affective states.

Despite the above showing that the manipulation worked as intended, this limitation should be acknowledged. Whilst self-reported emotions may demonstrate no change in participants' perceptual states, other physiological measures, if they had been employed, could have shown that these manipulations, indeed, affected emotions and thus, confound the findings ultimately driving the change in customer revenge behaviour.

#### **8.2.8.2 Ordering of the measurement of emotions**

Another limitation of this experiment is the question ordering, whereby the measurement of participants' emotions followed questions about revengeful behaviours. This ordering was deemed appropriate for two reasons. First, the scale was intended to measure a number of emotions ( $n = 18$ ) and cover a wide range so as to make sure that individuals were not affected by the happy memory recall manipulation. It was expected that if questions about emotions were placed first, the participants would become suspicious about the purpose of the study, potentially predicting that it was to examine how creating expectations about future positive experiences (i.e. chocolate eating and happy memory recall) influenced their current emotions and behavioural responses. This could have created demand effects, which would have biased the responses and hence, the findings of the experiment. Second, Fishbach and Labroo (2007) have suggested that labelling one's emotions enhances the salience of their source of identification, which subsequently may attenuate the actual affective experience and behavioural responses. Since the interest lay in the participants' revengeful behaviours, such attenuation needed to be avoided. This question ordering comes with limitations, because the duration of emotions is short, for they dissipate after some time. That is why the earlier they are measured the more accurate their reported affective intensity will be (Bagozzi et al., 1999). However, even if they had dissipated until they were measured in the questionnaire, this should

not be problematic for this study. Emotions were primarily measured in order to examine whether the mood change belief manipulation had influenced individuals' emotions. Hence, if the treatment manipulation had had an impact on emotions, differences in reported emotions between the conditions should still have been found, despite dissipation.

For the same reasons as stated above, emotions were only measured once in the questionnaire. However, a more ideal experimental design would have been to measure the participants' emotions before and after providing the instructions about the chocolate eating/memory recall studies, to examine any changes in the affective states arising from the experimental manipulation. Nevertheless, the fact that there was a control condition, which received no instructions and that there were no differences in positive and negative emotions between the happy memory recall and the control conditions, suggests that the manipulation did not affect emotions. Hence, whilst the limitations of this design are acknowledged, this question ordering was deemed more appropriate in order to avoid more serious problems that may have occurred had the measurement of emotions been undertaken in some of the other ways discussed in this section.

### **8.2.8.3 Priming instructions**

As explained in the experimental procedure of both the chocolate and memory recall studies, the mood-change belief condition involved manipulating participants' beliefs about the nature of their emotions at the end of the session. In particular, participants in this condition were told that after the end of the first study they would participate in another supposedly unrelated study which would ask them to taste several chocolates or to recall a happy memory respectively. In order to make the mood-change belief manipulation more robust, the following text was inserted: "Previous studies have shown that recalling past happy personal experiences (or eating chocolates) improves individuals' moods even when they are in intense negative emotional states. So, whatever emotional state you are in now and after the end of the first study you are very likely to feel better after the second study". These instructions were inserted in order to strengthen the mood-change belief manipulation and to make it more credible and effective. These instructions are in line with those employed in Tice et al.'s (2001) study to manipulate participants' beliefs about their prospective emotions. Despite this, it should be acknowledged that these instructions may have primed participants with what they should feel instead of subtly manipulating their expectations about their moods. Priming participants may

have created demand effects, thus biasing the findings. That is, the priming instructions may have increased the positive emotions individuals felt which, in turn, may have resulted in lower motivation to exact revenge. Although emotions were measured in both the control and mood-change belief conditions and no reported differences were found, the actual emotions individuals felt may have become more positive due to the priming manipulation thus, driving the decrease in subsequent revenge behaviour compared to the control group that received no instructions. Hence, while there is no evidence that the priming instructions biased the findings of the two studies, it should be acknowledged that a more subtle manipulation of the mood-change beliefs would have been more desirable.

## Chapter 9

### Study 4: The role of conflicting goals in customer revenge

The previous chapter demonstrated that various customer revengeful behaviours are employed by individuals as emotion regulation strategies. This held true for vindictive complaining, NWOM and third-party complaining, but not for aggression. These findings indicate that individuals engage in such behaviours, because they expect that doing so will alleviate their negative emotions and make them feel better. Hence, customer revenge is driven by emotion regulation goals.

After establishing the role of emotion regulation goals, in this chapter, goal conflict theories are adopted to examine how various conflicting goals influence customer revenge. Past research has argued that when individuals are in negative affective states, their goal to regulate their negative emotions takes precedence over other self-control goals (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). That is, individuals experiencing negative emotions seek immediately to feel good. This desire is often urgent and promotes a short-term focus. The desire to regulate negative emotions comes at the expense of self-control goals that require the individual to forgo instantly rewarding activities to gain long-term benefits. This conflict between emotion regulation and impulse control is further exacerbated when the activities that the individuals employ to feel better are the same as those that they usually use self-control to restrain (Tice et al., 2001). Adopting goal conflict theory in the context of customer revenge, the latter is viewed as a conflict between the goal to regulate negative emotions and the goal to control aggressive impulses. Accessibility of these two goals will differentially impact on customer revenge depending on whether customer revengeful behaviours are of an overt (direct revenge) or covert nature (indirect revenge). Hence, in this chapter, the following hypotheses of this thesis are addressed.

Table 9.1: Hypotheses tested in Study 4

	<b>Hypotheses</b>
<b>H9</b>	<b>H9:</b> <i>When the goal of emotion regulation is accessible individuals are more likely to engage in the customer direct revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining) than when the goal to control aggressive impulses is accessible.</i>
<b>H10</b>	<b>H10:</b> <i>When the goal of emotion regulation is accessible individuals are no more likely to engage in customer indirect revengeful behaviours (i.e. vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) than when the goal to control aggressive impulses is accessible.</i>

## 9.1 Participants

Ninety university students (n = 30 for each condition) were recruited for this experiment through the Prolific Academic online participant recruitment platform. The pre-screening criteria used to determine participation eligibility were the following:

- Age: 18-28
- Student status: yes
- Country of residence: United Kingdom
- Participation in other studies by the researcher of this thesis: none.

One participant was removed from further analysis, because he had correctly guessed the real purpose of the study and could potentially bias the findings. The final sample consisted of 89 respondents, 59.6% male, and 40.4% female with an average age  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.15$  ( $SD = 5.41$ ). The study lasted about 10 minutes and the participants were paid £1.30 for their participation.

## 9.2 Research Design

The experiment was a 3 (goal priming: control vs emotion regulation goal vs self-control goal) between-subjects design. The independent variable was the goal priming, while the dependent variables were the four customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining).

### 9.3 Procedure

The participants were randomly assigned to the three experimental conditions. The first page of Qualtrics informed them about the purpose of the study and asked them to answer the questions openly and truthfully. Also, they were informed that their responses would be kept anonymous and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point. Participants in the two goal priming conditions (i.e. emotion regulation goal priming and self-control goal-priming) were informed that they would participate in two unrelated studies that would provide insights for two different research projects. The first study was introduced as a pilot study for a forthcoming experiment, the purpose of which was to investigate activities that students usually engage in. The second study was said to be about exploring customer responses to service experiences. Participants in the control condition were told that they would participate in one study, which would examine customer responses to service experiences.

Participants in the goal priming conditions first received the goal priming manipulations while those in the control condition moved straight to the scenario. Individuals in the emotion regulation goal priming condition received the following instructions. “Different people choose to pursue different activities when they seek pleasure. We are interested to learn about the type of activities that you usually pursue when you seek pleasure. Please list at least five activities that you do in order to seek pleasure”. This goal priming manipulation was adopted from the procedures used by Fishbach and Labroo (2007) and Salerno et al. (2014). Individuals in the self-control goal priming first received a definition of the self-control goal, which was “a behaviour or activity that people pursue and where they have to forgo some short-term rewards and pleasure to enjoy some long-term benefits”. Then, the following instructions were given: “Different people choose to pursue different activities when they seek to pursue their goals and forgo short-term rewards for long-term benefits. We are interested to learn about the type of activities that you usually pursue when you seek to pursue your goals and forgo the short-term rewards for the long-term benefits. Please list at least five activities that you do in order to pursue your goals”. This goal priming manipulation was adapted from the procedures followed by Fishbach and Shah (2006) and Fishbach and Labroo (2007).

All the participants then read the airline scenario. As in the previous studies, they were asked to try to imagine the situation as vividly as possible by imagining all the details of the situation described as if it was happening to them right at that point in time. The timing setting of



Qualtrics was set to 40 seconds so that they had to spend at least this amount of time reading the scenario.

The scenario was the same as that used in Experiment 3. The customer of the story had booked a flight from London to Rome via Geneva. The flight to Geneva was delayed by three hours due to crew unavailability, thus making the customer lose his or her connecting flight to Rome. The scenario then described a failed service recovery situation (double deviation scenario), where the customer had to wait for 30 minutes for the airline employee to address his or her problem (low procedural justice), received no compensation for the flight delay and instead, had himself/herself to pay the price difference for the flight change (low distributive justice) and was treated by the employee with rudeness along with a complete lack of concern (low interactional justice). The scenario can be seen in Appendix D.

After reading the scenario, all the participants moved to the main questionnaire of the study. Then, the session ended and they were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

## **9.4 Measurement**

The questionnaire assessed the following (see Appendices E and G):

1. Four customer revengeful behaviours;
2. Emotions;
3. Impulsivity.

The questionnaire first assessed the various customer revengeful behaviours. The scales were all taken from Grégoire et al. (2010). Aggression was a four item scale ( $\alpha = 0.73$ /formative measurement), vindictive complaining was a three item scale ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ), NWOM behaviour had three items ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ) and third-party complaining had four items ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ). For all the revengeful behaviours, the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 10-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 10-Strongly Agree).

In order to ensure that the goal-priming manipulations did not have an impact on customer emotions the scale taken from Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008a) was employed to measure positive and negative emotions. Nine positive emotions were measured ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ) and nine negative ones. Seven were taken from Schoefer and Diamantopoulos's (2008a) scale and two

were added, namely, contempt and disgust, in order to be consistent with previous studies ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ). The participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt this way on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 10 (Very much).

Then, the personality trait of impulsivity was measured. This trait is expected to influence revenge as will be explained in more detail in the next section and hence will be used as a control variable in the analysis. Trait impulsivity was measured using 12 items from Puri's (1996) scale and the responses were recorded on a 7-point scale (1-Seldom would describe me, 7-Usually would describe me) ( $\alpha = 0.69$ ).

Scenario realism was assessed with two questions taken from Bechwati and Morrin (2003). One asked participants the extent to which they thought the scenario was realistic and responses were recorded on a 10-point scale (1-Very unrealistic, 10-Very realistic). The other item asked whether they believed that such an incident could happen to someone in real life, with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree) on a 10-point scale. The scale reliability was  $\alpha = 0.74$ . To examine the extent to which the student participants were familiar with airline bookings two questions were included in the questionnaire. The first asked them to indicate whether they had travelled with an airline before (yes/no response), whilst the second asked them how often they travelled with airline companies, with the answers being recorded on a 10-point scale (1-Not often at all, 10-Very often).

In order to ensure that the goal priming manipulation was successful, the participants in both the emotion regulation and self-control goal-priming conditions were asked to indicate how much effort they had put into listing activities in the first study, with the responses being entered on a 10-point scale (1-Not very much, 10-Very much). This question was adopted from Fishbach and Labroo (2007).

The participants were also asked about what they thought the purpose of the study was in order to eliminate those who had a handle on its true aim. This question was open-ended and they were asked to explain in as much detail as possible their thoughts. Finally, demographic questions asked them about their gender, age, and nationality.

### **9.4.1 Impulsivity**

In this study, the impulsivity trait was measured and used as a control variable. Impulsivity refers to “the tendency to act with little forethought as to the consequences of one's actions” (Henle, 2005, p. 250). Impulsive behaviour is characterised by immediate hedonic benefits with detrimental long-term consequences (Puri, 1996). Impulsivity has been implicated in deviant customer behaviour in service settings (Fullerton & Punj, 1993). Impulsive individuals act on the spur of the moment and are more likely to express their emotions freely as well as being explosive in their emotional reactions. Since they lack self-discipline and patience, they are more likely to engage in deviant responses (Henle, 2005). Past research has provided a link between impulsivity and aggression. In particular, Denson et al. (2011) have demonstrated that lack of self-control, which appears to be the reciprocal of impulsivity, results in aggression and hence, there should be a link between impulsivity and aggression as well. Similarly, studies on workplace aggression have shown that impulsive individuals lack strong inhibitions and are more likely to react aggressively to provocation and injustice (Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Henle, 2005). Since impulsive individuals tend to have a more short-term focus they are more likely to have short-term hedonic goals chronically accessible rather than self-control goals. That is, individuals high in impulsivity are more likely than those low in impulsivity to pursue emotion regulation goals and less likely to pursue self-control ones. Hence, a high impulsivity trait should result in higher customer revenge than when a person has low impulsivity.

## **9.5 Findings**

### **9.5.1 Manipulation check**

Participants in the two goal-priming conditions were asked about the effort they had put into listing activities in the first study. The results indicate that there were no significant differences between the two conditions ( $M_{\text{emotionregulation}} = 7.14$  vs  $M_{\text{self-control}} = 7.27$ ;  $F(1, 57) = 0.11$ ,  $p = 0.74$ ) and that the participants had put equal effort into the goal priming tasks.

### **9.5.2 Tests for normality**

In this study, the goal priming condition served as the independent variable and the four revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining) were the dependent variables. A general customer revenge score was also created by summing these four behaviours. Parametric tests like ANOVA are based on the

assumptions of normal distribution of the data. For this reason, tests of normality were first conducted in order to examine whether the data within conditions followed the normal distribution. The results for the Kolmogorov test can be seen in the table below. Results indicate that NWOM and third-party complaining violate the assumptions of normal distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 9.2: Tests of Normality for Experiment 4

	Condition	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
		Statistic	Significance
Aggression	Control	0.149	0.089
	Emotion regulation	0.147	0.113
	Self-control	0.143	0.119
Vindictive complaining	Control	0.102	0.200
	Emotion regulation	0.119	0.200
	Self-control	0.136	0.167
NWOM	Control	0.258	0.000
	Emotion regulation	0.266	0.000
	Self-control	0.176	0.018
Third-party complaining	Control	0.253	0.000
	Emotion regulation	0.168	0.036
	Self-control	0.147	0.098
Revenge	Control	0.100	0.200
	Emotion regulation	0.087	0.200
	Self-control	0.133	0.183

### 9.5.3 Descriptive Statistics

The table below shows some descriptive statistics for the dependent variables and the personality trait, which is used as a control variable in the main analysis.

Table 9.3: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 4

	Condition	Mean	Standard Deviation
Aggression	Control	4.09	1.69
	Emotion regulation	4.33	1.96
	Self-control	3.28	1.35
Vindictive complaining	Control	5.78	2.49
	Emotion regulation	5.84	2.58
	Self-control	4.31	1.93
NWOM	Control	8.76	1.53
	Emotion regulation	8.97	1.32
	Self-control	8.29	1.82
Third-party complaining	Control	8.33	2.09
	Emotion regulation	8.39	1.51
	Self-control	7.87	2.02
Revenge	Control	6.66	1.42
	Emotion regulation	6.81	1.44
	Self-control	5.89	1.26
Impulsivity	Control	3.23	0.74
	Emotion regulation	3.32	0.73
	Self-control	3.11	0.65

### 9.5.4 Main analysis

The main analysis tests H9 and H10 of this thesis. That is, whether accessibility of the two conflicting goals will differentially influence customer revenge such that accessibility of the impulse control goal will decrease direct, but not indirect revenge, when compared to the accessibility of the emotion regulation goal. Analysis of the participant responses in the goal priming tasks shows that those in the emotion regulation goal priming condition listed activities including reading, listening to the music, socialising, playing games, walking, cycling and

drinking, among others, as what they do when seeking pleasure. Those in the self-control goal priming condition listed activities, such as studying, exercising, eating healthily, saving money, abstaining from alcohol, training for sports and learning a language, among others, as activities they do in order to pursue their long-term goals.

The dependent variables of the analysis were the various revengeful behaviours and the independent one was the goal priming condition. As noted above, two of the dependent variables, i.e. NWOM and third-party complaining, violate the normal distribution. However, parametric tests are based on the fulfilment of this assumption. For this reason, it was deemed appropriate to first use a non-parametric test to examine the effect of goal-priming on NWOM and third-party complaining. Since there were three conditions, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted. The results indicate that there was no significant effect of goal priming on NWOM ( $H(2) = 2.56, p = 0.28$ ) and third-party complaining ( $H(2) = 1.53, p = 0.47$ ). However, the Kruskal-Wallis test cannot account for the effect of covariates. As noted before, the impulsivity personality trait will be used as a covariate in this study. For this reason, a parametric test is needed and hence, an ANOVA will be conducted first in order to compare the results obtained from Kruskal-Wallis test with those from ANOVA.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted with all the revengeful behaviours as dependent variables and the goal-priming condition as the independent one. Levene's test shows that for all variables the variances across the groups are the same ( $p > 0.05$ ). The results from the ANOVA show that there was a significant effect of goal-priming on aggression ( $F(2,86) = 3.15, p = 0.048$ ) and vindictive complaining ( $F(2,86) = 4.04, p = 0.021$ ). However, the effect was not significant for NWOM ( $F(2,86) = 1.43, p = 0.244$ ) and third-party complaining ( $F(2,86) = 0.67, p = 0.514$ ). Also, a significant effect of goal priming was found on revenge as a whole ( $F(2,86) = 3.86, p = 0.025$ ). Planned contrasts were subsequently conducted for aggression, vindictive complaining and revenge to examine the differences between the conditions. These show that individuals in the self-control goal-priming condition engaged in significantly less aggression than those in the emotion regulation goal-priming condition ( $t(86) = -2.38, p = 0.019$ ), while the difference with the control condition approached significance ( $t(86) = -1.86, p = 0.066$ ). Furthermore, aggression did not differ significantly between emotion regulation goal priming and control conditions ( $t(86) = -0.54, p = 0.592$ ). Planned contrasts for vindictive complaining demonstrate that individuals in the self-control goal priming condition engaged in significantly less vindictive complaining than those in the emotion regulation goal priming condition ( $t(86)$

= -2.50,  $p = 0.014$ ) or the control condition ( $t(86) = -2.42, p = 0.018$ ). In addition, no significant differences between emotion regulation goal priming and the control condition were found ( $t(86) = 0.10, p = 0.92$ ). Regarding revenge, the planned contrasts show that individuals in the self-control goal priming condition engaged in significantly less revenge than those in the emotion regulation goal-priming condition ( $t(86) = -2.57, p = 0.012$ ) or the control condition ( $t(86) = -2.19, p = 0.031$ ). No significant differences were found between emotion regulation goal priming and the control conditions ( $t(86) = 0.401, p = 0.689$ ). These findings provide support for H9 and H10 of this thesis.

Table 9.4: ANOVA results for Experiment 4

	$M_{\text{control}}$	$M_{\text{emotionregulation}}$	$M_{\text{self-control}}$	F-value	Significance
Aggression	4.09	4.33	3.28	3.15*	0.048
Vindictive complaining	5.78	5.84	4.31	4.04*	0.021
NWOM	8.76	8.97	8.29	1.43	0.244
Third-party complaining	8.33	8.39	7.87	0.67	0.514
Revenge	6.66	6.81	5.89	3.86*	0.025

\* $p < 0.05$

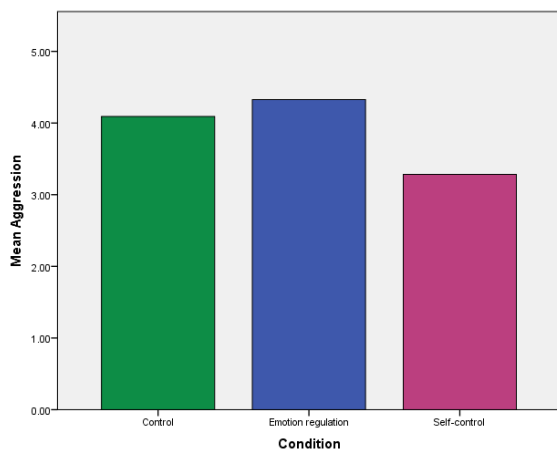


Figure 9.1: Mean aggression across conditions

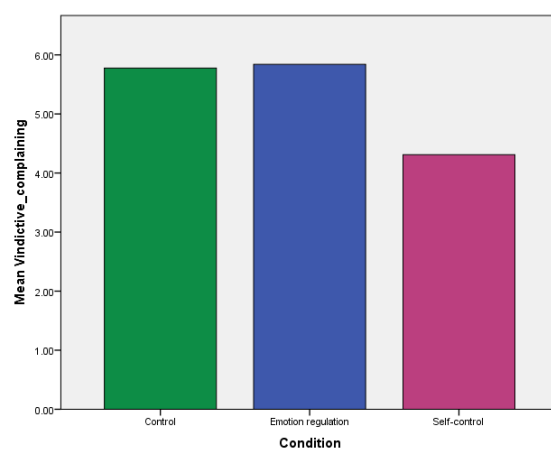


Figure 9.2: Mean vindictive complaining across conditions

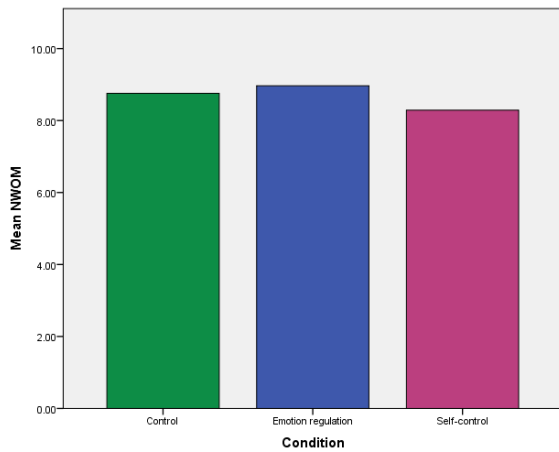


Figure 9.3: Mean NWOM across conditions

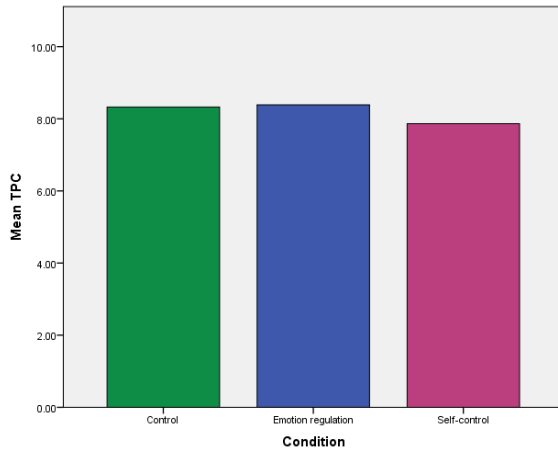


Figure 9.4: Mean third-party complaining across conditions

The above show that results for NWOM and third-party complaining are the same for the Kruskal-Wallis and ANOVA tests. Hence, the latter appears to be robust in violations of the normality assumptions. In order to account for the effect of the impulsivity personality trait a MANCOVA was conducted with all the revengeful behaviours as dependent variables and the goal-priming condition as the independent one. A median split procedure was used for impulsivity personality trait so as to categorise individuals into high and low impulsivity individuals, respectively.

A MANCOVA is based on the assumption of homogeneity of variances between groups and homogeneity of covariance matrices across groups. Levene's tests were conducted for all the dependent variables and these were found to be non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), with the result showing that the variances in each group were equal. Furthermore, Box's M statistic was non-significant ( $p = 0.178$ ), thus demonstrating that the assumption of homogeneity of the covariance matrices is met.

The results from the MANCOVA demonstrate that the effect of goal-priming in the customer revengeful behaviours was not significant ( $F(8,166) = 1.14, p = 0.34, \eta^2 = 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the impulsivity covariate did not have a significant effect on the dependent variables ( $F(4,82) = 0.62, p = 0.65, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ). Next, the effect of the goal priming on the individual dependent variables was examined. The findings indicate that after controlling for impulsivity, there was a significant effect of goal priming in aggression ( $F(2,85) = 3.11, p = 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.07$ ), and vindictive complaining ( $F(2,85) = 4.00, p = 0.02, \eta^2 = 0.09$ ), but no significant effect on



NWOM ( $F(2,85) = 1.42, p > 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.03$ ) and third-party complaining ( $F(2,85) = 0.67, p > 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.02$ ). An ANCOVA was subsequently conducted to test the effect of goal priming on the summated customer revenge, taking into consideration the impulsivity personality trait. The findings indicate that goal priming had a significant effect on customer revenge ( $F(2,85) = 3.83, p = 0.03, \eta^2 = 0.08$ ). Hence, even after accounting for the effects of the personality trait hypotheses H9 and H10 are supported. The results can be seen in the table below.

Table 9.5: MANCOVA and ANCOVA results for Experiment 4

	$M_{\text{control}}$	$M_{\text{emotionregulation}}$	$M_{\text{self-control}}$	F-value	Significance
Aggression	4.09	4.33	3.28	3.11*	0.050
Vindictive complaining	5.78	5.84	4.31	4.00*	0.022
NWOM	8.76	8.97	8.29	1.42	0.247
Third-party complaining	8.33	8.39	7.87	0.67	0.513
Revenge	6.66	6.81	5.89	3.83*	0.026

\* $p < 0.05$

In order to ensure that the goal priming manipulations had not influenced emotions, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The results confirm that there were no significant differences between the groups for positive ( $M_{\text{control}} = 1.41$  vs  $M_{\text{emotionregulation}} = 1.60$  vs  $M_{\text{self-control}} = 1.24$ ;  $F(2, 86) = 1.78, p = 0.17$ ) and negative emotions ( $M_{\text{control}} = 8.37$  vs  $M_{\text{emotionregulation}} = 8.19$  vs  $M_{\text{self-control}} = 8.00$ ;  $F(2,86) = 0.54, p > 0.59$ ). Finally, the scenario realism was high ( $M = 7.76, SD = 1.76$ ) and did not differ between the conditions ( $M_{\text{control}} = 8.30$  vs  $M_{\text{emotionregulation}} = 7.55$  vs  $M_{\text{self-control}} = 7.43$ ;  $F(2, 86) = 2.18, p = 0.12$ ).

## 9.6 Discussion

This study involved testing the role of conflicting goals in customer revenge behaviour. After a negative service experience, individuals in negative affective states have to decide whether they will engage in revenge. Individuals may simultaneously hold two conflicting goals, that of immediately regulating their negative emotions and the long-term goal of restraining their aggressive impulses. These two goals can influence customer revenge in opposite directions. This thesis argued that whether customers will engage in revenge depends on which of the two

goals is accessible at the point of the decision. It was further suggested that accessibility of the self-control goal will decrease customer revenge, but this will occur only for the overt (i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining) and not the covert behaviours (i.e. NWOM and third-party complaining), since the latter two are not usually triggered by aggressive impulses and do not require self-control.

The results from the experiment confirm the hypotheses of the study. That is, individuals in the self-control goal priming condition engaged in significantly less direct revenge but no less indirect revenge compared to those in the emotion regulation goal priming condition. That is, the priming of the self-control goal decreased aggression and vindictive complaining compared to the emotion regulation goal priming and the control conditions. However, no such effects were found for NWOM or third-party complaining. Interestingly, planned contrasts demonstrated that revengeful behaviours in emotion regulation goal priming did not significantly differ from the control condition. That is, individuals in this condition engaged in no more aggression and vindictive complaining than individuals in the control condition. Since emotion regulation goal-priming and the control groups followed similar patterns of behaviour, this effect could indicate that emotion regulation may be the default goal for individuals. In other words, when individuals are in negative affective states, they automatically seek to ameliorate their negative emotions even when no specific goal is primed. This finding provides further support for the results of Study 3, offering more evidence in favour of the hypotheses of this thesis.

## **9.7 Limitation**

### **9.7.1 Conscious priming**

The first limitation of this study is that conscious priming was employed. There are two types of priming: conscious and unconscious. It could be argued that conscious priming may have made individuals more suspicious about the real purpose of the study and this could have had an impact on the findings. However, inspection of the participants answers on what they thought the real purpose of the study was showed that only one individual seemed to have guessed the link between the two supposedly unrelated studies and for this reason his responses were eliminated from further analysis. Furthermore, even if participants had suspected that the two studies were in fact related, it would be difficult for them to make the connection between the goal priming instructions and the effect they should have on the various revengeful

behaviours. Participants in the emotion regulation goal priming condition were asked to list activities that they do when they seek pleasure, whilst the self-control goal priming participants were asked to list activities they undertake when they seek to pursue their long-term goals. Hence, it is difficult to imagine how the participants would link the seeking pleasure instructions with the increase in revengeful behaviours and the pursuit of long-term goals with a reduction in revengeful behaviours. This would require significant thought on their part, for they were provided with no reason and little time for doing so.

### **9.7.2 Instructions to prime self-control**

The instructions used to prime self-control were quite general when referring to the long-term goals of the individuals. Self-control is a mechanism that can involve the pursuit of various long-term goals, such as control of emotions, control of aggressive impulses and so on. For this study, it was assumed that customer revenge poses a dilemma between the specific goal to restrain aggressive impulses and the emotion regulation goal. It was deemed appropriate not to specify the instructions for self-control goal priming because if the participants were asked to list activities they do when they seek to control their aggressive impulses, it would be easier for them to guess the association between the two supposedly unrelated studies and adjust their responses accordingly. Hence, the study would suffer from demand effects. Most of the studies in the literature prime specific aspects of self-control (e.g. self-improvement and health improvement in Fishbach and Labroo's (2007) study). However, there are some studies that have used general instructions in order to prime self-control (e.g. Fishbach and Shah, 2006). Even though by using a general instruction, it cannot be concluded which aspect of self-control was primed, this still serves the main purpose of the study of showing the conflict between emotion regulation and self-control when individuals are in negative affective states. In order to address this limitation, future research could employ subconscious goal priming procedures. These would involve subtly priming more specific self-control goals (i.e. the goal to control aggressive impulses) without the risk that individuals would be aware of the link between goal priming and its effect on their subsequent behavioural responses.

## Chapter 10

### **Study 5: The role of goal commitment/goal progress inferences in sequential revengeful behaviours**

In the previous chapter, it was argued that customer revenge may be influenced by two conflicting goals -the goal to regulate negative emotions immediately and that of controlling aggressive impulses. Accessibility of these two goals at the point where the customer decides whether to exact his or her revenge was shown to differentially impact on their behaviour, such that accessibility of the emotion regulation goal increased, whilst accessibility of the self-control goal decreased customer revenge. However, this only held true for direct revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining), which are more overt and require aggressive impulses and not for indirect revengeful behaviours (i.e. NWOM and third-party complaining), which are covert and involve less aggressive impulses.

This chapter goes one step further and examines how this goal conflict influences customer revenge in sequential revengeful behaviours. Nowadays, firms have set in place mechanisms that enable customers to express their emotions freely in order to absorb their further emotional reactions. For example, service personnel are trained to listen carefully to customer complaints and to help them “let off steam”, customers are often being advised to write letters of complaint to the management of the service firms and so on. This study examines how subsequent customer revengeful behaviour will be influenced after the customer has been given the opportunity to vent his or her negative emotions. In other words, how an initial customer action congruent with the emotion regulation goal will affect his/her subsequent revenge behaviour. Past research has suggested that this depends on whether the initial customer action is interpreted as goal commitment or goal progress (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). It is expected that when an initial customer action towards the goal of emotion regulation is interpreted as goal commitment, then individuals will infer that the goal is important and will subsequently increase goal-congruent revengeful actions. However, when the same action is interpreted as goal progress, this will give a sense of goal accomplishment, resulting in a decrease of goal-congruent revengeful actions. Accordingly, for this study the following hypothesis of the thesis is examined.

Table 10.1: Hypotheses tested in Study 5

	<b>Hypothesis</b>
<b>H11</b>	<b>H11:</b> <i>When an initial action towards the goal of emotion regulation is interpreted as goal commitment, individuals are more likely to subsequently engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) than when it is interpreted as goal progress.</i>

## 10.1 Participants

Ninety one university students were recruited for this experiment through the Prolific Academic online participant recruitment platform (n = 30 for the control condition, n = 31 for the goal commitment condition and n = 30 for the goal progress condition). Several pre-screening criteria were used to determine participation eligibility, as described below:

- Age: 18-28
- Student status: yes;
- Country of residence: United Kingdom
- Participation in other studies from the researcher of this thesis: none.

The sample consisted of 54.9% males and 45.1% female, with the average age being  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.84$  ( $SD = 4.58$ ). The study lasted about 14 minutes and the participants were paid £1.80 for their participation.

## 10.2 Research Design

This study was a 3 (goal focus: control vs goal commitment vs goal progress) between-subjects design. The independent variable was the goal focus, while the dependent variables were the four revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining).

## 10.3 Procedure

The participants were randomly assigned to the three conditions. The first page of Qualtrics introduced the instructions about the study. Participants in all conditions were informed that

the purpose of the study was to investigate customer responses to service experiences. Moreover, they were told that their responses would be kept anonymous and they reserved the right to withdraw at any point of the study.

Participants first read the scenario, being asked to try to imagine the situation described as vividly as possible by taking on board all the details involved in the scenario, as if it was happening to them at that point in time. The scenario described a hotel service experience and was the same as that used in Experiment 1. The timing setting of Qualtrics was set to 40 seconds in order to ensure that the participants actually spent that duration of time reading the scenario. The hotel scenario described a hotel overbooking service failure, where the customer had booked a hotel room, but when he/she reached the destination he/she was informed that the hotel was overbooked and that they had arranged another room in one of the other hotels of the ABC chain located three miles away from the current one. The scenario then described a failed service recovery situation (double deviation scenario) where:

- The hotel did not provide the customer with any compensation for the inconvenience caused (low distributive fairness);
- The customer had to wait for 30 minutes until he/she received a response from the receptionist about how his/her problem could be addressed (low procedural fairness);
- The hotel receptionist was very rude and unconcerned about the customer's problem (low interactional fairness).

The full scenario employed in this study can be seen in Appendix B. After reading the scenario, an expressive writing task was introduced. The logic behind the expressive writing task was that it could serve as an action towards the goal of emotion regulation. A review of the literature suggests that expressive writing serves as a venting mechanism that alleviates individuals' negative emotions (Barclay & Skarlicki, 2009). In particular, previous studies have demonstrated that such writing has cathartic properties that enable individuals to release their negative emotions (Lee-Wingate & Corfman, 2011). Frattaroli (2006) argues that individuals have the need to disclose information about events that occur in their lives and that this tendency is both normal and healthy. In fact, emotional disclosure has been associated with a number of physical and psychological health benefits (Barclay and Skarlicki, 2009). This is because when individuals express their emotions, they confront and work them through. By observing themselves expressing and controlling them they get the feeling that the challenges

they face are more controllable, which in turn results in a reduction of negative emotions (Frattaroli 2006). More importantly for this thesis, prior research has demonstrated that expressive writing interventions can undo the effects of violations of justice (Barclay and Skarlicki, 2009; Lee-Wingate and Corfman, 2011). Regarding which, Barclay and Skarlicki (2009) found that after allowing individuals to express their thoughts and emotions about an unfair incident, they reported reduced negative emotions and decreased motivation to take revenge. Hence, expressive writing appears to have cathartic properties that enable individuals to satisfy, at least in part, their emotion regulation goals. In line with this Mattila and Wirtz (2004) have shown that when customers seek to complain with the goal of venting their negative emotions, they tend to use remote channels that enable expressive writing, such as letters and emails, rather than face-to-face communication.

Hence, an expressive writing task was deemed appropriate for this study. After reading the hotel scenario, the participants in the three conditions were told that after they had insisted, the receptionist provided them with a complaint form to complete, which would go directly to the manager of the hotel. The instructions were as follows: “Below you are given the space to write and describe all the details of the incident to the manager of the hotel as well as your thoughts and feelings about the incident. You have to spend at least two minutes on this task before you can move on to the next section. Please try to imagine yourself in such a situation as vividly as possible and describe in as much detail as possible your thoughts and feelings about this incident to the hotel manager”.

Next, the goal focus manipulation was inserted. To manipulate goal focus, after the expressive writing task, the participants in the goal commitment condition were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt they were committed towards the goal of venting their emotions (1-Not committed at all, 10-Very committed), while those in the goal progress condition were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt they were making progress towards the goal of venting their emotions (1-No progress at all, 10-A lot of progress). These manipulations were adapted from Fishbach and Dhar (2005). Individuals in the control group did not receive any question. Finally, all the participants moved on to the main questionnaire of the study. Then, the session ended, with their being debriefed and thanked for their participation.

## 10.4 Measurement

The questionnaire first assessed the various customer revengeful behaviours. The scales were all taken from Grégoire et al. (2010). Aggression was a four item scale ( $\alpha = 0.74$ /formative measurement), whilst vindictive complaining had three items ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ), with NWOM behaviour also having three items ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ) and third-party complaining had four items ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ). For all the revengeful behaviours, the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 10-point scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 10-Strongly Agree). Also, a summated score of customer revenge was taken by aggregating the scores for the items for the individual revengeful behaviours ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ).

The scenario realism was assessed with two questions, one of which asked the extent to which they thought the scenario was realistic and responses were recorded on a 10-point scale (1-Very unrealistic, 10-Very realistic). In addition, they were asked whether they believed that such an incident could happen to someone in real life, with the responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree) on a 10-point scale. The scale reliability was  $\alpha = 0.81$ . To examine the student participants' familiarity with hotel bookings two questions were included in the questionnaire. The first asked them to indicate whether they had stayed in a hotel before (yes/no response), whilst the second asked them how often they stayed in hotels, with the answers being recorded on a 10-point scale ranging from 1-Not often at all to 10-Very often. They were also questioned about what they thought the purpose of the study was in order to eliminate those who had worked out the true purpose of the research. This question was open-ended and they were asked to explain their thoughts in as much detail as possible. Finally, demographic questions asked the participants about their gender, age, and nationality.

## 10.5 Findings

### 10.5.1 Tests of normality

As explained previously, parametric tests, like ANOVAs are based on the assumption of a normal distribution. For this reason, tests of normality were conducted, first, in order to examine whether the data within the conditions followed this distribution. The results from the Kolmogorov test can be seen in the table below. The test shows that for aggression, NWOM and third-party complaining in at least one of the three conditions the assumption of a normal distribution was violated ( $p < 0.05$ ).



Table 10.2: Tests of Normality for Experiment 5

	Condition	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
		Statistic	Significance
Aggression	Control	0.150	0.084
	Goal commitment	0.152	0.065
	Goal progress	0.106	0.200
Vindictive complaining	Control	0.085	0.200
	Goal commitment	0.112	0.200
	Goal progress	0.131	0.200
NWOM	Control	0.137	0.160
	Goal commitment	0.123	0.200
	Goal progress	0.192	0.006
Third-party complaining	Control	0.105	0.200
	Goal commitment	0.126	0.200
	Goal progress	0.179	0.015
Revenge	Control	0.075	0.200
	Goal commitment	0.100	0.200
	Goal progress	0.137	0.159

### 10.5.2 Descriptive Statistics

The table below shows some descriptive statistics for the dependent variables of the analysis, including means and standard deviations.

Table 10.3: Descriptive statistics for Experiment 5

	Condition	Mean	Standard Deviation
Aggression	Control	3.19	1.46
	Goal commitment	4.11	2.01
	Goal progress	2.73	1.23
Vindictive complaining	Control	4.53	2.11
	Goal commitment	5.45	2.59
	Goal progress	4.24	1.77
NWOM	Control	7.66	1.97
	Goal commitment	7.91	1.80
	Goal progress	7.81	1.75
Third-party complaining	Control	6.45	2.36
	Goal commitment	7.42	1.99
	Goal progress	6.13	2.55
Revenge	Control	5.37	1.42
	Goal commitment	6.16	1.74
	Goal progress	5.11	1.40

### 10.5.3 Main analysis

The main analysis tested H11 of this thesis. Specifically, it examined whether the inferences of goal commitment about an initial customer action towards the goal of emotion regulation will result in a higher likelihood of customer revenge compared to inferences of goal progress. As noted above, three of the dependent variables, i.e. aggression, NWOM and third-party complaining violated the normal distribution. Hence, a non-parametric test was conducted first to examine the effect of goal-focus on aggression, NWOM and third-party complaining and then, the results were compared with that of an ANOVA. There were three conditions and hence, a Kruskal-Wallis test was used. The results demonstrate that the effect of goal focus on

aggression was significant ( $H(2) = 8.99, p = 0.011$ ) while that on NWOM ( $H(2) = 0.210, p = 0.900$ ) and third-party complaining ( $H(2) = 4.38, p = 0.112$ ) were not significant.

Next, a one-way ANOVA was conducted with all the revengeful behaviours as dependent variables and the goal focus condition as an independent one. A Levene's test shows that for all the dependent variables the variances of the groups are the same ( $p > 0.05$ ). The results from the ANOVA show that there was a significant effect of goal-focus on aggression ( $F(2,88) = 5.92, p = 0.004$ ), whilst it approached significance for vindictive complaining ( $F(2,88) = 2.54, p = 0.085$ ) and third-party complaining ( $F(2,88) = 2.58, p = 0.082$ ). However, the effect of goal priming on NWOM was not significant ( $F(2,88) = 0.15, p = 0.860$ ). Also, a significant effect of goal focus was found on revenge as a whole ( $F(2,88) = 3.87, p = 0.024$ ).

Planned contrasts were further conducted for aggression, vindictive complaining, third-party complaining, and revenge to examine the differences between the conditions. The results showed that individuals in the goal commitment condition engaged in significantly more aggression than those in the goal progress condition ( $t(88) = 3.37, p = 0.001$ ) and the control condition ( $t(88) = 2.24, p = 0.028$ ). Furthermore, aggression did not differ significantly between goal progress and the control conditions ( $t(88) = -1.13, p = 0.263$ ). The outcome for the planned contrasts for vindictive complaining demonstrate that individuals in the goal commitment condition engaged in significantly more vindictive complaining than those in the goal progress condition ( $t(88) = 2.15, p = 0.034$ ), while the difference with the control condition approached significance ( $t(88) = 1.64, p = 0.105$ ). In addition, no significant differences were observed between goal progress and the control conditions ( $t(88) = -0.511, p = 0.610$ ). Regarding third-party complaining, the findings indicate that individuals in the goal commitment condition engaged in significantly more third-party complaining than those in the goal progress condition ( $t(88) = 2.18, p = 0.032$ ), while the difference with the control condition approached significance ( $t(88) = 1.64, p = 0.105$ ). Furthermore, no significant differences were observed between goal progress and the control conditions ( $t(88) = -0.531, p = 0.597$ ). Regarding revenge, the planned contrasts showed that individuals in the goal commitment condition engaged in significantly more revenge than those in the goal progress condition ( $t(88) = 2.66, p = 0.009$ ) and the control condition ( $t(88) = 2.02, p = 0.047$ ). Moreover, no significant differences were found between the goal progress and the control conditions ( $t(88) = -0.638, p = 0.525$ ). In sum, the findings indicate that H11 is partially supported.

Table 10.4: ANOVA results for Experiment 5

	$M_{\text{control}}$	$M_{\text{goalcommitment}}$	$M_{\text{goalprogress}}$	F-value	Sig.
Aggression	3.19	4.11	2.73	5.92**	0.004
Vindictive complaining	4.53	5.45	4.24	2.54*	0.085
NWOM	7.66	7.91	7.81	.152 (ns)	0.860
Third-party complaining	6.45	7.42	6.13	2.58*	0.082
Revenge	5.37	6.16	5.11	3.87**	0.024

\* $p < 0.09$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$

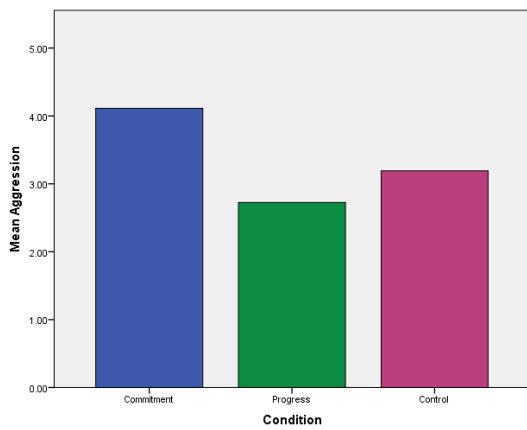


Figure 10.1: Mean aggression across conditions

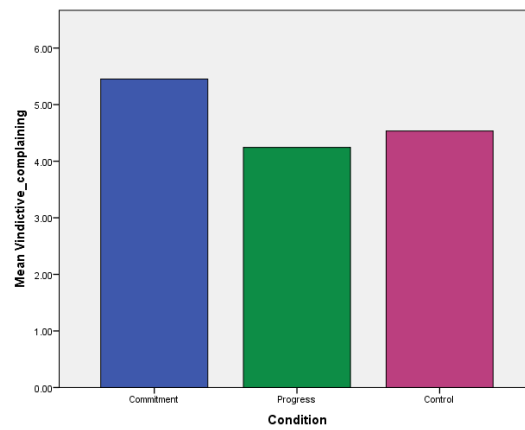


Figure 10.2: Mean vindictive complaining across conditions

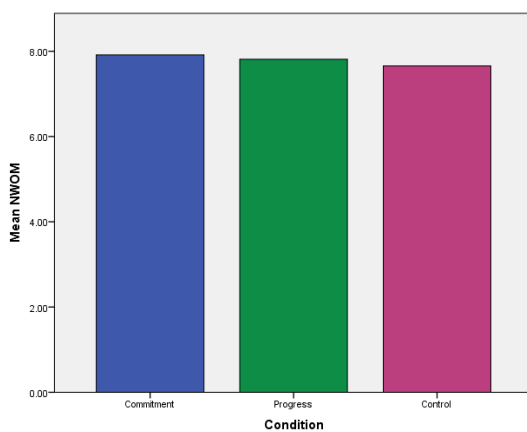


Figure 10.3: Mean NWOM across conditions

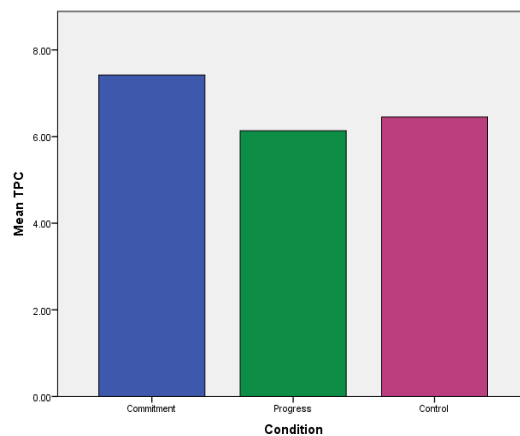


Figure 10.4: Mean third-party complaining across conditions

When asked about whether they had stayed in a hotel before, 95.6% of the respondents indicated that they had. However, the frequency of staying in a hotel was low, with the mean being lower than the midpoint ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 2.30$ ). Finally, the scenario realism was high ( $M = 8.06$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ) and did not differ across the conditions ( $M_{\text{control}} = 8.07$  vs  $M_{\text{goalcommitment}} = 8.32$  vs  $M_{\text{goalprogress}} = 7.78$ ;  $F(2, 88) = 0.74$ ,  $p = 0.482$ ).

## **10.6 Discussion**

For this study, customer revengeful behaviour in sequential decisions was examined. Specifically, it involved testing how individuals' inferences about an initial emotion regulation goal-congruent action influence subsequent revengeful behaviour. When individuals engage in an initial goal action, they tend to make inferences and they may infer that the action denotes goal commitment or goal progress. Inferences of goal commitment should result in goal-congruent subsequent actions, while inferences of goal progress should decrease goal-congruent and increase goal-incongruent subsequent actions (Fishbach and Dhar 2005).

Results from this study have demonstrated that when individuals interpret an initial action towards the goal to regulate their negative emotions as commitment they subsequently engage in more aggression, vindictive complaining and third-party complaining, but no more NWOM than those who interpret the same action as goal progress. Furthermore, revenge was higher in the goal commitment group than the goal progress and control groups. Interestingly, the behaviour of the control group more closely reflected the behaviour of individuals in the goal progress group rather than that of the goal commitment group. This finding indicates that when an opportunity to express emotions and thoughts is given to customers, this is more likely to be interpreted as goal progress towards the goal of venting negative emotions, rather than goal commitment, even when there is no specific goal focus.

## **10.7 Limitation**

### **10.7.1 Expressive writing task**

The expressive writing task was employed in this study as a task that could serve the emotion regulation goal. By expressing their emotions and thoughts individuals could get the sense that they are pursuing the goal to vent and hence, regulate their negative emotions. However, some results only approached significance (i.e. for vindictive complaining and third-party

complaining), while there was no significant result found for NWOM. This lack of evidence in support of the predicted behaviour might be due to the task used in this study. Writing a letter to the manager may, indeed, have given the opportunity to individuals to rationalize their emotions and thoughts and thus reduce their impact. However, individuals could have been uncertain about the outcome of the action, for they were unaware as to whether the manager would actually read their complaint letter and whether this form of complaining would have any positive outcome for them or for future customers of the firm. Hence, individuals may have felt more that they were pursuing their goal to vent their emotions, if they had engaged in an action that would directly impact on the firm and the employees that were responsible for the inconvenience. For instance, in the past few years, with the proliferation of social media and websites with customer reviews, people can employ these as means to vent their emotions. Writing a bad review online can severely harm a firm's reputation and deter other customers from using it. In this way, individuals can vent their negative emotions, whilst at the same time taking revenge on the firm. Due to resource and time constraints, the construction of a website that would resemble reality was deemed unfeasible. However, it is acknowledged that employment of such a task may have enabled the researcher to get larger effects in the hypothesised relationships and evidence for the expected effect on NWOM.

### **10.7.2 The questions of commitment and progress**

In order to manipulate goal focus, the participants in the goal commitment and goal progress conditions were asked directly about their perceived commitment and progress towards the goal of venting their emotions. This question, embedded in a long study, may have not been strong enough to create the intended goal focus. That is, the participants may have not paid the required attention to the question and hence, another task that would increase goal focus may have been more appropriate. For instance, prior studies have shown that more subtle manipulations can be used in order to increase participants' focus on goal commitment, such as priming the superordinate goal (Fishbach et al., 2006). In this context, this would involve priming the emotion regulation goal. Hence, future research could involve replicating the effects of the current study with other manipulations of goal progress and goal commitment in order to establish the effect of goal focus on subsequent revengeful behaviour.

# Chapter 11

## Discussion

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings of the thesis. The table below provides an outline of the hypotheses that were tested and whether they were supported or not.

Table 11.1: Summary of the hypotheses and findings of this thesis

	<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>H1</b>	<i>H1: Higher (vs lower) perceived distributive unfairness will result in higher (vs lower) likelihood to engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>	<b>Supported</b>
<b>H2</b>	<i>H2: Higher (vs lower) perceived procedural unfairness will result in higher (vs lower) likelihood to engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>H3</b>	<i>H3: The higher (vs lower) perceived interactional unfairness will result in higher (vs lower) likelihood to engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and/or third-party complaining).</i>	<b>Supported</b>
<b>H4</b>	<i>H4: Anger mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness and customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>	<b>Partially supported</b>
<b>H5</b>	<i>H5: Disgust mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness and customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>H6</b>	<i>H6: Contempt mediates the relationship between distributive, procedural and interactional unfairness and customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>	<b>Partially supported</b>

	<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>H7</b>	<b>H7:</b> <i>Forgiveness mediates the effect of the three moral emotions (i.e. anger, disgust and contempt) on customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining).</i>	<b>Supported</b>
<b>H8</b>	<b>H8:</b> <i>Individuals who believe that their negative emotions will be improved by exacting revenge after unfair treatment, are more likely to engage in customer revengeful acts (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) than individuals who believe that their negative emotions are unchangeable.</i>	<b>Partially supported</b>
<b>H9</b>	<b>H9:</b> <i>When the goal of emotion regulation is accessible individuals are more likely to engage in the customer direct revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining) than when the goal to control aggressive impulses is accessible.</i>	<b>Supported</b>
<b>H10</b>	<b>H10:</b> <i>When the goal of emotion regulation is accessible individuals are no more likely to engage in customer indirect revengeful behaviours (i.e. vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) than when the goal to control aggressive impulses is accessible.</i>	<b>Supported</b>
<b>H11</b>	<b>H11:</b> <i>When an initial action towards the goal of emotion regulation is interpreted as goal commitment, individuals are more likely to subsequently engage in customer revengeful behaviours (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining) than when it is interpreted as goal progress.</i>	<b>Partially supported</b>

In summary, the main aim of this thesis was to examine the effect of emotion regulation on customer revenge. It was argued that service failures/recoveries constitute highly stressful situations that insistently press for corrective action. Perceptions that the firm has severely violated norms of fairness elicit strong negative emotions. In turn, when individuals feel bad, hedonic emotion regulation goals will be automatically activated and individuals will seek ways to decrease their negative emotions and increase their positive ones. This thesis posited that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. Individuals have internalized beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and engage in such actions with the intent to feel better. Hence, after a service failure, customers who feel bad will engage in



the various revengeful acts because of the emotional benefits they expect to get. This research went one step further to examine the conditions under which the emotion regulation goals will guide customer revenge. More specifically, it examined customer revenge as a conflict between short-term emotion regulation and long-term impulse control goals and argued that accessibility of conflicting goals and goal focus will influence customer motivation for revenge.

The first study of the thesis sought to establish the mediating effect of certain discrete emotions in the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge. After demonstrating the affective nature of customer revenge, the second and third studies investigated whether customer revenge is driven by emotion regulation goals. Finally, the purpose of the fourth and fifth studies was to find the conditions under which emotion regulation drives customer revenge. The findings will be discussed in detail below.

## **11.1 The mediating role of emotions in the relationship between unfairness and customer revenge**

This section will discuss the role of discrete emotions as important drivers of customer revenge. In order for emotion regulation to take place, individuals must be in intense negative affective states. Hence, it was deemed appropriate to first examine the mediating role of certain discrete negative emotions in the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge. This was the purpose of the first study of this thesis and the findings from the study are discussed in this section.

### **11.1.1 The effect of unfairness in customer revenge**

The motivation for revenge is often rooted in feelings of injustice (Tripp & Bies, 2010). When customers feel wronged by a firm, they seek to harm it by engaging in a number of direct (i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining) and indirect revengeful behaviours (i.e. vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining) (Grégoire et al., 2010). These behaviours are qualitatively different from traditional customer responses to dissatisfying service experiences, such as complaining, exiting or staying loyal to the firm (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). At high levels of dissatisfaction individuals do not just passively complain or exit from the firm but, rather, they seek to get even (Grégoire et al., 2010).

This research has employed justice theories to explain customer revenge in a service recovery context. This is in line with the vast number of studies in the service literature that have consistently demonstrated that customers evaluate service recovery encounters with respect to norms of fairness (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Blodgett et al., 1997; Grégoire et al., 2010; Tax et al., 1998). When faced with a service failure/recovery encounter, customers engage in appraisal processes where they seek to make sense and attach meaning to the incident. Part of this sense-making process is the assignment of blame where perceptions of intentionality of the harm doing and controllability over the incident become critical (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). When the firm's intentionality and controllability are determined, perceptions of injustice arise (Tripp & Bies, 2010). Severe service failures, such as flight delays and hotel overbookings, especially when followed by failed service recoveries trigger high perceptions of unfairness because they leave little doubt regarding whether the firm's actions were intentional and the firm had control over the failure.

Prior research suggests that customers' judgements of justice are based not only on outcomes but also on firms' procedures (Blodgett et al., 1997; Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001; Tax et al., 1998). Service failure/recovery incidences involve exchanges of resources where the customer incurs costs due to the service failure and the service firm seeks to provide some gain in the form of service recovery efforts (A. K. Smith et al., 1999). Customers experience feelings of injustice when their money, time, effort and feelings are disregarded and expect the firm to restore balance in the exchange relationship (Funches et al., 2009). Money, time and effort resources are associated with evaluations of outcomes and respect with evaluations of processes. In turn, in order to restore justice, the firms should provide their customers with fair outcomes (i.e. distributive fairness), procedures (i.e. procedural fairness) and interpersonal treatment (i.e. interactional fairness). If the firm's service recovery efforts manage to restore the sense of justice, then customer satisfaction will be restored and customer negative emotional and behavioural reactions will be reduced or eliminated (Blodgett et al., 1997; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b; Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001). However, when firms fail to restore the balance in the relationship, customers will want justice and will be motivated to punish the firm (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Grégoire et al., 2010).

While a number of studies have employed the justice framework to explain customer reactions to service recovery encounters, gaps still remain in the literature. First, the customer revenge research that mainly comes from the pioneering work of Grégoire and colleagues (Grégoire &

Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2010) has tested holistic models rather than the direct effect of the three forms of unfairness on customer revenge. So, it remains uncertain which dimensions of fairness lead to which specific customer revengeful actions. Second, while a number of studies have examined the effect of the three dimensions of fairness on post-recovery behaviours the results are mixed (Blodgett et al., 1997; Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001; Tax et al., 1998; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). For instance, Schoefer and Diamantopoulos (2008b) found that NWOM was associated with interactional unfairness while repurchase intentions with all forms of fairness. On the other hand, Blodgett et al. (1997) found that distributive and interactional but not procedural unfairness, could predict NWOM and repurchase intentions. These and other inconsistent findings encountered in the literature may arise from the different service contexts, manipulations of the fairness elements and forms of behavioural responses used in previous studies. The first study of this thesis addressed this gap in the literature by providing more evidence about the direct effect of the various dimensions of unfairness in the various customer revengeful behaviours.

Results from the first study indicate that distributive unfairness was associated with customer revenge. This provided support for H1 of this thesis. When individuals felt that they did not receive fair compensation for the service failure they were more likely to engage in aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining behaviours in order to punish the firm. This finding is in line with prior research that shows that lack of distributive fairness results in a number of customer negative responses and more specifically, in dissatisfaction (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001; Tax et al., 1998), NWOM (Blodgett et al., 1997; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b), third-party complaining (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b) and lower repurchase intentions (Blodgett et al., 1997). These studies suggest that customers prefer to receive a tangible outcome because this is an indication that the firms sincerely care about them (Goodwin & Ross, 1992). However, the finding contradicts results from studies in customer revenge. For instance, Grégoire et al. (2010) argued that individuals are not reacting to the outcome but rather to the symbolism of how they are treated during the service recovery process. Therefore, customer revenge in their study was motivated by procedural and interactional injustice, but not from distributive injustice. In a similar vein, Bechwati and Morrin (2003) found that distributive injustice did not incite customer revenge.

The difference in the findings between this research and the aforementioned ones may arise from the type and severity of the service failure as well as the manipulation of distributive

fairness employed in this research. In particular, the airline scenario involved a three hour flight delay which made the customer miss the connecting flight and where he/she had to pay for the price difference of the new ticket because the airline worked as a point-to-point carrier. Similarly, customers in the hotel overbooking scenario had to be moved to another hotel of the same hotel chain which was located three miles away from the one they had originally booked while they were not compensated for this change. In both cases, individuals were faced with a severe service failure that caused significant losses in economic resources with respect to customers' money, time, and effort expenditure. Smith et al. (1999) suggested that customers prefer matching between the type of resources lost in the service failure and the type of resources gained in the service recovery. Customers faced with a loss in economic resources expect firms to provide a gain in economic resources in the service recovery process. Therefore, severe losses in economic resources such as the ones involved in the scenarios employed in this research could have made issues of distributive fairness very salient.

Furthermore, service failures such as flight delays and hotel overbookings may make customers feel powerless and exposed to risk. A customer who misses a flight has to make the arrangements for a new flight and search for alternatives. Furthermore, changing the hotel may involve the risk of getting a lower quality room and in a less central location. It is apparent that service failures of such severity cause great anxiety and inconvenience to customers. These customers will seek tangible rather than intangible outcomes (e.g. respect) as a resolution to the service failure. Customers in our study valued tangible outcomes potentially because these represented a sincere confession of the firm's guilt and they restored the power in the relationship with the firm reducing customers' exposure to risk. When the firm fails to provide a tangible outcome for a severe outcome-based service failure, the sense of distributive unfairness can become aggravating and motivate customer revenge.

For the second aspect of justice, procedural justice, findings from the first study found no evidence regarding its association with customer revenge. Hence, H2 was rejected. In other words, results demonstrated that perceived procedural unfairness did not influence customer aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining and the hypothesized relationships were non-significant. This is in line with research that has shown the lack of effect of procedural unfairness in customer post-recovery behaviours, including NWOM (Blodgett et al., 1997), third-party complaining (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b), and repurchase intentions (Blodgett et al., 1997). In a similar vein, in a qualitative research

exploring customer retaliatory behaviours, Funches et al. (2009) found that individuals did not report any issues associated with procedural justice. They note that “customers either were not aware of the service provider’s policy regarding complaint handling or the policy was not salient” (Funches et al., 2009, p. 235). On the other hand, this finding stands in contrast with Grégoire et al.’s (2010) study which suggests that issues of procedural unfairness trigger customer revenge. However, the latter study examined a holistic revenge model rather than direct relationships between the forms of unfairness and the various revengeful behaviours. In particular, procedural injustice was found to lead to perceptions of the firm’s greediness, which in turn, resulted in an increase in a desire for revenge. Therefore, procedural unfairness may have an indirect effect on customer revenge through various mediating variables that affect revenge rather than directly influencing customer revengeful behaviours.

The lack of effect for procedural fairness may be due to the manipulation of procedural fairness employed in this thesis. In particular, procedural fairness was operationalized as speed of recovery where the customer either received an immediate response in terms of how the service failure could be addressed (i.e. high procedural fairness) or had to wait for thirty minutes until the service employee gave a response (i.e. low procedural fairness). This choice of the manipulation was based on studies documenting the focal role of speed in service evaluations (Blodgett et al., 1997; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). Using a critical incident technique, Tax et al. (1998) proposed that speed of recovery is one of the most important factors influencing perceptions of procedural fairness. Speed of recovery is deemed a signal of the efficiency and competency of the firm (Blodgett et al., 1997). A delayed recovery leads to time loss which constitutes a valuable resource for customers. For this reason, past research has associated low speed of service recovery with dissatisfaction and negative firm evaluations (A. K. Smith & Bolton, 1998; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004). Despite research suggesting that speed of recovery is important for customer satisfaction, this study’s results demonstrate that the amount of time taken for the firm to resolve the service failure does not affect customer revenge. There are two potential explanations for this. First, customers may understand the need to wait for the resolution of the service failure (Blodgett et al., 1997). Having to wait for thirty minutes may seem a reasonable amount of time to allow the service personnel to figure out what can be done to address the service failure. Therefore, although the timing for the speed of the service recovery process was pretested in order to identify the timing that would be perceived by participants as aggravating and unfair, it may ultimately have not been perceived as unfair as had been expected. Second, while slow service recovery may result in customer dissatisfaction,

it may not be a strong motivation for customers to engage in the various revengeful behaviours. Subsequently, speed of recovery may influence satisfaction and firm evaluations but not customer revenge.

The third aspect of justice, interactional fairness, was found to be a significant predictor of customer revenge. This provides support for H3 of this thesis. This finding indicates that individuals value the manner in which they are treated by service personnel. When customers feel that they are treated without respect and dignity, they are motivated to engage in aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining. This finding is in line with a number of studies that have shown that interactional unfairness results in various negative customer post-recovery reactions, such as dissatisfaction (Tax et al., 1998; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004), NWOM (Blodgett et al., 1997), third-party complaining (Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b) and lower repurchase intentions (Blodgett et al., 1997). More importantly, this study provides corroborating evidence to the vast majority of the literature in customer revenge that suggests that lack of interactional fairness triggers revengeful impulses (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Funches et al., 2009; Grégoire et al., 2010). In a qualitative investigation, Funches et al. (2009) found that in most of the reported customer revengeful incidences, individuals were incited by slights in interactional fairness. In a similar vein, Bechwati and Morrin (2003) demonstrated that lack of good interpersonal treatment led customers to switch to the firm's main competitor in order to punish it. When the service personnel show concern for the customer by listening attentively to his/her problem, making the effort to help and showing empathy, the customer feels like a valued asset of the firm (Sparks & McColl-Kennedy, 2001). However, when customers are treated rudely and with disrespect this is perceived as a self-identity threat (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). Individuals base their evaluations of the firm on interpersonal communications because these carry symbolic meaning about how much firms care about their customers (Grégoire et al., 2010). When firms violate norms of interpersonal treatment individuals not only feel wronged but also personally hurt. This in turn damages their self-identity and motivates customers to act proactively by taking revenge (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003).

To sum up, distributive and interactional but not procedural unfairness resulted in customer revengeful behaviour. Furthermore, an examination of the path coefficients demonstrates that distributive unfairness was a stronger predictor than interactional unfairness for aggression ( $b=0.186$  vs  $b=0.175$  respectively) and vindictive complaining ( $b=0.312$  vs  $b=0.273$

respectively) but a less strong predictor for vindictive NWOM ( $b=0.323$  vs  $b=0.400$  respectively) and third-party complaining ( $b=0.260$  vs  $b=0.377$  respectively). Therefore, distributive unfairness was more strongly associated with direct revenge while interactional unfairness was a stronger predictor of indirect revenge. Individuals experiencing distributive unfairness face a loss in economic resources. Customers will be motivated to restore the balance in the relationship with the firm by seeking to gain resources that match the type of loss (Smith et al., 1999). Therefore, customers may view aggression and vindictive complaining as a means to restore balance in economic resources. First, these behaviours cause direct costs to the firm and its employees with regards to money, time and effort. Second, customers may expect that by engaging in direct revenge which is visible to the firm, the latter may change its stance towards the customer and provide him/her with better outcomes in the end. On the other side, interactional unfairness occurs when the customer experiences a loss in psychological or social resources (Smith et al., 1999). Individuals feel that they are not valued by the firm which causes self-identity damage (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). Individuals may expect that by engaging in NWOM and third-party complaining, they will restore their sense of self-worth. By publicizing their negative experience with the firm to their social circle and to the general public, they may enhance their self-esteem and restore the psychological balance.

### **11.1.2 The effect of moral emotions in customer revenge**

Customer revenge is not only driven by perceptions of unfairness but also by negative emotions. Customers faced with a service failure, especially when this is followed by a failed service recovery, experience intense negative emotions which may influence their revengeful behaviour over and above perceived unfairness (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009). Evidence coming from qualitative research demonstrates that customers report experiencing a number of negative emotions before engaging in revengeful behaviours (Funches et al., 2009). Similarly, individuals' accounts of justice show that justice is a hot and emotionally laden phenomenon that is almost always accompanied by emotions (Bies & Moag, 1986). In service failure/recovery encounters customers do not just calculate justice but rather experience a justice-related emotion and react to this behaviourally (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005).

Despite these findings, revenge has mainly been studied with respect to its cognitive antecedent (i.e. perceived unfairness) while its emotional aspect has remained largely under researched. Although traditional theories of fairness (e.g. Adams, 1965) implicated negative emotions,

such as anger, as responses to perceptions of unfairness, the dominant revenge models are primarily cognitively-based. For instance, while Tripp and Bies's (2010) model of revenge highlights the importance of negative emotions, these tend to be figural in understanding responses to injustice and revenge is postulated to be primarily driven by the sense of injustice. Furthermore, the few studies that have examined the role of emotions in customer negative responses to service recovery encounters tend to report diffuse rather than discrete emotions (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005; DeWitt, Nguyen, & Marshall, 2008; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b). Nevertheless, discrete emotions are linked with distinct cognitive and motivational properties and may influence customer revenge in different ways (Lerner & Keltner, 2000). The first study of this research addressed this gap in the literature by examining the role of three moral emotions in translating the perceptions of unfairness into customer revengeful behaviours.

Service recovery encounters constitute moral transgressions where the firm violates norms of fairness (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). Past research suggests that moral transgressions give rise to moral emotions which, in turn, influence moral judgment and behaviour (Haidt, 2003). With regards to this, it was predicted that customers who appraise the service recovery incidence as unfair should experience three moral emotions, i.e. anger, disgust, and contempt that would, in turn, motivate customer revenge.

Consistent with this idea, results from the first study demonstrate that anger arises from perceptions of distributive and interactional but not procedural unfairness. The lack of effect for the procedural unfairness was explained in section 11.1. More importantly, it emerges that anger acted as the mediating mechanism that explained how perceptions of unfairness were translated into the various customer revengeful behaviours. In particular, when individuals felt that the service recovery encounter violated norms of distributive and interactional fairness they were angered and motivated to take revenge by engaging in aggression, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining. However, contrary to expectations, anger did not have an effect on vindictive complaining. Therefore, H4 of this thesis is partially supported.

The finding that anger results in customer revenge is in line with research that suggests that anger is the most commonly felt emotion after service failure/recovery incidences and prior to retaliation (Bougie et al., 2003; Funches et al., 2009). Anger arises when the event is appraised as harmful and blame is externally attributed (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). The service



failure/recovery harms the customer by creating losses in the form of economic or symbolic resources. Moreover, the customer feels that he/she has been intentionally and unjustifiably wronged by the firm. Blame is attributed to the firm because service failure/recovery encounters are perceived as intentional and controllable by the firm. In turn, the emotion of anger gives rise to a number of experiential phenomena. When individuals experience anger they tend to think about how unfair the incident was and about becoming violent towards others (Bougie et al., 2003). Angry feelings are overwhelming, making individuals feel like exploding and behaving aggressively (Roseman et al., 1994). For this reason, anger has been associated with approach tendencies where individuals are motivated to “attack, humiliate, or otherwise get back at the person who is perceived as acting unfairly or immorally” (Haidt, 2003, p. 856). Therefore, outraged customers seek to exact their revenge in order to get back at the firm for the unacceptable service. Consistent with this, a number of studies in the service literature have associated anger with customer revenge (Bonifield & Cole, 2007; Gelbrich, 2010; Grégoire et al., 2010).

Past research has suggested that anger can have destructive consequences in the short-term but may result in reconciliation in the long-term. According to Fischer and Roseman (2007, p. 104), the social function of anger “can be conceptualized as attaining a better outcome by forcing a change in another person’s behaviour”. While in the short-run intense angry feelings trigger attacking behaviours aiming to correct the wrongdoing, in the long-run individuals may seek to improve the relationship with the transgressors which may result in reconciliatory efforts to establish a mutually satisfactory relationship. Averill (1982) reports that individuals evaluated anger episodes as beneficial because either they managed to change the other person’s behaviour or they helped them realize their own strengths and weaknesses. Reacting angrily to the firm’s actions may signal to the firm that it has treated the customer unfairly or may enhance the customer’s self-esteem by restoring his/her sense of power in the relationship with the firm. While angry customers may exact their revenge in the heat of the moment when the service failure/recovery occurs, they may subsequently decide to remain and seek reconciliation with the firm. In this sense, firms may still have a chance to retain angry customers and avoid exiting behaviour or further customer revenge. Although the current study does not address this issue, it could be an interesting avenue for future research.

For the moral emotion of disgust, results from the first study demonstrate that while it arose from perceptions of distributive and interactional injustice, it did not act as a mediator in the

relationship between unfairness and customer revenge. This rejects H5 of this thesis. This finding indicates that individuals that appraised the service recovery incident as unfair with regards to the compensation and interpersonal treatment they received felt disgust. This is in line with studies that have demonstrated that violations of fairness norms trigger feelings of disgust (e.g. Moretti & Di Pellegrino, 2010). Therefore, this study provides corroborating evidence to the stream of research that argues that the emotion of disgust may arise from a wide range of moral violations and not only those that involve bodily violations (Haidt, 2003; Rozin et al., 1999). As noted in section 2.3.4.2 of the literature review, there is debate about the form of appraisals that give rise to moral disgust. Some researchers argue that moral disgust arises solely from appraisals that someone is revolting because of violating bodily norms (Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2013). However, others postulate that the feeling of disgust may arise from a variety of moral transgressions, beyond bodily concerns, especially when the transgressors are viewed as morally untrustworthy (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011) and their actions involve hypocrisy and betrayal (Haidt, 2003). In the case of the service recovery incident, the firm is morally untrustworthy and the customer feels that it has betrayed his/her trust. The firm's actions are viewed as impure since they are intentional and controllable by the firm thereby violating the norm of divinity (Rozin et al., 1999). It is apparent that perceptions of unfairness in this study, although not involving violation of bodily norms, elicited customer disgust.

Whereas unfairness gave rise to feelings of disgust, the latter did not impact on customer revenge behaviour. This finding is in contrast with the literature suggesting that when disgust arises from a wide range of moral transgressions, it tends to have anger-like tendencies such as attacking and moving against the transgressor (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). In this study, disgusted customers were not led to confrontational behaviours but may rather have chosen to avoid or withdraw from the firm. This study provides corroborating evidence to the traditional view that has associated the emotion of disgust with tendencies to avoid and break off any contact with the transgressor (Haidt, 2003). Customers who experience disgust after a service failure/recovery incident may have the goal of distancing themselves from the firm. Disgust serves to mark individuals whose behaviour poses a threat and to avoid them in order to reduce the risk of exposure to harm (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). That is, when customers view firms' actions as contaminating and harmful they are motivated to refuse any contact with the transgressing firm to reduce the risk of harm. Avoidance may occur in a physical sense, such as refusing direct contact with the firm by avoiding aggression and vindictive complaining as well as in a non-physical sense, such as by refraining from publicly sharing their bad experience

by engaging in NWOM or third-party complaining behaviours. By ostracizing the firm, customers aim to punish firm's actions and deter future inappropriate behaviours towards other customers (Haidt, 2003).

Findings from the first study indicate that the moral emotion of contempt acted as a mediator between perceptions of unfairness and customer revenge behaviour. Customers who perceived that the service recovery encounter violated norms of distributive and interactional fairness experienced feelings of contempt and were motivated to engage in aggression, vindictive complaining, and vindictive NWOM. Contrary to expectations, contemptuous feelings did not affect third-party complaining. Therefore, H6 is partially supported. The finding that perceptions of unfairness trigger contempt can be explained by prior research that has suggested that contempt arises from appraisals that the transgressor has violated the ethical code of community (Rozin et al., 1999). By transgressing the norms of fairness, the firm fails to carry out its obligations to the community, such as the right of individuals to be treated fairly. Furthermore, prior research has associated contempt with appraisals that the transgressor is incompetent (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Perceptions of unfair treatment may be a signal that the firm lacks the competency to provide a satisfactory service to its customers and hence cannot contribute meaningfully to customer experience.

Results from the first study further show that customer feelings of contempt incited customer revenge. This finding is in line with prior studies that have shown that when a firm violates moral norms, contemptuous individuals engage in destructive punitive behaviours, such as NWOM, complaining and boycotting (Romani et al., 2013; Xie et al., 2015). Nevertheless, this finding may seem to contradict the traditional literature on contempt that has associated it with avoidance tendencies (Haidt, 2003). According to Fischer and Roseman (2007) the main goal of contempt is to exclude the transgressor from one's social circle. This can be achieved in a number of ways with avoidance being only one. Customers may believe that by engaging in the various customer revengeful behaviours they will manage to derogate firms in other customers' eyes and ultimately prevent them from using its services. By engaging in behaviours such as aggression, vindictive complaining, NWOM and third-party complaining individuals mark those firms that are worthy of complete disregard (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). This way, customers may expect to achieve a change in the behaviour of other customers so that firms will be treated with less warmth and respect in future interactions and finally end up being excluded from their consideration set (Haidt, 2003). Hence, customer revenge may

accomplish social exclusion. Furthermore, the fact that contempt incited revenge may be explained by the literature that suggests that contempt arises some time after the negative incident has taken place and occurs on top of angry feelings. When anger and contempt co-occur, hostile tendencies with tendencies to derogate may co-occur resulting in revengeful behaviour (Fischer & Roseman, 2007).

In contrast with anger, contempt has been associated with destructive consequences both in the short and long-term (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Romani et al., 2013). The short-term aim of contempt to derogate the transgressor results in long-term rejection with the goal being to permanently exclude the transgressor from one's social environment. While anger may lead to reconciliation with the firm in the long-term if the customer feels that the firm has been punished or reparation has been provided, contempt is associated with a permanent belief that the firm is intrinsically bad and hence, there is no way to change its behaviour (Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Therefore, feelings of contempt are less likely to lead to reconciliation with the firm than feelings of anger. Although this research does not examine this issue, an interesting avenue for further research could be an examination of the long-term consequences of anger and contempt for the customer relationship with the transgressing firm.

A final note should be made with respect to the lack of effect of some of the hypothesized mediating effects. As noted above, anger did not mediate the effect of unfairness on vindictive complaining. This result was unexpected since vindictive complaining is an aggressive form of complaining and angry customers should be motivated to engage in such behaviours. Similarly, contempt did not affect third-party complaining. This finding is also contrary to expectations since third-party complaining may serve as an action to derogate a firm's reputation, especially because it is addressed to a wide customer audience. Currently, it is difficult to explain why these two effects were not significant. For now, it will be assumed that the lack of effect is due to the specific sample and not due to the non-existence of these relationships. Future research could explore why we failed to find evidence for these hypothesized relationships.

### **11.1.3 The effect of forgiveness in customer revenge**

Another prediction of this thesis was that moral emotions influence customer revenge not only directly but also indirectly through the mechanism of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the process that can heal the relationship between the customer and the firm in the aftermath of the service failure/recovery encounter (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011). The customers who choose to forgive will seek to abandon negative emotions and decrease their motivation to take revenge (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). Despite its potential pivotal role, service literature has overlooked the role of forgiveness in customer reactions to service recovery efforts. As Zourrig et al. (2009b) note traditional firm recovery strategies (e.g. compensation) often fail to restore customer satisfaction because these strategies cannot alleviate customer negative emotions. Therefore, intense negative emotions are maintained and customers seek venting outlets. Forgiveness, in these instances, becomes relevant because it is the mechanism that results in the neutralization of negative emotions. The first study of this research addressed this gap in the literature by examining the role of forgiveness as the mediating mechanism between moral emotions arising from perceptions of unfairness of the service recovery encounters and customer revenge.

In line with the predictions of H7, forgiveness was the mediating mechanism that translated moral emotions into customer revenge. In particular, findings demonstrate that the higher the moral emotions (i.e. anger, disgust and contempt), the less likely it was for individuals to forgive the firm and the more likely they were to engage in the various customer revengeful behaviours. This finding is in line with Tsarenko and Tojib's (2012) study which showed that reduced customer forgiveness results in NWOM behaviour and customer intention to switch to another service provider.

Activation of customer forgiveness after service failure/recovery encounters involves several cognitive and emotional progressions. At the cognitive level, the individuals reframe the transgressing service failure/recovery incident in a more positive way. At the emotional level, negative emotions are replaced by neutral or even positive ones. At the motivational level, the individuals decrease their motivation for revenge and increase their desire for reconciliation (Zourrig et al., 2009b). However, the cognitive and motivational progressions do not occur at once but instead, require a lot of time and effort. Therefore, it requires a considerable time period for the customer to forgive the firm after the service failure/recovery.

Forgiveness may be granted as a “free gift” even when the firm does not provide reparation or does not deserve the customers’ forgiveness. This is because individuals feel that justice has been served when they restore the psychological balance and free themselves from negative thoughts and emotions (Exline et al., 2003). Despite this, factors that influence perceptions of justice have been shown to facilitate the process of forgiveness (Karremans & Van Lange, 2005). When the customer feels that justice has been restored by the firm’s recovery efforts (e.g. giving compensation, showing concern) forgiveness will be accelerated and more likely to be achieved. However, when the firm fails at the recovery stage and is highly accountable for the failure, cognitive reframing will be more difficult. In turn, the neutralization of negative emotions will be deterred which will preclude the granting of forgiveness and increase the motivation for carrying out the various customer revengeful behaviours (Exline et al., 2003). Consequently, the higher the felt injustice gap the lower the opportunity for customers to forgive and to abandon their revengeful impulses (Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

## **11.2 The effect of emotion regulation in customer revenge**

After demonstrating the role of emotions in driving customer revenge, this section will discuss whether customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. This is linked with the findings from Studies 2 and 3. The role of negative emotions in customer revenge may become even more important in double deviation scenarios where the customer is faced with both failed service delivery and service recovery. Double deviations are highly distressful situations that insistently press for action (del Río-Lanza et al., 2009). In these instances, customers may spontaneously seek to regulate their negative emotions in order to feel better (Gross, 1998b). Prior research has suggested that individuals acquire hedonistic tendencies from an early age and they tend to approach pleasure and avoid pain (Koole, 2009b; Larsen, 2000). Consequently, customers in distress will seek ways to increase their positive emotions and decrease their negative ones. Customers have a repertoire of strategies to cope with their negative emotions (Yi & Baumgartner, 2004). The prediction of this research was that customer revenge may be one of these strategies that individuals employ to alleviate their negative emotions.

Although prior investigations have posited that customer revenge may serve as a coping strategy (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Zourrig et al., 2009a), no previous study has directly tested the assumption that the various customer revengeful behaviours are employed by individuals

because they believe that pursuing them will make them feel better. This thesis addressed this gap in the literature by examining whether the various customer revengeful behaviours are employed in the service of emotion regulation. Studies 2 and 3 were conducted to test this hypothesis. These two studies involved similar experimental design but employed different manipulations. In particular, Study 2 used a chocolate manipulation and Study 3 a happy memory recall manipulation. The purpose of these manipulations was to make individuals believe that at the end of the session they would have positive emotions. The prediction was that if individuals engage in revengeful behaviours because they believe that they will improve their negative emotions, then giving them another opportunity to feel good (i.e. chocolate eating, happy memory recall) would reduce their motivation to undertake revenge.

Findings from Study 2 were mixed. While no significant effects were found when examining the whole dataset of responses, close examination of the female dataset showed that aggression and third-party complaining may serve as emotion regulation strategies. In other words, females engaged in aggression and third-party complaining because they expected to feel better. This effect was not found for vindictive complaining and NWOM. Furthermore, these significant effects were eliminated when accounting for the effect of two personality traits, i.e. anger-out tendencies and cultural orientation. When the two personality characteristics were inserted as covariates in the analysis, all the aforementioned effects became insignificant indicating that customer revenge is not employed in the service of emotion regulation. As noted in section 8.1.9, this lack of findings was attributed to the chocolate manipulation employed in the study. A number of prior studies have documented a gender effect in the affect regulatory properties of chocolate eating (Dubé et al., 2005; Macht et al., 2002). In particular, they have demonstrated that while women tend to consume more fattening food when in negative emotional states (Andrade, 2005), men tend to do so when in positive affective states (Dubé et al., 2005). Therefore, for women, consuming fattening foods may serve to alleviate negative emotions whilst for men it may serve to maintain positive ones (Dubé et al., 2005). If this research is valid, it follows that women but not men acknowledge the mood-lifting properties of chocolates. Hence, the chocolate eating manipulation employed in Study 2 with the purpose to manipulate individuals' expectations about their emotions may have worked only for females and not for males.

For this reason, the researcher decided to replicate the second study with a third study that used a different manipulation (i.e. a happy memory recall) to test H8 of this research. Findings from

Study 3 provide support for the hypothesis that customer revenge may be employed in the service of emotion regulation. In particular, this held true for vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM, and third-party complaining but not for aggression. More importantly, the effect occurred for both males and females. Therefore, customers engage in these three revengeful behaviours in the hope that they will feel better. Hence, H8 is partially supported.

Findings from the third study provide corroborating evidence to psychological research that suggests that revenge is employed for affect regulation purposes (Bushman et al., 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008). Bushman et al. (2001) showed that angered individuals were more likely to aggress when they believed that their emotions were changeable than when they were made to believe that their emotions were temporarily frozen, thus rendering any affect regulatory effort useless. At the core of the hedonic emotion regulation is the assumption that in order for individuals to engage in an emotion regulation activity they must believe in the mood-lifting properties of this activity. In line with this, Carlsmith et al. (2008) have demonstrated that individuals punished the offender in anticipation of the positive emotions they expected to have after exacting their revenge. Therefore, individuals seem to have internalized beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and engage in such behaviours with the intent to alleviate their negative emotions. These beliefs are constantly reinforced by mass media and popular psychology and pervade today's society (Bushman et al., 1999).

However, findings from Study 3 contradict Gollwitzer and Bushman's (2012) work that found that revenge primarily arises from justice and not emotion regulation motives. However, whether revenge arises from justice or emotion regulation motives, may depend on an individual's level of involvement (Carlsmith et al., 2008). When involvement is low, as in the case of the social dilemma context used in Gollwitzer and Bushman's (2012) study, justice motives may be dominating. However, when involvement is high, as when individuals are personally harmed and hurt by the firm, then the additional motive of emotion regulation may be activated and become the prime mover of revenge. In line with this idea, Gollwitzer and Bushman (2012) showed that when individuals focused inwardly on their emotions, negative emotions became salient and offenders' punishment was primarily driven by affect regulation rather than justice motives. In the case of severe service failures, especially when followed by failed service recoveries, individuals feel that they are personally hurt rendering negative emotions particularly salient. This explains the fact that customer revenge in this study was employed by individuals for emotion regulation purposes.



Looking at the customer revengeful behaviours individually, the fact that vindictive complaining, NWOM and third-party complaining served as emotion regulation strategies is in line with research that reports the venting motive as the driver of complaining (Alicke et al., 1992; Bennett, 1997) and NWOM behaviours (Sundaram et al., 1998; Wetzer et al., 2007). Although evidence from these studies is indirect, it implies that these negative customer behaviours may serve cathartic purposes. Conversely, findings from this study suggest that customer aggression is not employed in the service of emotion regulation. This contradicts psychological evidence that has shown that aggression is used by individuals in order to alleviate their negative emotions (Bushman et al., 2001). Contrary to Bushman et al.'s (2001) study that examined one form of aggression, in this study aggression was a multifaceted concept that involved customer actions such as damaging firm's properties, bending firm's policies, and slamming doors in front of an employee. The lack of effect may indicate that customer aggression is primarily driven by other motives. For instance, Daunt and Harris (2012b) have suggested that customer vandalism, a form of customer aggression, serves ego-gains motives. These arise from individuals' need to feel positive about themselves or the need to feel that others respect them. The failed service recovery incident may damage individuals' self-identity because the customers feel they are not valued by the firm. Given that their self-esteem is lowered by such an incident, customers may seek ways to restore their sense of self-worth. In this sense, aggressive behaviours may serve as a positive reinforcement. Aggression is an overt demonstration of one's power and hence customers may feel that they regain the respect that they had deserved from the firm in the first place and consequently feel more positive about themselves. Whereas this research does not provide any evidence about the motives that underlie customer aggression this presents an interesting avenue for further research.

Participants in Study 3 were also asked about their motives to engage in the various customer revengeful behaviours. Responses showed that 64.3% of the participants indicated their primary motive was to vent their emotions, followed by motives to restore equity (31.7%) and lastly to cause harm to the firm (4%). This provides further evidence to the claim of this thesis that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. Furthermore, it indicates that customer revenge is a form of instrumental aggression in that customers engage in such behaviours not to harm the firm per se but to achieve other higher-order goals such as venting negative emotions and restoring justice (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). This distinguishes customer revenge from other negative customer behaviours encountered in the

literature, such as brand sabotage, which is a form of hostile aggression and is fuelled by the end goal of harming the firm (Kähr et al., 2016).

Although this study has demonstrated that individuals have internalized beliefs about the cathartic properties of the various revengeful behaviours, it provides no evidence about whether these beliefs are valid. An interesting avenue for future research could be to examine whether customer revenge actually makes individuals feel better or instead maintains negative emotions and aggressive impulses.

### **11.3 Boundary conditions for the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge**

The previous section has demonstrated that customer revenge is driven by emotion regulation goals. This section will now discuss two conditions that affect the influence of emotion regulation in customer revenge: goal accessibility and goal focus. The findings discussed in this section are associated with Studies 4 and 5 of this research.

#### **11.3.1 The effect of goal accessibility in customer revenge in single behaviours**

So far, the discussion has indicated that customer revenge arises from emotion regulation goals. Recent evidence suggests that individuals simultaneously hold various goals which, if seen in isolation, may appear conflicting (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005). In a dynamic environment, individuals come across different environmental stimuli which simultaneously activate various goals on a daily basis. These goals compete with each other for the individual's limited cognitive resources, such as attention, energy, and time (Louro et al., 2007). Multiple goal pursuit requires individuals to prioritize goals and resolve conflict to ensure successful goal attainment (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Accordingly, when customers encounter a service recovery incident they may simultaneously hold various conflicting goals. Goals will guide their behaviour, such as whether they will respond to the service failure by being competitive, collaborative or resigned (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Indeed, past research has shown that customers have a repertoire of behavioural responses to negative service experiences (Gelbrich, 2010; Yi & Baumgartner, 2004). On some occasions customers may decide to take revenge on the firm while on other occasions they may engage in conciliatory or avoidance behaviours. The prediction of this research was that the nature of customer response will depend on the accessibility of customer goals at the point of the decision.

The role of multiple goals in customer revenge behaviour has been neglected in the service literature. The fourth study of this research addressed this gap by examining the role of two conflicting goals: emotion regulation vs self-control, in customer revenge. In particular, this research viewed customer revenge as a self-control failure where individuals fail to control their aggressive impulses (Denson, DeWall et al., 2012). This self-control failure arises from two sources: individuals' false beliefs and giving too much priority to emotion regulation (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Regarding the first source, individuals may have internalized beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and engage in such behaviours with the intent to feel better (Carlsmith et al., 2008). However, there is now significant evidence documenting that revenge does not extinguish the fire but rather maintains negative emotions and aggressive impulses (Bushman et al., 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008). Consequently, individuals engage in the various revengeful behaviours in anticipation of positive feelings but instead end up feeling worse. Second, when customers experience negative emotions, emotion regulation goals take precedence over impulse control goals driving customer revenge behaviour. Customers who feel acutely bad need to feel better, here and now. Emotion regulation goals shift priorities to the immediate present. However, this short-term focus on feeling good comes at the expense of other long-term goals (Baumeister, 1997). That is, individuals simultaneously hold the long-term goal to restrain their aggressive impulses and conform to socially acceptable behaviours (Denson et al., 2012). Subsequently, when customers have to decide whether they will respond to the failed service recovery by being revengeful, they face a conflict between emotion regulation and impulse control goals.

This research predicted that accessibility of these two goals will influence customer revenge behaviour in opposite directions. Consistent with this prediction, results demonstrated that accessibility of impulse control goals resulted in reduced aggression and vindictive complaining but no less NWOM and third-party complaining behaviours compared to accessibility of emotion regulation goals. It is apparent that self-control goals influenced direct but not indirect customer revenge. Hence, H9 and H10 of this thesis are supported. This finding is in line with Archer et al.'s (2010) study that has demonstrated that self-control resulted in a reduction in direct aggressive behaviours but had no effect in indirect aggressive behaviours. Direct revengeful behaviours, i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining, are directly observable and controllable by the firm (Grégoire et al., 2010) exposing the customer to high risk. Customer negative behaviour carries the risk of inciting firm's counterrevenge and being subject to disapproval by friends or other customers present at the scene (Aquino et al., 2006;

Archer & Coyne, 2005). Since there is a high likelihood that direct revenge could be costly to the customer, it requires self-control to restrain the aggressive impulses that motivate the customer to engage in such behaviours. On the other hand, indirect revenge, i.e. vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining, happens behind the firm's back and hence, is not directly observable and controllable by the firm (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). The revengeful customer remains unidentified minimizing the costs of counterrevenge or social disapproval (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Thus, the costs of engaging in such behaviour do not exceed the benefits and therefore, impulse control will not affect indirect revenge (Archer et al., 2010). Moreover, these behaviours usually take place some time after the service recovery episode has occurred and hence, the intensity of emotions may have been reduced and aggressive impulses relaxed.

Another interesting finding of this study is that there were no significant differences between the control group and the emotion regulation goal priming group. This result may indicate that in this instance the default goal of individuals was more closely associated with the goal to feel better. Therefore, when customers experience acute negative emotions they will spontaneously seek to regulate upwardly their emotions by engaging in revenge, even when no goal is accessible. This provides further support and confidence for the findings of Study 3. Moreover, the finding is in line with Fishbach and Labroo's (2007) study that has suggested that in some instances, such as when individuals decide whether to donate in charities, the default goal of individuals in negative affective states was more closely related to the feeling good goal. Helping and revengeful behaviours are used by individuals to improve their negative emotions and hence, even when no goal is accessible, individuals in negative affective states will spontaneously seek to regulate their emotions by engaging in such behaviours.

This study leaves open certain questions about what types of goals could reduce indirect revenge, i.e. NWOM and third-party complaining. This could be an interesting avenue of further research with important implications since prior research has demonstrated that these behaviours can have an enormous impact on firm's reputation and create costs for the firm over and above those generated by direct revengeful behaviours.

### **11.3.2 The effect of goal focus in customer revenge in sequential behaviours**

The previous section discussed findings about how two conflicting goals influence customer revenge behaviour in a single decision. Nevertheless, usually goals cannot be accomplished in

one action but rather require taking several actions that unfold over time (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). After the failed service recovery encounter, customers may be given the opportunity to vent their negative emotions. Nowadays, firms have set in place several venting outlets to absorb customer negative emotional reactions. For instance, they allow customers to write complaint letters to the management of the service firms, they train service personnel to listen to the customers patiently and to help them to let off some steam, and so on. These actions enable the customer, at least partially, to accomplish the goal of emotion regulation. After having been given this opportunity by the firm, the customer has to decide whether he/she will engage in the various revengeful behaviours. Prior studies in service research have neglected the influence of conflicting goals in sequential decision-making. The fifth study of this research addressed this gap by examining how an initial customer action towards the goal of emotion regulation (i.e. writing a complaint letter) influenced subsequent customer revenge behaviour.

The prediction was that customer inferences of goal commitment or goal progress regarding the initial action would have differential impact on subsequent revenge. Consistent with our predictions the results of Study 5 demonstrated that when the initial customer action towards the goal of emotion regulation was interpreted as goal commitment, customers subsequently engaged in more revengeful behaviours than when the same action was interpreted as goal progress. This held true for aggression, vindictive complaining and third-party complaining, but not for vindictive NWOM. Therefore, H11 is partially supported. These findings are in line with psychological research that suggests that inferences of goal commitment should result in goal-congruent subsequent behaviours while inferences of goal progress should result in goal-incongruent behaviours (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Fishbach et al., 2006).

When individuals engage in an action they seek to give meaning to it and subsequently make inferences of goal commitment or goal progress. When customers interpret the initial action towards the goal of emotion regulation as commitment, they infer that the goal is important to them and hence engage in more revenge behaviours because these are congruent with the goal of emotion regulation. In this case, customers highlight the pursuit of one goal, i.e. the emotion regulation goal (Fishbach et al., 2009). When customers infer goal progress with the initial action towards the goal of emotion regulation, they get a sense of accomplishment. Goal progress denotes the reduction in the discrepancy between the current and desired states and liberates the customers to pursue the conflicting self-control goal thereby reducing their revengeful behaviour (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). In this case the conflicting goal rebounds

and the individual gives it greater priority pursuing choice balancing between the two conflicting goals (Fishbach et al., 2009).

Interestingly, findings from this study further indicate that there were no significant differences in revengeful behaviour between the goal progress and the control groups. This result may indicate that when customers are given the opportunity to vent their emotions with an initial action, the latter is more likely to be interpreted as goal progress rather than goal commitment. Therefore, the interpretation individuals make by default when engaging in an action congruent with a goal is that they have partially achieved their goal. Given the opportunity to accomplish the goal of emotion regulation, individuals will reduce their subsequent revengeful behaviours even when no specific goal focus is available.

Results failed to produce a significant effect for NWOM. Individuals engaged equally in NWOM irrespective of goal focus condition. Furthermore, while differences between groups for aggression were significant at the 5% level, the effect for vindictive complaining and third-party complaining, despite being in the predicted direction, only approached significance ( $p < 0.09$ ). This lack of findings may be due to the manipulation task employed in this study. The expressive writing task where the customers were asked to write a complaining letter to the manager of the firm may have primarily served other goals than that of emotion regulation. As noted in the discussion of the findings of Study 3, aggression was not found to arise from emotion regulation goals. It was hypothesized that it may arise primarily from other types of goals such as ego-gain goals. Although prior research has demonstrated that expressive writing is a way to release negative emotions (Lee-Wingate & Corfman, 2011), writing a complaint letter to the manager may have been primarily associated with ego-enhancing goals rather than venting goals. This may explain the significant effect on aggression. Customers may feel that this action boosts their self-esteem because given the opportunity to voice their dissatisfaction to the management they are valued by the firm. On the other hand, writing a complaint letter may not be enough to ameliorate their negative emotions. Customers may feel that the firm did not get what it deserved especially because they are unsure about whether their complaint was actually taken into consideration. Therefore, they may expect to get no satisfaction from engaging in such action. For this reason, the effect of writing a complaint letter to the manager on the other two revengeful behaviours (i.e. vindictive complaining and third-party complaining) may have been lessened and in the case of NWOM, eliminated. This could be an interesting avenue for future research. Further studies could replicate our hypotheses by using

another task that enables customers to vent their emotions whilst being perceived as congruent with the emotion regulation goal. Its effect on subsequent customer revengeful behaviour could then be examined.

#### **11.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter has provided a discussion of the key findings of this research associated with the key questions about whether revenge is employed by individuals with the intent to feel better. In particular, the role of moral emotions, emotion regulation processes and conflicting goals in customer revenge were analyzed. The results were discussed at the broader theoretical level linking them with existing literature in psychology and service literature. This chapter has given rise to a number of important theoretical and practical implications as well as avenues for future research. These will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 12**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provides the background to the study and a summary of the research findings. Following this, there is an outline of the theoretical and practical contributions of this research and finally, there is a discussion of the limitations with the chapter concluding with suggestions for avenues for future research.

#### **12.1 Background to the study and research findings**

Customer revenge incidences have become commonplace with services being the most vulnerable to such reactions due to their intangibility and the human interactions involved (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009). Failures, such as flight delays and hotel overbookings, are almost unavoidable and frequently cause customer outrage. Customers who feel harmed by the firm that fails to deliver a standard of service seek to get even by engaging in aggression, vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining (Grégoire et al., 2010). Whereas customer revenge may be beneficial in that it may serve as a punishment for firms' wrongdoing and a deterrent for future transgressions, it has primarily been associated with negative consequences. In particular, its negative impact involves multiple recipients, including firms, employees and customers (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). For this reason, understanding the mechanism underlying customer revenge is of utmost significance because this will enable firms to design effective strategies to curb negative customer reactions.

While a number of studies in the service literature have examined the cognitive aspect of customer revenge, the emotional aspect remains understudied. In particular, past research has demonstrated that individuals appraise the service failure/recovery incident with respect to the fairness of outcome (i.e. distributive fairness), procedures (i.e. procedural fairness), and interpersonal treatment (i.e. interactional fairness) (Blodgett et al., 1997; Goodwin & Ross, 1992; Tax et al., 1998). Customer perceptions that the firm has violated norms of fairness have been shown to motivate customer revenge (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Grégoire et al., 2010). Nevertheless, while individuals' reports of revenge incidences suggest that revenge is a "hot" and emotionally laden phenomenon (Barclay et al., 2005), prior studies have neglected the role of negative emotions as key drivers of customer revenge.



The main aim of this thesis was to investigate the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge. Service failures/recoveries constitute highly stressful incidences that insistently press for corrective action. Individuals in strong negative affective states spontaneously seek ways to regulate upwardly their emotions. It was argued that customer revenge may serve emotion regulation goals. This research contributes to the literature by examining whether individuals engage in the various customer revengeful behaviours because they expect to alleviate their negative emotions and feel better. In doing so, it first investigated the mediating role of certain discrete emotions in the relationship between perceptions of unfairness and customer revenge. In particular, three moral emotions -anger, disgust and contempt- were chosen as the foci of the research. After establishing the key role of negative emotions in translating perceptions of unfairness into customer revenge, the research tested the main assumption of the thesis, i.e. that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. In addition, this research further illuminated the boundary conditions under which emotion regulation drives customer revenge: accessibility of conflicting goals and goal focus.

A theoretical model was proposed in Chapter 5 and eleven hypotheses were tested. To address the hypotheses of the research, five scenario-based experimental designs were employed. The scenarios involved either a flight delay or a hotel overbooking service failure. The stories were written after consulting a customer complaint website in order to make the scenarios more realistic and representative of reality so that participants could easily identify with them. The sample used was a convenience sample where the participants were students from UK universities who were recruited either at the University of Bath or through an online participant recruitment platform (Prolific.ac).

The first experiment tested hypotheses H1 through H7. Results from the experiment showed that H1 was supported. The effect of distributive unfairness in customer revenge was significant. H2 was rejected suggesting that procedural fairness had no significant effect on customer revenge. The third form of fairness, interactional fairness significantly influenced customer revenge, providing support for H3. Hence, regarding the relationship between fairness and revenge, these findings indicate that perceptions of distributive and interactional but not procedural unfairness drive customer revenge. Next, the mediating role of moral emotions was tested. Anger mediated the effect of unfairness in the various revengeful behaviours with the exception of vindictive complaining, thus providing partial support for H4. Conversely, disgust did not affect customer revenge and hence did not act as a mediator in the

relationship between unfairness and customer revenge. Hence, H5 was rejected. Perceptions of unfairness significantly predicted the rise of the moral emotion of contempt which in turn, motivated customers to engage in the various revengeful behaviours with the exception of third-party complaining. Thus, H6 was partially supported. An indirect route through which moral emotions may influence customer revenge was also examined. Results for H7 indicated that the higher the moral emotions, the less forgiving individuals will be and the more motivated to exact revenge. Therefore, forgiveness is the indirect route through which moral emotions are translated into revengeful acts. Taken together, these findings show the important role of emotions as drivers of customer revenge.

After establishing the key mediating role of negative emotions in the relationship between perceptions of unfairness and customer revenge, the second and third experiments tested H8. In other words, they examined whether customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. This is the key assumption of this thesis. Results provided partial support for H8 by demonstrating that vindictive complaining, vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining, but not aggression, serve as emotion regulation strategies. This finding indicates that individuals in negative affective states spontaneously seek ways to cope with their emotions and engage in such behaviours with the intent to feel better.

The fourth and fifth experiments sought to investigate two boundary conditions that influence the effect of emotion regulation on customer revenge. The fourth experiment is associated with hypotheses H9 and H10 of this thesis and examined the role of goal accessibility. Customer revenge was viewed as a conflict between emotion regulation and self-control goals. When faced with the decision of whether to exact revenge, customers face a dilemma between their desire to immediately regulate their negative emotions and their long-term goal to restrain their aggressive impulses and conform to socially appropriate behaviours. Accessibility of these two goals was expected to differentially impact customer revenge. Results from this study supported H9 and H10 by demonstrating that accessibility of the self-control goal reduces the direct but has no effect on indirect revenge as compared to accessibility of the emotion regulation goal. Therefore, when the self-control goal is salient, the direct revengeful behaviours that entail aggressive impulses (i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining) are significantly prevented.

Finally, the fifth experiment examined H11 and how goal focus influences customer revenge in sequential revengeful behaviours. When individuals engage in an initial action that serves the accomplishment of one goal, they tend to make inferences of either goal commitment or goal progress. These inferences influence their subsequent revengeful behaviour in sequential decisions. Findings from the study indicated that when customers were given by the firm the opportunity to vent their emotions with an initial action (i.e. writing a complaint letter to the manager), then individuals' inferences of goal progress about this initial action towards the emotion regulation goal subsequently led to reduced aggression, vindictive complaining, and third-party complaining but no less vindictive NWOM compared to that found in the case of inferences of goal commitment. Thus, H11 was partially supported.

## **12.2 Contributions**

### **12.2.1 Theoretical Contributions**

The main contribution of this research is to examine the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge behaviour. Previous literature has provided some insight into the process that motivates customers to exact revenge by engaging in various direct (i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining) and indirect revengeful behaviours (i.e. vindictive NWOM and third-party complaining). First, extant research has examined customer revenge as a response to perceived unfairness (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Blodgett et al., 1997; Funches et al., 2009; Grégoire et al., 2010); second, it has acknowledged the mediating role of emotions (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005; DeWitt et al., 2008; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b); and third, it has assumed that customer revenge serves as a coping strategy (Gelbrich, 2010; Zourrig et al., 2009a). However, previous service research leaves under-investigated the emotional factors that play a significant role in the process of customer revenge. This thesis addressed this gap by bringing together existing interdisciplinary knowledge into a theoretical model of customer revenge. By testing the hypotheses of this model, this research offers a richer understanding of the customer revenge process and provides evidence regarding why and under what circumstances customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation.

The contribution of this thesis is important because of the prevalence of the phenomenon of customer revenge especially in service firms. The proposed model is not only relevant to a consumer context, but can further be applied to other managerial contexts which involve conflict, such as workplace revenge. In this way, the model also contributes to the limited

knowledge on revenge available in workplace literature (Ambrose et al., 2002; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Jawahar, 2002).

Along with the overall contribution of the thesis, there are a number of micro-contributions linked to individual components within the model. Each of these contributions is discussed below.

#### **12.2.1.1 Discrete emotions as mediating mechanism**

This section demonstrates the theoretical significance of the finding that certain discrete emotions act as mediators in the relationship between perceived unfairness and customer revenge. Justice has been traditionally placed at the heart of revenge (Tripp & Bies, 2010). Whereas previous studies have examined unfairness as a driver of customer negative responses to service failure encounters, they have provided mixed results about which dimensions of unfairness motivate revenge (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Blodgett et al., 1997; Grégoire et al., 2010). This research suggests that in cases of severe outcome-based service failures, such as flight delays and hotel overbookings, distributive and interactional unfairness trigger customer revenge. This finding indicates that customers base their evaluations and behavioural responses on the compensation and interpersonal treatment received by service personnel (Blodgett et al., 1997; Grégoire et al., 2010). Customers value outcomes because they indicate a sincere effort on the part of the firm to fix the initial service failure (Goodwin & Ross, 1992; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos, 2008b) and interpersonal treatment because of the symbolic meaning it carries about the extent to which the customers are valued by the firms (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003; Grégoire et al., 2010). Consequently, in this thesis evidence has been provided that after severe service failures, the firms' failure to provide fair compensation and treatment to their customers incites revenge.

Customer revenge is not only cognitively driven but also is almost always accompanied by emotional responses. When customers feel that they have been treated unfairly by the firm, they experience certain negative emotions which in turn, motivate revenge. While prior research has acknowledged that emotions serve as the mechanism that translates perceptions of unfairness into customer revenge, these studies tend to report diffuse rather than discrete emotions (Chebat & Slusarczyk, 2005; DeWitt et al., 2008; Schoefer & Diamantopoulos,

2008b). This research has addressed this gap by demonstrating that two moral emotions -anger and contempt- arise when norms of justice are violated and can incite customer revenge.

Anger has been traditionally associated with tendencies to attack and move against the offender (Frijda et al., 1989). It is also the most commonly reported emotion in response to service failures and a precursor to customer revenge (Bougie et al., 2003; Funches et al., 2009). Contempt on the other hand has been primarily associated with withdrawal and avoidance tendencies (Haidt, 2003; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). Contrary to these studies, the current findings indicate that contempt may occasionally result in confrontational behaviours as well. The social function of contempt is to derogate and socially exclude the offender from one's social circle (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Subsequently, customer revenge may serve such a goal and by engaging in the various revengeful behaviours, customers may seek to derogate the firm and prevent other customers from using its services. This finding has important theoretical contributions because it shows that contempt may result in approach tendencies when individuals feel that engaging in certain behaviours will achieve the goal of contempt, i.e. the social exclusion of the transgressor.

Moral emotions influence customer revenge not only directly, but also indirectly through the mechanism of forgiveness. Prior research in the service literature calls for more research with regards to the role of forgiveness after service failure encounters (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011; Zourrig et al., 2009b). However, to date, no previous study has directly examined it. Findings from this research provide evidence that unfair service incidences that trigger moral emotions preclude forgiveness which in turn, motivates customer revenge. The process of forgiveness is important because it denotes the abandonment of negative emotions and opens the door to reconciliation (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011). Even when traditional recovery efforts fail to retain customers, activation of the forgiveness process may result in neutralization of negative emotions and reduced motivation for revenge. Forgiveness may be granted as a "free gift" even when the firm does not deserve it (Exline et al., 2003). For this reason, it is an important mechanism to consider in the process of customer revenge.

### **12.2.1.2 Customer revenge employed in the service of emotion regulation**

The main contribution of this research has been to examine the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge. Service failure/recoveries constitute highly stressful situations that press for

corrective action. Customers in strong affective states will spontaneously seek ways to regulate upwardly their emotions. This thesis has argued that customer revenge may serve as one of these emotion regulation strategies. Prior research has suggested that customer revenge serves as a coping strategy (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Zourrig et al., 2009a). However, no previous study has directly tested this assumption. Findings from this thesis demonstrate that customer revenge is employed in the service of emotion regulation. In other words, customers engage in the various revengeful behaviours because they believe that doing so will ameliorate their negative emotions. This finding is important because it indicates that customers in intense negative emotional states will spontaneously seek to alleviate their negative emotions by engaging in revenge. Even more importantly, findings from this research demonstrate that in severe service failures, such as flights delays and hotel overbookings, intense negative affective states may become the prime drivers of customer revenge. When asked about the motives behind their decision to engage in the various revengeful behaviours, individuals indicated the motive to vent their negative emotions first, followed by the motive to restore equity and the motive to harm the firm. This provides further evidence to the assumption of this thesis that after substantially negative experiences with the firm, customers will seek to exact revenge with the intent to release their negative emotions rather than to restore justice and to harm the firm per se.

Furthermore, this finding significantly contributes to the relevant psychology literature that has thus far provided mixed results about whether revenge arises from justice or emotion regulation motives. In particular, while Carlsmith et al. (2008) argued that individuals punish the transgressors because they predict that they will feel better after exacting their revenge, Gollwitzer and Bushman (2012) found that the purpose of revenge is to restore justice rather than to regulate upwardly emotions. This thesis reconciles these inconsistent findings by showing that whether justice or emotion regulation goals drive revenge depends on the individual's level of involvement and salience of negative feelings (Carlsmith et al., 2008). While retributive punishment might be primarily driven by justice motives, customer revenge will be primarily influenced by emotion regulation motives. When individuals are personally hurt by the firm, as is the case with double deviation scenarios, they should be highly involved and aware of their negative feelings. In these instances, emotion regulation goals become salient and constitute the primary drivers of revenge.

### **12.2.1.3 Customer revenge in the presence of conflicting goals**

After establishing the role of emotion regulation in customer revenge, this research sought to investigate two conditions which influence the effect of emotion regulation on customer revenge: goal accessibility and goal focus. Customer revenge in this research was viewed as a self-control failure. It was argued that the intense negative emotional states customers experience after severe service failures give emotion regulation goals precedence over long-term self-control goals (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Therefore, customers' decision to exact revenge poses a self-control goal conflict. It was argued that whether or not the customers engage in revengeful behaviour depends on the accessibility of emotion regulation or impulse control goals. Prior research in customer revenge has neglected the role of goals in guiding customer behaviour. While consumer research suggests that consumer behaviour is largely goal driven, the role of conflicting goals has been predominantly examined in relation to behaviours, such as healthy eating, exercising, and academic performance (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Fishbach & Labroo, 2007). This research significantly contributes to service literature by demonstrating that accessibility of emotion regulation and impulse control goals can differentially impact on customer revenge. When the goal to control aggressive impulses is accessible, customers engaged in less direct but no less indirect revengeful behaviours as compared with the accessibility of the emotion regulation goal. This finding is important because it indicates that customer revenge can be prevented when the goal of impulse control is accessible. However, this effect only occurs for direct revengeful behaviours, i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining, but not for indirect revengeful behaviours, i.e. NWOM and third-party complaining because the latter require less aggressive impulses to take place.

This contribution is important because the result can further be applied to other contexts such as workplace aggression and aggression in social contexts. When angered individuals have the impulse control goal accessible they will engage in less direct revengeful behaviours, such as reduced aggression and verbal attack towards employers or towards partners, than when the emotion regulation goal is accessible.

Self-control goal conflict influences revengeful behaviours not only in single behaviours but also in sequential behaviours. Prior studies have suggested that in sequential behaviours the nature of influence depends on the inferences individuals make about an initial action that is congruent with one of the two goals (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007).

This research demonstrates that when an initial customer action that is congruent with the goal of emotion regulation is interpreted as goal commitment, customers subsequently engage in more revengeful behaviours than when the same action is interpreted as goal progress. This finding is in line with the psychological research that suggests that inferences of goal commitment signal that the goal is important for the individual and subsequently result in goal-congruent behaviours while goal progress gives a sense of accomplishment and liberates the individual to pursue goal-incongruent behaviours (Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Fishbach et al., 2006). Therefore, when customers infer commitment towards the goal of emotion regulation they subsequently engage in goal-congruent revengeful behaviours while inferences of goal progress result in reduced revengeful behaviours. This finding is important because it indicates that when firms provide their customers with the opportunity to vent their negative emotions with an initial action, subsequent revengeful behaviour depends on the inferences customers make about their commitment or progress towards the emotion regulation goal.

### **12.2.2 Practical Contributions**

The theoretical model advanced in this research has important practical implications. Recent evidence shows that the customer revenge phenomenon is alarmingly expanding exposing firms to a high risk of losing customers (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2009; Zourrig et al., 2009a). The proliferation of user-generated content and complaint websites has empowered customers as they now have access to a wide array of venting outlets that can seriously damage firm reputation. This in conjunction with the ever escalating standards of service and the dominant “customer is always right” philosophy of firms give rise to expressions of customer sovereignty and customer rage episodes (Harris & Reynolds, 2004). Acknowledging the importance of this phenomenon, the motivation behind this research was to better understand the factors that trigger customer revenge in order to help firms enact strategies that will successfully prevent it from occurring.

In this research, the role of emotions as drivers of customer revenge has been stressed and it has been shown that feelings of anger and contempt motivate customers to get even with firms. To limit customer rage episodes employees should be trained to be able to identify the early warning signs of these emotions. Furthermore, voice recognition technology should be used to detect verbal signs of these emotions. Anger has been associated with non-verbal cues, such as signs of “shaking of the head, rolling of the eyes, glaring, and giving dirty looks” (McColl-



Kennedy et al., 2009, p. 234) and verbal expressions such as yelling, raising voice and swearing. The non-verbal cues of contempt are less well identified but are usually associated with one side of the lip tightened upwards and the raising of an eyebrow. Verbal expressions of contempt involve a sarcastic tone of voice or a cold tone indicating indifference towards others.

Identification of such expressions should allow employees to tailor their responses to the specifics of the customer emotional experience. Past research has suggested that hybrid support strategies that incorporate both instrumental and emotional support are more likely to lead to positive service evaluations for angry customers (Menon & Dubé, 2007). To please angry customers firms should adapt the core service offering and seek solutions to resolve the situation but at the same time, aid customers to manage their emotions. Although the effectiveness of various support strategies for managing contempt have not been examined in the literature, firms should pay significant attention to the rise of contemptuous feelings. Contempt is associated with a permanent belief that the transgressor is intrinsically bad and cannot change his/her behaviour and results in short-term derogation and long-term rejection (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Therefore, contempt has destructive consequences for the firm, both in the short and long-term. In contrast, anger is destructive in the short-term resulting in confrontational behaviours but may lead to long-term reconciliation when the customer feels that the firm has got what it deserved (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Hence, angry tendencies may dissipate in the long-term and firms may be given a second chance. Past research has shown that contempt usually occurs some time after the transgressing incident and on top of angry feelings. This suggests that firms should deal with angry customers at the early stages of the negative service encounter because the subsequent rise of contemptuous feelings may be more difficult to handle and their destructive consequences for the firm more difficult to undo.

Forgiveness was shown to be the mechanism that mediates the effect of moral emotions on customer revenge. Customers seek to restore the psychological balance after service failures and are essentially motivated to forgive (Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011). Although forgiveness is a gradual progression that requires time and effort, managerial efforts should encourage and facilitate this process. In particular, implementation of service recovery strategies that are directed towards the reduction of the negative affective states should accelerate customer forgiveness. To this end, the enactment of staff training programmes that include simulations and role play exercises involving interpersonal conflicts can enhance service personnel's

emotional intelligence and their abilities to tailor the firm's responses to help customers go through the forgiveness process.

Findings from this research also indicate that customers engage in the various revengeful behaviours for emotion regulation purposes. In other words, customers exact revenge because they expect to feel better. Individuals have internalized beliefs about the cathartic properties of revenge and engage in such acts for the emotional benefits they expect to get. This is not surprising since mass media and popular psychology constantly reinforce the view that the outward expression of negative and aggressive feelings is healthy whereas bottling them up creates internal tension and negatively influences the psyche (Bushman, 2002; Bushman et al., 1999). Since these beliefs seem to be ingrained in today's society, actions should be taken on a firm-level to avoid customer revenge. After severe service failures, customers seek ways to alleviate the negative emotions they experience. Intense negative emotions are painful and require venting outlets in the here and now. When customers have no other opportunity to vent their emotions they engage in the various revengeful behaviours. However, findings from this research demonstrate that when firms provide customers with the opportunity to vent their emotions subsequent revengeful behaviours can be prevented. For this reason, firms should set in place venting mechanisms to absorb customers' negative reactions within the firm. Hence, by creating outlets that enable a milder outward expression, firms can lessen or eliminate severe expressions of customer revenge. To this end, employees should be trained in anger management skills so as to help customers "let off steam" by adopting strategies such as listening attentively to their complaints and showing empathy. Moreover, firms should ask for customer feedback by sending personal emails or using feedback surveys. Giving voice to customers to allow them to express their thoughts and feelings about the service experience may alleviate customer negative emotions because emotional expression has been associated with cathartic benefits (Lee-Wingate & Corfman, 2011).

More importantly, nowadays, the Internet has provided venting outlets which an increasing number of customers use to badmouth firms and to share negative experiences. Complaint websites, consumer agencies and user-generated content websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube, provide online platforms where customers can post their misadventures and chat with others. Online reviews can cause damage to the firm to a greater extent because of their pervasive use and their potential to reach a vast audience at a very short time (Obeidat, Xiao, Iyer, & Nicholson, 2017). For this reason, firms should constantly monitor customer activity

online to find negative reviews and venting of negative emotions. Increasing the availability of online platforms where customers can interact with the firms and release their emotions may reduce customer revenge incidences. Firms should be ready to respond to negative feedback as quickly as possible. Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009) stress the importance of timing and suggest that after four weeks, any post-recovery effort is likely to be ineffective. Firms should create a dialogue with the customer where they are ready to assume responsibility, apologise and seek to find solutions for their customers. This way, they can not only dilute customer negative emotions but also create a positive image in the eyes of potential customers.

On a broader societal level, endorsement of cathartic release may pose a threat to social harmony. Firms may appear to encourage or tacitly condone customer outward expressions and customers, in turn, may feel that it is acceptable to behave in such manner. Customers will subsequently be more prone to revenge in response to an unacceptable service, creating severe costs for the firm, its employees and other customers. Hence, the prevalence of customer revenge incidences might put the social order in danger. For this reason, public policies should design interventions and educational programs to inform individuals that the short-term cathartic benefits of exacting revenge may come at the expense of its long-term harmful consequences for society. Better information about the negative impact of revenge should eliminate the popularity of catharsis and prevent customer revenge from being undertaken for affect regulation purposes.

Finally, findings from the current research demonstrate that when the goal of self-control is accessible, customers are less likely to engage in direct revengeful behaviours than when the emotion regulation goal is accessible. Past studies have found that environmental cues activate goals which subsequently guide customer behaviour, even without any conscious awareness (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007). Daunt and Harris (2012a) have argued that service contextual factors, including the physical and social servicescape, impact on the customers' propensity to misbehave. This implies that service managers can, in part, prevent forms of customer revenge through the manipulation and control of the service design. That is, certain characteristics of the service design may subconsciously prime the self-control goal thereby reducing the norm-breaking revenge behaviours. Regarding the physical aspects of servicescape design, which include the exterior environment, the layout and design of the outlet and the atmospherics, scholars have noted that contexts which "promote ease of patron movement, suitable crowd density, good air quality, and cleanliness" may lessen customer negative behaviours (Daunt &

Harris, 2012a, p. 145). In addition, the management of the social aspects of the servicescape, including the capabilities of service employees, is important. More specifically, service employees who are trained to show the ability and willingness to satisfy customer needs and who behave appropriately, such as being polite, responsive and helpful will prime the goal of self-control and decrease customer vengeful impulses (Daunt & Harris, 2012a).

### **12.3 Limitations**

This section outlines the limitations of this thesis. Four limitations are discussed below: 1) the scenario-based methodology, 2) generalizability of the sample, 3) the use of revengeful behaviours, and, 4) self-reported measures.

#### **12.3.1 Scenario-based methodology**

One of the main limitations of this research is the use of scenarios to examine customer revenge behaviour. As outlined in section 6.10, the justification for this choice was that the aim of the thesis was to test causal relationships between variables. A vignette experimental methodology allows for the testing of causal relationships enabling the researcher to control for other confounding variables that could influence the hypothesised relationships. Hence, this methodology provides high levels of internal validity. However, it should be acknowledged that this methodology comes with certain drawbacks, in particular, the lack of external and ecological validity. The contrived conditions in which the experiment took place and the student sample used limit the generalisability of the findings to other contexts and populations as well as to real-life situations. As discussed in section 7.5.1, steps were taken to make the service failure scenarios more realistic and to ensure that they represented real life situations with which the participants could identify. Customer complaint websites were reviewed and stories were taken from descriptions of customer real life experiences with service firms. Whereas this strategy increased the realism of the experimental design, it does not completely solve the problem of ecological validity.

To address this specific limitation, future research could employ other types of methodologies to examine the process of customer revenge. A number of methodologies have been employed in the service literature such as retrospective recall surveys, interviews and field experiments (Funches et al., 2009; Grégoire et al., 2010). Retrospective recall surveys rely on individuals' recall of past service experiences to answer certain questions. They allow the simultaneous

testing of relationships to the wider population and are associated with a high degree of external validity but low internal validity. Moreover, interviews with customers who have experienced service failures and engaged in customer revenge would give a richer understanding of the customer revenge phenomenon allowing for an in-depth examination of the processes that motivate customers to get even with firms. Finally, field experiments can allow for the examination of causal relationships in a real-life setting. Whereas they enhance ecological validity, field experiments render the control of other extraneous variables more difficult, thus reducing their internal validity. Field studies in service research are quite rare because of the difficulty in implementing them. This is due to the significant time and cost resources they require and the ethical considerations related to the enactment of actual service failures. It is apparent that every methodology comes with strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, triangulation of the findings using other methodologies would give more confidence in the conclusions offered in this thesis.

### **12.3.2 Generalisability of the sample**

This thesis used a young educated sample consisting predominantly of UK university students. This sampling strategy accords with the usual practice followed in experimental designs which are primarily based on convenience samples (Shadish et al., 2002). However, it has the disadvantage that the findings cannot be generalized to the wider population because of the specific age and educational group the student sample belongs to. More specifically, it is predicted that age should have a significant influence on customer revenge behaviour. Prior research suggests that as individuals age, they acquire capabilities to effectively control their emotions (Gross, 1998b). Hence, when encountering severe service failures, older individuals should experience less intense emotions which in turn, should result in less motivation to get even with the firm compared to young individuals. Moreover, older individuals, having acquired the skills to manage their emotions, should be less inclined to exact their revenge for affect regulation purposes.

Similarly, education is expected to influence revenge. Educated people are more likely to have acquired stronger self-control skills and high levels of emotional intelligence. Therefore, they are more likely to avoid norm-breaking and deviant behaviours. By contrast, a lower level of education is reported as being associated with lack of self-control, poor emotional intelligence skills and increased vengeful impulses (Huefner & Hunt, 2000). Future research should

examine the effect of these demographic variables on the theoretical model of customer revenge tested in this thesis by using a diverse sample that is more representative of the wider population.

### **12.3.3 The use of revengeful behaviours**

This thesis may raise concerns about the use of the four behaviours, i.e. aggression, vindictive complaining, NWOM and third-party complaining, as revengeful. These behaviours have been repeatedly reported in the literature to arise from various motives other than the revenge motive. For instance, NWOM behaviour is sometimes used with the intention to inform others and prevent them from using the firm's services or to seek support and consolation (Wetzer et al., 2007). Similarly, aggression and vindictive complaining can be used for ego-gain purposes in order to restore individuals' self-esteem that was hurt from the negative service experience (Daunt & Harris, 2012b).

To address this concern, the scales of the revengeful behaviours used in this research were taken from Grégoire et al.(2010) whose work has focused on customer revenge. Most of the scales indicate the revenge motive. For instance, one item used to measure vindictive complaining is: "I complained to the firm to give a hard time to the representatives". The scales used give us confidence that revengeful behaviours were measured, especially since these scales have been repeatedly used in prior studies to denote customer revengeful behaviours (Gelbrich, 2010; Grégoire et al., 2010; Joireman et al., 2013). Furthermore, the service scenarios employed in this research involved severe service failures which were followed by failed service recoveries. As Bechwati and Morrin (2003) note, extreme levels of dissatisfaction change the nature of the customer response and motivate them to act proactively by engaging in revenge, rather than passively complaining and exiting from the firm. While these behaviours were conceptualized as displaying revengeful intent, it should be acknowledged that "such intent must always be inferred and can never be proven, because direct access to others' mental states is impossible" (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997, p. 441) .

### **12.3.4 Self-reported measures**

This thesis has relied on self-report measures to examine the hypothesised relationships. The latter can be problematic when measuring emotions and behavioural intentions and can subsequently bias results. When asked to report emotions and intentions, individuals are asked

to work at a high-level of abstraction in a brief time interval. This higher-order cognitive process involves “not only recall but also weighting, inference, prediction, interpretation, and evaluation” (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986, p. 533). Therefore, the data garnered are removed from the discrete stimuli and responses to which they relate.

This problem is further exacerbated when two or more variables that involve self-report measures are collected from the same individuals. Individuals presumably being aware of the interrelationships between the variables have the tendency to respond consistently to a series of questions (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For instance, in the first study, individuals might well have understood that negative emotions should be linked with increased revengeful behaviour and decreased forgiveness and respond accordingly, thus biasing the study results.

Despite these limitations, the use of self-report measures is widespread in consumer research (Cohen et al., 2008; Grégoire et al., 2010). As an alternative, researchers can opt to employ physiological measures to evaluate emotions and actual behaviours, rather than behavioural intentions, to assess customer behaviour. However, physiological measures can be problematic because whereas they can discriminate between certain emotions, distinguishing between the emotions of anger, contempt and disgust may prove difficult. As these emotions belong to the same emotion family with sometimes only subtle differences between them, physiological measures may not be able to provide accurate measurements. Moreover, it is difficult to obtain actual revengeful behaviour in a service context. The enactment of a real service failure for research purposes may be difficult and unethical to stage, and even in this case, the researcher will be able to observe only overt customer revenge behaviour, i.e. aggression and vindictive complaining but not indirect revenge, through NWOM and third-party complaining, since the latter is less visible to the firm. Therefore, whereas our behavioural measures actually evaluate intentions rather than actual behaviour, they were deemed to represent the most feasible way of conducting the research.

## **12.4 Future Research**

This research leaves a number of questions unanswered which could provide interesting avenues for future research. First, future studies could examine the differences between the emotions of anger and contempt with regards to their consequences for the firm, as well as the types of service provider responses that could effectively attenuate these emotions. Prior

studies have suggested that the social function of anger is to attain a better outcome by forcing a change to the transgressor's behaviour (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). This function can be served either by seeking confrontation and attacking the firm or by seeking mutually beneficial solutions. Furthermore, firm hybrid support strategies that involve both instrumental and emotional support have been shown to be more effective in managing angry customers (Menon & Dubé, 2007). Whereas anger is associated with confrontational behaviours in the short-term, it can result in reconciliatory efforts in the long-term, when a mutually satisfactory relationship is established. Conversely, contempt is associated with the permanent belief that the firm is intrinsically bad and cannot change its behaviour (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011) and is characterized by rejection and social exclusion both in the short and long-term (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Due to their different appraisals and social functions, it would be interesting for further studies to examine first, the forms of firm support strategies that effectively diffuse contempt (i.e. instrumental, emotional or hybrid support strategies) and second, any differences in the short and long-term consequences of these two emotions for the firms.

Second, an interesting avenue for further research would be to examine whether the tenets of catharsis apply to customer revenge. While findings from this research imply that individuals have internalized beliefs about the cathartic properties of customer revenge, this research does not examine whether these beliefs hold true. In other words, it does not examine whether customer revenge alleviates negative emotions. As noted in section 2.3.1, there is debate in the literature about whether exacting revenge actually releases negative emotions or instead perpetuates negative emotions, and results in vicious cycles of aggression (Bushman et al., 2001; Carlsmith et al., 2008). Future research could examine customer responses after they have exacted their revenge and whether their subsequent negative emotions and revengeful tendencies are attenuated.

Third, this research gave evidence that accessibility of the goal to control aggressive impulses decreases customer direct but not indirect revenge. Future research could investigate other types of goals that could attenuate customers' intention to spread NWOM and third-party complaining. For instance, since revengeful behaviours arise from strong negative emotions, it could prove worthwhile to investigate whether the goal of emotion control could effectively attenuate both direct and indirect revengeful behaviours.



Finally, future research could examine the moderation effect of loyalty. Currently, there is debate in the literature about whether customer loyalty acts as a buffer or an amplifier on customer negative responses when individuals feel that they are victims of unfair treatment (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2009). Traditionally, strong relationships have been shown to mitigate the effects of a poor recovery on the reduction in satisfaction, trust and commitment (Hess et al., 2003; Tax et al., 1998). However, more recent evidence suggests a 'love becomes hate' effect where loyal customers tend to feel more betrayed after unfair service failure/recovery. This sense of betrayal is difficult to forget and subsequently motivates customers to exact revenge with greater intensity (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2009). If this is the case, loyal customers will be more likely to employ revenge for emotion regulation purposes, thus, creating an amplifying effect on the proposed relationships of the thesis.

## References

- Aarts, H., Dijksterhuis, A., & Vries, P. (2001). On the psychology of drinking: Being thirsty and perceptually ready. *British Journal of Psychology*, *92*(4), 631-642.
- Adams, J. S. (1965). Inequity in social exchange. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 267-299). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Aguinis, H., & Bradley, K. J. (2014). Best practice recommendations for designing and implementing experimental vignette methodology studies. *Organizational Research Methods*, *17*(4), 351-371.
- Alicke, M. D., Braun, J. C., Glor, J. E., Klotz, M. L., Magee, J., Sederholm, H., et al. (1992). Complaining behavior in social interaction. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *18*(3), 286-295.
- Ambrose, M. L., Seabright, M. A., & Schminke, M. (2002). Sabotage in the workplace: The role of organizational injustice. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, *89*(1), 947-965.
- Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2002). Human aggression. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *53*(1), 27-51.
- Anderson, E. W. (1998). Customer satisfaction and word of mouth. *Journal of service research*, *1*(1), 5-17.
- Andrade, E. B. (2005). Behavioral consequences of affect: Combining evaluative and regulatory mechanisms. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *32*(3), 355-362.
- Aquino, K., Grover, S. L., Goldman, B., & Folger, R. (2003). When push doesn't come to shove interpersonal forgiveness in workplace relationships. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *12*(3), 209-216.
- Aquino, K., Tripp, T. M., & Bies, R. J. (2001). How employees respond to personal offense: the effects of blame attribution, victim status, and offender status on revenge and reconciliation in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*(1), 52-59.
- Aquino, K., Tripp, T. M., & Bies, R. J. (2006). Getting even or moving on? Power, procedural justice, and types of offense as predictors of revenge, forgiveness, reconciliation, and avoidance in organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91*(3), 653-668.
- Archer, J., & Coyne, S. M. (2005). An integrated review of indirect, relational, and social aggression. *Personality and social psychology Review*, *9*(3), 212-230.
- Archer, J., Fernández-Fuertes, A. A., & Thanzami, V. L. (2010). Does cost-benefit analysis or self-control predict involvement in two forms of aggression? *Aggressive Behavior*, *36*(5), 292-304.
- Atzmüller, C., & Steiner, P. M. (2010). Experimental vignette studies in survey research. *Methodology: European Journal of Research Methods for the Behavioral and Social Sciences*, *6*(3), 128-138.
- Austin, J. T., & Vancouver, J. B. (1996). Goal constructs in psychology: Structure, process, and content. *Psychological bulletin*, *120*(3), 338-375.
- Averill, J. R. (1982). *Anger and aggression: An essay on emotion*. New York: Springer-Verlag
- Bagozzi, R. P., & Dholakia, U. (1999). Goal setting and goal striving in consumer behavior. *The Journal of Marketing*, *63*(4), 19-32.
- Bagozzi, R. P., Gopinath, M., & Nyer, P. U. (1999). The role of emotions in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *27*(2), 184-206.
- Barclay, L. J., & Skarlicki, D. P. (2009). Healing the wounds of organizational injustice: Examining the benefits of expressive writing. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*(2), 511-523.
- Barclay, L. J., Skarlicki, D. P., & Pugh, S. D. (2005). Exploring the role of emotions in injustice perceptions and retaliation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *90*(4), 629-643.

- Bargh, J. A., & Chartrand, T. L. (1999). The unbearable automaticity of being. *American Psychologist*, 54(7), 462-479.
- Bargh, J. A., Gollwitzer, P. M., Lee-Chai, A., Barndollar, K., & Trötschel, R. (2001). The automated will: nonconscious activation and pursuit of behavioral goals. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 81(6), 1014-1027.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 51(6), 1173-1182.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1997). Esteem threat, self-regulatory breakdown, and emotional distress as factors in self-defeating behavior. *Review of general psychology*, 1(2), 145-174.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Heatherton, T. F. (1996). Self-regulation failure: An overview. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7(1), 1-15.
- Baumeister, R. F., Muraven, M., & Tice, D. M. (2000). Ego depletion: A resource model of volition, self-regulation, and controlled processing. *Social cognition*, 18(2), 130-150.
- Bechwati, N. N., & Morrin, M. (2003). Outraged consumers: Getting even at the expense of getting a good deal. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(4), 440-453.
- Bennett, R. (1997). Anger, catharsis, and purchasing behavior following aggressive customer complaints. *Journal of consumer marketing*, 14(2), 156-172.
- Berinsky, A. J., Huber, G. A., & Lenz, G. S. (2012). Evaluating online labor markets for experimental research: Amazon. com's Mechanical Turk. *Political Analysis*, 20(3), 351-368.
- Berkowitz, L. (1990). On the formation and regulation of anger and aggression: A cognitive-neoassociationistic analysis. *American Psychologist*, 45(4), 494-503.
- Bhaskar, R. (1975). *A Realist Theory of Science*. Leeds: Leeds Books.
- Bies, R. J. (2001). Interactional (in) justice: The sacred and the profane. In J. Greenberg & R. Cropanzano (Eds.), *Advances in organizational justice* (pp. 89-118). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bies, R. J., & Moag, J. S. (1986). Interactional justice: Communication criteria of fairness. *Research on negotiation in organizations*, 1(1), 43-55.
- Bies, R. J., & Shapiro, D. L. (1987). Interactional fairness judgments: The influence of causal accounts. *Social justice research*, 1(2), 199-218.
- Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., et al. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11(3), 230-241.
- Bitner, M. (1990). Evaluating service encounters: the effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *The Journal of Marketing*, 54(2), 69-82.
- Bitner, M., Booms, B. H., & Tetreault, M. S. (1990). The service encounter: diagnosing favorable/unfavorable incidents. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(1), 71-84.
- Blodgett, J. G., Granbois, D. H., & Walters, R. G. (1993). The effects of perceived justice on complainants' negative word-of-mouth behavior and repatronage intentions. *Journal of Retailing*, 69(4), 399-428.
- Blodgett, J. G., Hill, D. J., & Tax, S. S. (1997). The effects of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice on postcomplaint behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 73(2), 185-210.
- Blumer, H. (1962). Society as Symbolic Interaction. In A. M. Rose (Ed.), *Human Behaviour and Social Processes* (pp. 179-192). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bonifield, C., & Cole, C. (2007). Affective responses to service failure: anger, regret, and retaliatory versus conciliatory responses. *Marketing Letters*, 18(1-2), 85-99.
- Boote, J. (1998). Towards a comprehensive taxonomy and model of consumer complaining behaviour. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 11, 140-151.

- Borders, A., Earleywine, M., & Jajodia, A. (2010). Could mindfulness decrease anger, hostility, and aggression by decreasing rumination? *Aggressive Behavior, 36*(1), 28-44.
- Bougie, R., Pieters, R., & Zeelenberg, M. (2003). Angry customers don't come back, they get back: the experience and behavioral implications of anger and dissatisfaction in services. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 31*(4), 377-393.
- Bower, G. J. (1981). Mood and memory. *American Psychologist, 36*(2), 129-148.
- Bradfield, M., & Aquino, K. (1999). The effects of blame attributions and offender likableness on forgiveness and revenge in the workplace. *Journal of management, 25*(5), 607-631.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford university press.
- Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011). *Business Research Methods* (3rd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Bushman, B. J. (2002). Does venting anger feed or extinguish the flame? Catharsis, rumination, distraction, anger, and aggressive responding. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28*(6), 724-731.
- Bushman, B. J., Baumeister, R. F., & Phillips, C. M. (2001). Do people aggress to improve their mood? Catharsis beliefs, affect regulation opportunity, and aggressive responding. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 81*(1), 17-32.
- Bushman, B. J., Baumeister, R. F., & Stack, A. D. (1999). Catharsis, aggression, and persuasive influence: Self-fulfilling or self-defeating prophecies? *Journal of personality and social psychology, 76*(3), 367-376.
- Byrne, B. M. (2010). *Structural Equation Modeling with AMOS: Basic concepts, Applications, and Programming* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Carlsmith, K. M., Wilson, T. D., & Gilbert, D. T. (2008). The paradoxical consequences of revenge. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 95*(6), 1316-1324.
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (1990). Origins and functions of positive and negative affect: a control-process view. *Psychological review, 97*(1), 19-35.
- Casado-Díaz, A. B., Más-Ruiz, F. J., & Kasper, H. (2007). Explaining satisfaction in double deviation scenarios: the effects of anger and distributive justice. *International Journal of Bank Marketing, 25*(5), 292-314.
- Chandler, J., & Shapiro, D. (2016). Conducting clinical research using crowdsourced convenience samples. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 12*, 53-81.
- Chartrand, T. L., Huber, J., Shiv, B., & Tanner, R. J. (2008). Nonconscious goals and consumer choice. *Journal of Consumer Research, 35*(2), 189-201.
- Chebat, J.-C., & Slusarczyk, W. (2005). How emotions mediate the effects of perceived justice on loyalty in service recovery situations: an empirical study. *Journal of Business research, 58*(5), 664-673.
- Chen, M., & Bargh, J. A. (1999). Consequences of automatic evaluation: Immediate behavioral predispositions to approach or avoid the stimulus. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25*(2), 215-224.
- Cialdini, R. B., & Kenrick, D. T. (1976). Altruism as hedonism: a social development perspective on the relationship of negative mood state and helping. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 34*(5), 907-914.
- Cialdini, R. B., & Trost, M. R. (1998). Social influence: Social norms, conformity and compliance. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (pp. 151-192). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Cohen-Charash, Y., & Spector, P. E. (2001). The role of justice in organizations: A meta-analysis. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes, 86*(2), 278-321.
- Cohen, J. B., & Andrade, E. B. (2004). Affective intuition and task-contingent affect regulation. *Journal of Consumer Research, 31*(2), 358-367.

- Cohen, J. B., Pham, M. T., & Andrade, E. B. (2008). The nature and role of affect in consumer behavior. In C. Haugtvedt, P. Herr & F. Kardes (Eds.), *Handbook of consumer psychology* (pp. 297-348). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Colquitt, J. A. (2012). Organizational Justice. In S. W. J. Kozlowski (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 526-547). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Crano, W. D., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). *Principles and Methods of Social Research* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Creswell, J. (1994). *Research Design: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cropanzana, R., Bowen, D. E., & Gilliland, S. W. (2007). The management of organizational justice. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, 21(4), 34-48.
- Daunt, K. L., & Harris, L. C. (2012a). Exploring the forms of dysfunctional customer behaviour: A study of differences in servicescape and customer disaffection with service. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 28(1-2), 129-153.
- Daunt, K. L., & Harris, L. C. (2012b). Motives of dysfunctional customer behavior: an empirical study. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 26(4), 293-308.
- De Quervain, D. J. F., Fischbacher, U., Treyer, V., Schellhammer, M., Schnyder, U., Buck, A., et al. (2004). The neural basis of altruistic punishment. *Science*, 305(5688), 1254-1258.
- del Río-Lanza, A. B., Vázquez-Casielles, R., & Díaz-Martín, A. M. (2009). Satisfaction with service recovery: Perceived justice and emotional responses. *Journal of Business research*, 62(8), 775-781.
- Denson, T. F., DeWall, C. N., & Finkel, E. J. (2012). Self-control and aggression. *Current directions in psychological science*, 21(1), 20-25.
- Denson, T. F., Moulds, M. L., & Grisham, J. R. (2012). The effects of analytical rumination, reappraisal, and distraction on anger experience. *Behavior therapy*, 43(2), 355-364.
- Denson, T. F., Pedersen, W. C., Friese, M., Hahm, A., & Roberts, L. (2011). Understanding impulsive aggression: Angry rumination and reduced self-control capacity are mechanisms underlying the provocation-aggression relationship. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(6), 850-862.
- Deutsch, M. (1975). Equity, equality, and need: What determines which value will be used as the basis of distributive justice? *Journal of Social issues*, 31(3), 137-149.
- DeWall, C. N., Baumeister, R. F., Stillman, T. F., & Gailliot, M. T. (2007). Violence restrained: Effects of self-regulation and its depletion on aggression. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 43(1), 62-76.
- DeWitt, T., Nguyen, D. T., & Marshall, R. (2008). Exploring customer loyalty following service recovery the mediating effects of trust and emotions. *Journal of service research*, 10(3), 269-281.
- Diamantopoulos, A., Riefler, P., & Roth, K. P. (2008). Advancing formative measurement models. *Journal of Business research*, 61(12), 1203-1218.
- Douglas, S. C., & Martinko, M. J. (2001). Exploring the role of individual differences in the prediction of workplace aggression. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(4), 547-559.
- Dubé, L., LeBel, J. L., & Lu, J. (2005). Affect asymmetry and comfort food consumption. *Physiology & Behavior*, 86(4), 559-567.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. (2008). *Management Research* (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Ellsworth, P. C., & Scherer, K. R. (2003). Appraisal processes in emotion. In R. J. Davidson, K. R. Scherer & H. H. Goldsmith (Eds.), *Handbook of affective sciences* (pp. 572-595). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Elster, J. C. (1990). Norms of Revenge. *Ethics*, 100(4), 862-885.

- Erber, R., & Erber, M. W. (2000). The self-regulation of moods: Second thoughts on the importance of happiness in everyday life. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(3), 142-148.
- Erber, R., Wegner, D. M., & Theriault, N. (1996). On being cool and collected: mood regulation in anticipation of social interaction. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 70*(4), 757-766.
- Exline, J. J., Worthington, E. L., Hill, P., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Forgiveness and justice: A research agenda for social and personality psychology. *Personality and social psychology Review, 7*(4), 337-348.
- Fehr, E., & Gächter, S. (2000). Fairness and retaliation: The economics of reciprocity. *The journal of economic perspectives, 14*(3), 159-181.
- Fehr, R., Gelfand, M. J., & Nag, M. (2010). The road to forgiveness: a meta-analytic synthesis of its situational and dispositional correlates. *Psychological bulletin, 136*(5), 894-914.
- Ferguson, M. J., & Bargh, J. A. (2004). Liking is for doing: the effects of goal pursuit on automatic evaluation. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 87*(5), 557-572.
- Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Fischer, A. H., & Roseman, I. J. (2007). Beat them or ban them: The characteristics and social functions of anger and contempt. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 93*(1), 103-115.
- Fishbach, A., & Dhar, R. (2005). Goals as excuses or guides: The liberating effect of perceived goal progress on choice. *Journal of Consumer Research, 32*(3), 370-377.
- Fishbach, A., Dhar, R., & Zhang, Y. (2006). Subgoals as substitutes or complements: the role of goal accessibility. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 91*(2), 232-242.
- Fishbach, A., & Ferguson, M. J. (2007). The goal construct in social psychology. In A. W. Kruglanski & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 490-515). New York, NY, US: Guilford Press.
- Fishbach, A., Friedman, R. S., & Kruglanski, A. W. (2003). Leading us not into temptation: Momentary allurements elicit overriding goal activation. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 84*(2), 296-309.
- Fishbach, A., & Labroo, A. A. (2007). Be better or be merry: how mood affects self-control. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 93*(2), 158-173.
- Fishbach, A., & Shah, J. Y. (2006). Self-control in action: implicit dispositions toward goals and away from temptations. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 90*(5), 820-832.
- Fishbach, A., Zhang, Y., & Koo, M. (2009). The dynamics of self-regulation. *European Review of Social Psychology, 20*(1), 315-344.
- Fisk, R., Grove, S., Harris, L. C., Keeffe, D. A., Daunt, K. L., Russell-Bennett, R., et al. (2010). Customers behaving badly: a state of the art review, research agenda and implications for practitioners. *Journal of Services Marketing, 24*(6), 417-429.
- Folkes, V. S. (1984). Consumer reactions to product failure: an attributional approach. *Journal of Consumer Research, 10*(4), 398-409.
- Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2004). COPING: Pitfalls and Promise. *Annual Review of Psychology, 55*(1), 745-774.
- Forgas, J. P. (1995). Mood and judgment: the affect infusion model (AIM). *Psychological bulletin, 117*(1), 39-66.
- Fornell, C., & Westbrook, R. A. (1979). An exploratory study of assertiveness, aggressiveness, and consumer complaining behavior. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research, 6*, 105-110.
- Förster, J., Liberman, N., & Higgins, E. T. (2005). Accessibility from active and fulfilled goals. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 41*(3), 220-239.
- Frattaroli, J. (2006). Experimental disclosure and its moderators: a meta-analysis. *Psychological bulletin, 132*(6), 823-865.

- Frijda, N. H., Kuipers, P., & Ter Schure, E. (1989). Relations among emotion, appraisal, and emotional action readiness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 57(2), 212-228.
- Fullerton, R. A., & Punj, G. (1993). Choosing to misbehave: A structural model of aberrant consumer behavior. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research*, 20, 570-574.
- Funches, V., Markley, M., & Davis, L. (2009). Reprisal, retribution and requital: investigating customer retaliation. *Journal of Business research*, 62(2), 231-238.
- Garg, N., Wansink, B., & Inman, J. J. (2007). The influence of incidental affect on consumers' food intake. *Journal of Marketing*, 71(1), 194-206.
- Gelbrich, K. (2010). Anger, frustration, and helplessness after service failure: coping strategies and effective informational support. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(5), 567-585.
- Gollwitzer, M., & Bushman, B. J. (2012). Do Victims of Injustice Punish to Improve Their Mood? *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 3(5), 572-580.
- Gollwitzer, M., & Denzler, M. (2009). What makes revenge sweet: Seeing the offender suffer or delivering a message? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45(4), 840-844.
- Gollwitzer, M., Keller, L., & Braun, J. (2011). Retributive punishment in a social context. In E. Kals & J. Maes (Eds.), *Justice and Conflicts* (pp. 169-183). New York: Springer.
- Gollwitzer, M., Meder, M., & Schmitt, M. (2011). What gives victims satisfaction when they seek revenge? *European journal of social psychology*, 41(3), 364-374.
- Goodwin, C., & Ross, I. (1992). Consumer responses to service failures: influence of procedural and interactional fairness perceptions. *Journal of Business research*, 25(2), 149-163.
- Greenberg, J. (1990). Organizational justice: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. *Journal of management*, 16(2), 399-432.
- Greenberg, J. (1993). The social side of fairness: Interpersonal and informational classes of organizational justice. In R. Cropanzano (Ed.), *Justice in the workplace: Approaching fairness in human resource management* (pp. 79-103). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grégoire, Y., & Fisher, R. J. (2008). Customer betrayal and retaliation: when your best customers become your worst enemies. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(2), 247-261.
- Grégoire, Y., Laufer, D., & Tripp, T. M. (2010). A comprehensive model of customer direct and indirect revenge: understanding the effects of perceived greed and customer power. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(6), 738-758.
- Grégoire, Y., Tripp, T. M., & Legoux, R. (2009). When Customer Love Turns into Lasting Hate: The Effects of Relationship Strength and Time on Customer Revenge and Avoidance. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(6), 18-32.
- Gregory, G. D., Munch, J. M., & Peterson, M. (2002). Attitude functions in consumer research: Comparing value-attitude relations in individualist and collectivist cultures. *Journal of Business Research*, 55(11), 933-942.
- Grobbink, L. H., Derksen, J. J. L., & van Marle, H. J. C. (2015). Revenge: An Analysis of Its Psychological Underpinnings. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*, 59(8), 892-907.
- Gross, J. J. (1998a). Antecedent-and response-focused emotion regulation: divergent consequences for experience, expression, and physiology. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 74(1), 224-237.
- Gross, J. J. (1998b). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of general psychology*, 2(3), 271-299.

- Gross, J. J., Richards, J. M., & John, O. P. (2006). Emotion regulation in everyday life. In D. K. Snyder, J. Simpson & J. N. Hughes (Eds.), *Emotion regulation in couples and families: Pathways to dysfunction and health* (Vol. 2006, pp. 13-35). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.
- Haidt, J. (2003). The moral emotions. In R. J. Davidson, K. R. Scherer & H. H. Goldsmith (Eds.), *Handbook of affective sciences* (pp. 852-870). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2014). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (7th ed.). Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hair, J. F., Celsi, M. W., Money, A. H., Samouel, P., & Page, M. J. (2011). *Essentials of business research methods* (2nd ed.). New York: ME Sharpe.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., & Sarstedt, M. (2014). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)*. London: Sage Publications.
- Han, S., Lerner, J. S., & Keltner, D. (2007). Feelings and consumer decision making: The appraisal-tendency framework. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 17*(3), 158-168.
- Harris, L. C., & Reynolds, K. L. (2003). The consequences of dysfunctional customer behavior. *Journal of service research, 6*(2), 144-161.
- Harris, L. C., & Reynolds, K. L. (2004). Jaycustomer behavior: an exploration of types and motives in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Services Marketing, 18*(5), 339-357.
- Hart, C. W., Heskett, J. L., & Sasser, W. E. (1990). The profitable art of service recovery. *Harvard business review, 68*(4), 148-156.
- Henle, C. A. (2005). Predicting workplace deviance from the interaction between organizational justice and personality. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 17*(2), 247-263.
- Hess, R. L., Ganesan, S., & Klein, N. M. (2003). Service failure and recovery: the impact of relationship factors on customer satisfaction. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 31*(2), 127-145.
- Heung, V. C. S., & Lam, T. (2003). Customer complaint behaviour towards hotel restaurant services. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 15*(5), 283-289.
- Hibbard, J. D., Kumar, N., & Stern, L. W. (2001). Examining the impact of destructive acts in marketing channel relationships. *Journal of marketing research, 38*(1), 45-61.
- Hirschman, A. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations and states*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hölzel, B. K., Lazar, S. W., Gard, T., Schuman-Olivier, Z., Vago, D. R., & Ott, U. (2011). How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 6*(6), 537-559.
- Hooper, D., Coughlan, J., & Mullen, M. (2008). Structural equation modelling: Guidelines for determining model fit. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods, 6*(1), 53-60.
- Huefner, J., & Hunt, H. K. (2000). Consumer retaliation as a response to dissatisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction & Complaining Behavior, 13*(1), 61-82.
- Hutcherson, C. A., & Gross, J. J. (2011). The moral emotions: A social-functional account of anger, disgust, and contempt. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 100*(4), 719-737.
- Isen, A. M. (1984). Toward understanding the role of affect in cognition. In R. S. Wyer & T. K. Srull (Eds.), *Handbook of social cognition* (Vol. 3, pp. 179-236). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.



- Isen, A. M., Shalcker, T. E., Clark, M., & Karp, L. (1978). Affect, accessibility of material in memory, and behavior: A cognitive loop? *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 36(1), 1-12.
- Izard, C. E. (1977). *Human emotions*. New York: Plenum.
- Jain, S., Shapiro, S. L., Swanick, S., Roesch, S. C., Mills, P. J., Bell, I., et al. (2007). A randomized controlled trial of mindfulness meditation versus relaxation training: Effects on distress, positive states of mind, rumination, and distraction. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 33(1), 11-21.
- James, W. (1884). What is an emotion? *Mind*, 9(34), 188-205.
- Jawahar, I. M. (2002). A model of organizational justice and workplace aggression. *Journal of management*, 28(6), 811-834.
- Johnson, P., & Duberley, J. (2000). *Understanding management research: An introduction to epistemology*. London: Sage.
- Joireman, J., Grégoire, Y., Devezer, B., & Tripp, T. M. (2013). When do customers offer firms a “second chance” following a double deviation? The impact of inferred firm motives on customer revenge and reconciliation. *Journal of Retailing*, 89(3), 315-337.
- Joireman, J., Grégoire, Y., & Tripp, T. M. (2016). Customer forgiveness following service failures. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 10, 76-82.
- Joormann, J., & Siemer, M. (2004). Memory Accessibility, Mood Regulation, and Dysphoria: Difficulties in Repairing Sad Mood With Happy Memories? *Journal of abnormal psychology*, 113(2), 179-188.
- Josephson, B. R. (1996). Mood regulation and memory: Repairing sad moods with happy memories. *Cognition & Emotion*, 10(4), 437-444.
- Kähr, A., Bettina, N., Harley, K., & Wayne, D. H. (2016). When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(3), 25-41.
- Karremans, J. C., & Van Lange, P. A. M. (2005). Does activating justice help or hurt in promoting forgiveness? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 41(3), 290-297.
- Keltner, D., & Gross, J. J. (1999). Functional accounts of emotions. *Cognition & Emotion*, 13(5), 467-480.
- Kim, T., Kim, W. G., & Kim, H.-B. (2009). The effects of perceived justice on recovery satisfaction, trust, word-of-mouth, and revisit intention in upscale hotels. *Tourism Management*, 30(1), 51-62.
- Kivetz, R., Urminsky, O., & Zheng, Y. (2006). The goal-gradient hypothesis resurrected: Purchase acceleration, illusionary goal progress, and customer retention. *Journal of marketing research*, 43(1), 39-58.
- Klein, J. G., Smith, N. C., & John, A. (2004). Why we boycott: Consumer motivations for boycott participation. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(3), 92-109.
- Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modelling* (4th ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Koo, M., & Fishbach, A. (2014). Dynamics of self-regulation: How (un) accomplished goal actions affect motivation. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 94(2), 183-195.
- Koole, S. L. (2009a). Does emotion regulation help or hurt self-regulation. In J. P. Forgas, R. F. Baumeister & D. M. Tice (Eds.), *The psychology of self-regulation* (Vol. 11, pp. 217-232). New York: Psychology Press.
- Koole, S. L. (2009b). The psychology of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Cognition and Emotion*, 23(1), 4-41.

- Koole, S. L., van Dillen, L. F., & Sheppes, G. (2011). The self-regulation of emotion. In K. D. Vohs & R. F. Baumeister (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation: Research, theory, and applications* (Vol. 2, pp. 22-40). New York: Guilford Press.
- Kowalski, R. M. (1996). Complaints and complaining: Functions, antecedents, and consequences. *Psychological bulletin*, *119*(2), 179-196.
- Kruglanski, A. W., Shah, J. Y., Fishbach, A., Friedman, R., Chun, W. Y., & Sleeth-Keppler, D. (2002). A theory of goal systems. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 34, pp. 331-378). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Larsen, R. J. (2000). Toward a science of mood regulation. *Psychological Inquiry*, *11*(3), 129-141.
- Latham, G. P., & Locke, E. A. (1991). Self-regulation through goal setting. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, *50*(2), 212-247.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1991). Progress on a cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion. *American Psychologist*, *46*(8), 819-834.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Lee-Wingate, S. N., & Corfman, K. P. (2011). The effect of consumer emotional disclosure on fairness perceptions. *Psychology & Marketing*, *28*(9), 897-908.
- Lee, A. S. (1991). Integrating positivist and interpretive approaches to organizational research. *Organization science*, *2*(4), 342-365.
- Lee, N., & Lings, I. (2008). *Doing business research: a guide to theory and practice*. London: Sage.
- Lerner, J. S., & Keltner, D. (2000). Beyond valence: Toward a model of emotion-specific influences on judgement and choice. *Cognition & Emotion*, *14*(4), 473-493.
- Lerner, J. S., & Tiedens, L. Z. (2006). Portrait of the angry decision maker: how appraisal tendencies shape anger's influence on cognition. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, *19*(2), 115-137.
- Leventhal, G. S., Karuza, J., & Fry, W. R. (1980). Beyond fairness: A theory of allocation preferences. In G. Mikula (Ed.), *Justice and social interaction* (pp. 167-218). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Litvak, P. M., Lerner, J. S., Tiedens, L. Z., & Shonk, K. (2010). Fuel in the fire: How anger impacts judgment and decision-making. In M. Potegal, G. Stemmler & C. Spielberger (Eds.), *International handbook of anger* (pp. 287-310). New York: Springer.
- Loewenstein, G. (1996). Out of control: Visceral influences on behavior. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, *65*(3), 272-292.
- Louro, M. J., Pieters, R., & Zeelenberg, M. (2007). Dynamics of multiple-goal pursuit. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *93*(2), 174-193.
- Macht, M., & Dettmer, D. (2006). Everyday mood and emotions after eating a chocolate bar or an apple. *Appetite*, *46*(3), 332-336.
- Macht, M., Roth, S., & Ellgring, H. (2002). Chocolate eating in healthy men during experimentally induced sadness and joy. *Appetite*, *39*(2), 147-158.
- Manucia, G. K., Baumann, D. J., & Cialdini, R. B. (1984). Mood influences on helping: Direct effects or side effects? *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *46*(2), 357-364.
- Mapstone, N. (2015). Companies ignore 'customer avengers' at their peril. *Financial Times*. Retrieved 15/07/2017, from <https://www.ft.com/content/bfd2da4a-ef22-11e4-87dc-00144feab7de>
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological review*, *98*(2), 224-253.

- Mattila, A. S., & Wirtz, J. (2004). Consumer complaining to firms: the determinants of channel choice. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 18(2), 147-155.
- Mauss, I. B., Bunge, S. A., & Gross, J. J. (2007). Automatic emotion regulation. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 1(1), 146-167.
- Maxwell, S. (2002). Rule-based price fairness and its effect on willingness to purchase. *Journal of economic psychology*, 23(2), 191-212.
- McColl-Kennedy, J. R., Patterson, P. G., Smith, A. K., & Brady, M. K. (2009). Customer rage episodes: emotions, expressions and behaviors. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(2), 222-237.
- McColl-Kennedy, J. R., & Smith, A. K. (2006). Customer emotions in service failure and recovery encounters. In W. J. Zerbe, N. M. Ashkanasy & C. E. J. Härtel (Eds.), *Individual and organizational perspectives on emotion management and display* (Vol. 2, pp. 237-268). Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald Group Publishing.
- McCullough, M. A. (2000). The effect of perceived justice and attributions regarding service failure and recovery on post-recovery customer satisfaction and service quality attitudes. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 24(4), 423-447.
- McCullough, M. A., Berry, L. L., & Yadav, M. S. (2000). An empirical investigation of customer satisfaction after service failure and recovery. *Journal of service research*, 3(2), 121-137.
- McCullough, M. A., & Bharadwaj, S. G. (1992). The recovery paradox: an examination of consumer satisfaction in relation to disconfirmation, service quality, and attribution based theories. In C. T. Allen, T. J. Madden, T. A. Shimp, R. D. Howell, G. M. Zinkham & D. D. Heisley (Eds.), *Marketing theory and applications* (pp. 119-129). Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- McCullough, M. E., Kurzban, R., & Tabak, B. A. (2010). Evolved mechanisms for revenge and forgiveness. In P. R. Shaver & M. Mikulincer (Eds.), *Understanding and reducing aggression, violence, and their consequences* (pp. 221-239). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- McCullough, M. E., Pargament, K. I., & Thoresen, C. E. (2000). The psychology of forgiveness: History, conceptual issues, and overview. In M. E. McCullough, K. I. Pargament & C. E. Thoresen (Eds.), *Forgiveness: Theory, research, and practice* (Vol. 2, pp. 1-14). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- McCullough, M. E., Rachal, K. C., Sandage, S. J., Worthington Jr, E. L., Brown, S. W., & Hight, T. L. (1998). Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships: II. Theoretical elaboration and measurement. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 75(6), 1586-1603.
- Menon, K., & Dubé, L. (2007). The effect of emotional provider support on angry versus anxious consumers. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 24(3), 268-275.
- Moretti, L., & Di Pellegrino, G. (2010). Disgust selectively modulates reciprocal fairness in economic interactions. *Emotion*, 10(2), 169-180.
- Muraven, M., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). Self-regulation and depletion of limited resources: Does self-control resemble a muscle? *Psychological bulletin*, 126(2), 247-259.
- Nasaw, D. (2009). YouTube video on wrecked guitar gets United Airlines to pay up. *The Guardian*. Retrieved 15/07/2017, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/23/united-airlines-guitar-dave-carroll>
- Nyer, P. (1999). Cathartic complaining as a means of reducing consumer dissatisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction & Complaining Behavior*, 12, 15-25.
- Obeidat, Z. M. I., Xiao, S. H., Iyer, G. R., & Nicholson, M. (2017). Consumer Revenge Using the Internet and Social Media: An Examination of the Role of Service Failure Types and Cognitive Appraisal Processes. *Psychology & Marketing*, 34(4), 496-515.

- Oliver, R. L., & Swan, J. E. (1989). Equity and disconfirmation perceptions as influences on merchant and product satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(3), 372-383.
- Peer, E., Brandimarte, L., Samat, S., & Acquisti, A. (2017). Beyond the Turk: alternative platforms for crowdsourcing behavioral research. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 70, 153-163.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903.
- Podsakoff, P. M., & Organ, D. W. (1986). Self-reports in organizational research: Problems and prospects. *Journal of management*, 12(4), 531-544.
- Popper, K. (1959). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. London: Hutchinson
- Potegal, M., & Novaco, R. W. (2010). *A brief history of anger*. New York: Springer.
- Prolific. (2015). A Crowdsourcing Platform Designed for Scientific Research. Retrieved 12/05/2017, from <http://blog.prolificacademic.co.uk/2015/07/23/a-crowdsourcing-platform-designed-for-scientific-research>
- Prolific. (2017). Explore our participant pool demographics. Retrieved 12/05/2017, from <https://www.prolific.ac/demographics?metric=54bef0fafdf99b15608c504e>
- Puri, R. (1996). Measuring and modifying consumer impulsiveness: A cost-benefit accessibility framework. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 5(2), 87-113.
- Quartana, P. J., & Burns, J. W. (2007). Painful consequences of anger suppression. *Emotion*, 7(2), 400-414.
- Rawls, J. (1958). Justice as fairness. *The philosophical review*, 67(2), 164-194.
- Ray, R. D., Wilhelm, F. H., & Gross, J. J. (2008). All in the mind's eye? Anger rumination and reappraisal. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 94(1), 133-145.
- Richards, J. M., & Gross, J. J. (2000). Emotion regulation and memory: the cognitive costs of keeping one's cool. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 79(3), 410-424.
- Robinson, S. L., & O'Leary-Kelly, A. M. (1998). Monkey See, Monkey Do: The Influence of Work Groups on the Antisocial Behavior of Employees. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 41(6), 658-672.
- Romani, S., Grappi, S., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2013). My anger is your gain, my contempt your loss: Explaining consumer responses to corporate wrongdoing. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30(12), 1029-1042.
- Roseman, I. J. (1991). Appraisal determinants of discrete emotions. *Cognition & Emotion*, 5(3), 161-200.
- Roseman, I. J., Wiest, C., & Swartz, T. S. (1994). Phenomenology, behaviors, and goals differentiate discrete emotions. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 67(2), 206-221.
- Rozin, P., Lowery, L., Imada, S., & Haidt, J. (1999). The CAD triad hypothesis: a mapping between three moral emotions (contempt, anger, disgust) and three moral codes (community, autonomy, divinity). *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 76(4), 574-586.
- Russell-Bennett, R., Härtel, C. E. J., & Drennan, J. (2010). Consumer satisfaction and redress with a government third-party complaints agency. *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 23, 65-82.
- Russell, P. S., & Giner-Sorolla, R. (2013). Bodily moral disgust: What it is, how it is different from anger, and why it is an unreasoned emotion. *Psychological bulletin*, 139(2), 328-351.
- Rusting, C. L., & Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (1998). Regulating responses to anger: effects of rumination and distraction on angry mood. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 74(3), 790-803.

- Salerno, A., Laran, J., & Janiszewski, C. (2014). Hedonic eating goals and emotion: When sadness decreases the desire to indulge. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *41*(1), 135-151.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2007). *Research Methods for Business Students* (4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Schoefer, K., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2008a). Measuring experienced emotions during service recovery encounters: construction and assessment of the ESRE scale. *Service Business*, *2*(1), 65-81.
- Schoefer, K., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2008b). The role of emotions in translating perceptions of (in) justice into postcomplaint behavioral responses. *Journal of service research*, *11*(1), 91-103.
- Schoefer, K., & Ennew, C. (2005). The impact of perceived justice on consumers' emotional responses to service complaint experiences. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *19*(5), 261-270.
- Schumann, K., & Ross, M. (2010). The benefits, costs, and paradox of revenge. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *4*(12), 1193-1205.
- Schutz, A. (1962). *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhof.
- Schwarz, N., & Clore, G. L. (1996). Feelings and phenomenal experiences. In E. T. Higgins & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (Vol. 2, pp. 433-465). New York: Guilford Press.
- Seiders, K., & Berry, L. L. (1998). Service fairness: What it is and why it matters. *The Academy of Management Executive*, *12*(2), 8-20.
- Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Boston, MA, USA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Shah, J. Y., Friedman, R., & Kruglanski, A. W. (2002). Forgetting all else: on the antecedents and consequences of goal shielding. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *83*(6), 1261-1280.
- Singh, J. (1988). Consumer complaint intentions and behavior: definitional and taxonomical issues. *The Journal of Marketing*, *52*(1), 93-107.
- Skarlicki, D. P., & Folger, R. (1997). Retaliation in the workplace: The roles of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *82*(3), 434-443.
- Smith, A. K., & Bolton, R. N. (1998). An experimental investigation of customer reactions to service failure and recovery encounters paradox or peril? *Journal of service research*, *1*(1), 65-81.
- Smith, A. K., Bolton, R. N., & Wagner, J. (1999). A model of customer satisfaction with service encounters involving failure and recovery. *Journal of marketing research*, *36*(3), 356-372.
- Smith, C. A., & Ellsworth, P. C. (1985). Patterns of cognitive appraisal in emotion. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *48*(4), 813-838.
- Solomon, M. R., Surprenant, C., Czepiel, J. A., & Gutman, E. G. (1985). A role theory perspective on dyadic interactions: the service encounter. *The Journal of Marketing*, *49*(1), 99-111.
- Sparks, B. A., & McColl-Kennedy, J. R. (2001). Justice strategy options for increased customer satisfaction in a services recovery setting. *Journal of Business research*, *54*(3), 209-218.
- Spielberger, C. D. (1979). *State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory: Revised research edition Resources*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Spielberger, C. D. (1999). *State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory-Revised*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.

- Stillwell, A. M., Baumeister, R. F., & Del Priore, R. E. (2008). We're all victims here: Toward a psychology of revenge. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 30*(3), 253-263.
- Strizhakova, Y., Tsarenko, Y., & Ruth, J. A. (2012). "I'm Mad and I Can't Get That Service Failure Off My Mind": Coping and Rumination as Mediators of Anger Effects on Customer Intentions. *Journal of service research, 15*(4), 414-429.
- Stuckless, N., & Goranson, R. (1992). The vengeance scale: Development of a measure of attitudes toward revenge. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 7*(1), 25-42.
- Sundaram, D. S., Mitra, K., & Webster, C. (1998). Word-of-mouth communications: A motivational analysis. *NA-Advances in Consumer Research, 25*, 527-531.
- Szathmary, Z. (2017). Payback! Driver settles his \$3,000 bill at the DMV in PENNIES after months-long legal battle. *Dailymail*, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4117286/No-pocket-change-Man-delivers-300-000-pennies-DMV.html>
- Tamir, M. (2015). Why do people regulate their emotions? A taxonomy of motives in emotion regulation. *Personality and social psychology Review, 20*(3), 199-222.
- Tamir, M., Chiu, C.-Y., & Gross, J. J. (2007). Business or pleasure? Utilitarian versus hedonic considerations in emotion regulation. *Emotion, 7*(3), 546-554.
- Tamir, M., & Ford, B. Q. (2009). Choosing to be afraid: preferences for fear as a function of goal pursuit. *Emotion, 9*(4), 488-497.
- Tamir, M., & Ford, B. Q. (2012). When feeling bad is expected to be good: Emotion regulation and outcome expectancies in social conflicts. *Emotion, 12*(4), 807-816.
- Tamir, M., Mitchell, C., & Gross, J. J. (2008). Hedonic and instrumental motives in anger regulation. *Psychological Science, 19*(4), 324-328.
- Tangney, J. P., Baumeister, R. F., & Boone, A. L. (2004). High self-control predicts good adjustment, less pathology, better grades, and interpersonal success. *Journal of personality, 72*(2), 271-324.
- Tax, S. S., Brown, S. W., & Chandrashekar, M. (1998). Customer evaluations of service complaint experiences: implications for relationship marketing. *The Journal of Marketing, 62*(2), 60-76.
- Taylor, S. E. (1991). Asymmetrical effects of positive and negative events: the mobilization-minimization hypothesis. *Psychological bulletin, 110*(1), 67-85.
- Thibaut, J. W., & Walker, L. (1975). *Procedural justice: A psychological analysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Tice, D. M., & Bratslavsky, E. (2000). Giving in to feel good: The place of emotion regulation in the context of general self-control. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(3), 149-159.
- Tice, D. M., Bratslavsky, E., & Baumeister, R. F. (2001). Emotional distress regulation takes precedence over impulse control: if you feel bad, do it! *Journal of personality and social psychology, 80*(1), 53-67.
- Triandis, H. C. (2001). Individualism-collectivism and personality. *Journal of personality, 69*(6), 907-924.
- Triandis, H. C., & Gelfand, M. J. (1998). Converging measurement of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*(1), 118-128.
- Tripp, T. M., & Bies, R. J. (2010). "Righteous" Anger and Revenge in the Workplace: The Fantasies, the Feuds, the Forgiveness. In M. Potegal, G. Stemmler & C. Spielberger (Eds.), *International handbook of anger* (pp. 413-431). New York: Springer.
- Tsarenko, Y., & Tojib, D. (2011). A transactional model of forgiveness in the service failure context: a customer-driven approach. *Journal of Services Marketing, 25*(5), 381-392.
- Tsarenko, Y., & Tojib, D. (2012). The role of personality characteristics and service failure severity in consumer forgiveness and service outcomes. *Journal of Marketing Management, 28*(9-10), 1217-1239.

- Tyler, T. R. (1989). The psychology of procedural justice: A test of the group-value model. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 57(5), 830-838.
- Tyler, T. R. (1994). Psychological models of the justice motive: Antecedents of distributive and procedural justice. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 67(5), 850-863.
- Van Vliet, W. (1984). Vandalism: an assessment agenda. In C. Levy-Leboyer (Ed.), *Vandalism: Behaviour and Motivations* (pp. 13–36.). Amsterdam: North-Holland.
- Wade, S. H. (1989). *The development of a scale to measure forgiveness*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fuller Graduate School of Psychology, Pasadena, CA.
- Ward, J. C., & Ostrom, A. L. (2006). Complaining to the masses: The role of protest framing in customer-created complaint web sites. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33(2), 220-230.
- Watkins, E., & Moulds, M. (2005). Distinct modes of ruminative self-focus: impact of abstract versus concrete rumination on problem solving in depression. *Emotion*, 5(3), 319-328.
- Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: the PANAS scales. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 54(6), 1063-1070.
- Webb, T. L., Miles, E., & Sheeran, P. (2012). Dealing with feeling: A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of strategies derived from the process model of emotion regulation. *Psychological bulletin*, 138(4), 775-808.
- Weiss, H. M., Suckow, K., & Cropanzano, R. (1999). Effects of justice conditions on discrete emotions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(5), 786-794.
- Wetzer, I. M., Zeelenberg, M., & Pieters, R. (2007). “Never eat in that restaurant, I did!”: Exploring why people engage in negative word-of-mouth communication. *Psychology & Marketing*, 24(8), 661-680.
- Wirtz, J., & Mattila, A. S. (2004). Consumer responses to compensation, speed of recovery and apology after a service failure. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 15(2), 150-166.
- Worthington, E. L., & Scherer, M. (2004). Forgiveness is an emotion-focused coping strategy that can reduce health risks and promote health resilience: Theory, review, and hypotheses. *Psychology & Health*, 19(3), 385-405.
- Xie, C., Bagozzi, R. P., & Grønhaug, K. (2015). The role of moral emotions and individual differences in consumer responses to corporate green and non-green actions. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(3), 333-356.
- Yagil, D. (2008). When the customer is wrong: A review of research on aggression and sexual harassment in service encounters. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 13(2), 141-152.
- Yi, S., & Baumgartner, H. (2004). Coping with negative emotions in purchase-related situations. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(3), 303-317.
- Zajonc, R. B. (1980). Feeling and thinking: Preferences need no inferences. *American Psychologist*, 35(2), 151-175.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). Problems and strategies in services marketing. *The Journal of Marketing*, 49(2), 33-46.
- Zhang, Y., Fishbach, A., & Dhar, R. (2007). When thinking beats doing: The role of optimistic expectations in goal-based choice. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(4), 567-578.
- Zourrig, H., Chebat, J.-C., & Toffoli, R. (2009a). Consumer revenge behavior: a cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Business research*, 62(10), 995-1001.
- Zourrig, H., Chebat, J.-C., & Toffoli, R. (2009b). Exploring cultural differences in customer forgiveness behavior. *Journal of Service Management*, 20(4), 404-419.
- Zourrig, H., Chebat, J.-C., & Toffoli, R. (2015). “In-group love and out-group hate?” A cross cultural study on customers' revenge, avoidance and forgiveness behaviors. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(3), 487-499.

## **Appendix A- Scenarios for the pre-test**

### **Scenario 1: Airline - flight delay**

Imagine that you are approaching the end of what feels like a particularly long semester. In an effort to take some time off for yourself and to relax during the Christmas break you decide to book a flight to Rome, Italy where you will be able to spend some quality time with close friends. You finally book a flight from London to Rome, via Geneva, Switzerland with ABC airline. You are very excited about this trip and you cannot wait to reach your destination and see your friends.

Upon arrival at the airport, you notice considerable confusion at the ABC airline check-in counter. When you reach the counter, you are informed that your flight will be delayed due to crew unavailability and will now depart six hours later than originally planned. Your flight from London now arrives after the departure of your connecting flight to Rome. Naturally, you get upset and complain.

#### ***Low distributive/low procedural/low interactional fairness***

You explain to the ABC employee, sounding quite worried, that this flight delay means that you are going to miss your connecting flight. The employee listens to you, sounding quite disinterested about your situation, and acts like you are the problem and that you are disturbing her. She says that you should wait until she has asked her manager to determine what can be done to address your case. You finally end up waiting for 30 minutes which seems like an age to you. The employee announces to you that, following her manager's direction, you should rebook your connecting flight and pay for the price difference of this change yourself. She tells you that it is against the airline's policy to compensate passengers for missed flights as it works as a point-to-point carrier. You tell her that you are not at all impressed with their service. The employee addresses you in a rude and unfriendly manner, telling you that you shouldn't expect the airline to pay for all the missed flights. She concludes by saying that you must not take up more of her time as she has a queue of customers waiting to be served and she doesn't have any more time to deal with your problem. Finally, she walks away and calls the next customer.



### ***High distributive/high procedural/high interactional fairness***

You explain to the ABC employee, sounding quite worried, that this flight delay means that you are going to miss your connecting flight. The employee listens to you, sounding quite concerned about your situation, and shows an understanding with regards to the inconvenience caused. She suggests that you should wait until she has asked her manager to determine what can be done to address your case. After a few moments, the employee announces to you that, following her manager's direction, the airline will rebook your connecting flight and is going to pay for the price difference of this change. She tells you that it is the airline's policy to compensate passengers for missed flights. You tell her that you are not at all impressed with their service. The employee addresses you in a polite and friendly manner telling you that she is terribly sorry about the connecting flight you are going to miss and that the airline is always concerned about trying to do its best to keep its customers satisfied. She concludes by saying that she is pleased she has been able to assist you and asks if there is anything else she can help you with.

### **Scenario 2: Hotel - overbooking**

Imagine that your partner's birthday is approaching and you want to surprise him/her with a romantic weekend in Edinburgh. The past few months have been quite busy for both of you, thus allowing less quality time together. You want to plan every little detail in order to make it a memorable weekend. You search for the available hotels and finally you decide to book a room at the ABC hotel. You are very excited about the trip and are already imagining how he/she will like the surprise.

It is Friday and you have been driving for six hours in order to reach your destination. Upon arrival to the hotel you notice considerable confusion at the ABC hotel reception. The receptionist informs you that there has been a mistake with your reservation and the hotel is overbooked, so you cannot have the room that you have previously booked. Instead, they will provide you with a room in a lower quality hotel located three miles away from the current one. You are taken aback by the news. The surprise for your partner and the enjoyable weekend with him/her that you have dreamed about is about to be spoiled. Naturally, you get upset and complain.

***Low distributive/low procedural/low interactional fairness***

You explain to the receptionist of the ABC hotel, sounding quite worried, that this is a special occasion for you and that you have been driving for so many hours to reach your destination. The receptionist listens to you, sounding quite disinterested about your situation, and acts like you are the problem and that you are disturbing him. He says that you should wait until he has asked his manager to determine what can be done to address your case. You finally end up waiting for 30 minutes which seems like an age to you. The receptionist announces to you that, following his manager's direction, the hotel will charge you the rate for the lower quality hotel where you are going to stay and that no discount off your total bill will be given to you. He tells you that it is against the hotel's policy to compensate customers for room changes. You tell him that you are not at all impressed with their service. The receptionist addresses you in a rude and unfriendly manner, telling you that this is all the hotel can do and that if you don't like it you can find another hotel, in any case this is none of his business. He concludes by saying that there are other customers waiting to be served and he doesn't have any more time to deal with your problem. Finally, he walks away and calls the next customer.

***High distributive/high procedural/high interactional fairness***

You explain to the receptionist of the ABC hotel, sounding quite worried, that this is a special occasion for you and that you have been driving for so many hours to reach your destination. The receptionist listens to you, sounding quite concerned about your situation, and shows an understanding with regards to the inconvenience caused. He suggests that you should wait until he has asked his manager to determine what can be done to address your case. After a few moments, the receptionist announces to you that, following his manager's direction, the hotel will charge you the rate for the lower quality hotel where you are going to stay and that due to the inconvenience they are going to offer you the first night for free. You tell him that you are not at all impressed with their service. The receptionist addresses you in a polite and friendly manner, telling you that he is terribly sorry about the overbooking and that the hotel is always concerned about trying to do its best to keep its customers satisfied. He concludes that he is pleased that he has been able to assist you and asks if there is anything else he can help you with.

### **Scenario 3: Telecommunication company – hidden costs**

Imagine that a few days ago, while watching TV, you saw an advertisement from the ABC telecommunication company announcing a special offer for long distance calls. The charges are 8p per min on all long distance calls you make during weekends and evenings. The advert also claims lower than average rates on calls made at all other times and great international rates. You find the offer attractive and so, you decide to start using the service.

You receive your telephone bill. To your great surprise, the amount due is way above what you had expected when taking up the offer. After a thorough review of the bill you realise that the company has charged you: a) a £15 fee for having the service, something that you were never told about, b) an automatic charge of 10p per call to any call lasting less than two minutes, and c) very high rates exceeding 15p/min on calls made during the day, a rate 6p above the average rate charged by other companies. Going over the bill again, you get the feeling that the company did not miss any opportunity to charge you excessively. You feel cheated, especially given that you thought you had a good deal. Naturally, you get upset and complain.

#### ***Low distributive/low procedural/low interactional fairness***

You call the customer service department. You explain to the sales representative, sounding quite worried, that you have been charged for hidden costs that you were never told about. You ask for an adjustment to the account. The sales representative listens to you, sounding quite disinterested about your situation, and acts like you are the problem and that you are disturbing her. She says that you should wait until she has asked her manager to determine what can be done to address your case. You finally end up waiting in line for 30 minutes which seems like an age to you. The sales representative announces to you that, following her manager's direction, you will have to pay for the whole amount of the bill. She explains that it is against the company's policy to compensate customers for extra charges. You tell her that you are not at all impressed with their service. The sales representative addresses you in a rude and unfriendly manner, telling you that you cannot expect to make calls for free and that the company does its best to explain all the terms to the customers so you need to be more careful regarding the details of any offer in the future. She concludes by saying that there are other customers waiting in line to be served and so she doesn't have any more time to deal with your problem. Finally, she hangs up abruptly.

### ***High distributive/high procedural/high interactional fairness***

You call the customer service department. You explain to the sales representative, sounding quite worried, that you have been charged for hidden costs that you were never told about. You ask for an adjustment to the account. The sales representative listens to you, sounding quite concerned about your situation, and shows an understanding with regards to the inconvenience caused. She suggests that you should wait until she has asked her manager to determine what can be done to address your case. After a few moments, the sales representative announces to you that, following her manager's direction, the company will delete all the extra charges on your current bill and will provide you with credit. She explains that it is the company's policy to compensate customers for extra charges. You tell her that you are not at all impressed with their service. The sales representative addresses you in a polite and friendly manner, telling you that she is terribly sorry about the extra charges and that the company is always concerned about trying to do its best to keep its customers satisfied. She concludes by saying that she is pleased she has been able to assist you and asks if there is anything else she can help you with.

### **Scenario 4: Retail shop – fake advertising**

Imagine that you are looking for a tablet. A few days ago, while watching TV, you see an advertisement put out by the ABC retail store announcing a special offer of a tablet at the price of £300 including a keyboard dock. You are excited about the offer which you consider to be a very good deal. You double check the price of the tablet on their website and you find the same advertised offer. The special offer will expire in one month. You decide to visit the store the next day and buy the tablet.

Upon arrival at the store, you search for the tablet. To your big surprise, you notice that the same tablet now costs £300, with an extra £90 for the keyboard dock. You feel cheated since you visited the store determined to buy the tablet only to find out that the advertised offer was misleading. Naturally, you get upset and complain.

### ***Low distributive/low procedural/low interactional fairness***

You call an assistant and you explain to him, sounding quite puzzled, that the advertised offer was lower than the retail store's price and that you want to buy the tablet along with the keyboard dock at the advertised price. The assistant listens to you, sounding quite disinterested

about your situation, and acts like you are the problem and that you are disturbing him. He says that you should wait until he has asked his manager to determine what can be done to address your case. You finally end up waiting for 30 minutes which seems like an age to you. The assistant announces to you that, following his manager's direction, you will have to pay extra for the keyboard dock. He explains that the advertisement had been a mistake and that the retail shop cannot reduce the price to the advertised one. You tell him that you are not at all impressed with their service. The assistant addresses you in a rude and unfriendly manner, telling you that you shouldn't expect to buy both the tablet and the keyboard dock for free and that if you don't like the price you can go to another store. He concludes by saying that he has a queue of customers waiting to be served and that he doesn't have any more time to deal with your problem. Finally, he walks away and calls the next customer.

### ***High distributive/high procedural/high interactional fairness***

You call an assistant and you explain to him, sounding quite puzzled, that the advertised offer was lower than the retail store's price and that you want to buy the tablet along with the keyboard dock at the advertised price. The assistant listens to you, sounding quite concerned about your situation, and shows an understanding with regards to the inconvenience caused. He suggests that you should wait until he has asked his manager to determine what can be done to address your case. After a few moments, the assistant announces to you that, following his manager's direction, you will not have to pay extra for the keyboard dock. He explains that, due to the inconvenience caused, the retail shop will reduce the price to the advertised one. You tell him that you are not at all impressed with their service. The assistant addresses you in a polite and friendly manner, telling you that he is terribly sorry about the differential pricing in store and that the retail store is always concerned about trying to do its best to keep its customers satisfied. He concludes by saying that he is pleased he has been able to assist you and asks if there is anything else he can help you with.

### **Scenario 5: Bank – Increase in interest rate**

Imagine that you have been offered a place in a well reputed university to undertake your undergraduate studies. You have dreamed about this moment for a long time and finally you can see your efforts paying off. You are looking for a student loan to cover your tuition fees and the maintenance costs during your studies. Your family has restricted financial resources and cannot fully support the expenses for your studies. You visit the ABC bank to ask for

information on student loans and you find one with a six year repayment period at 3.5% APR (annual percentage rate). You spend some days discussing it with your family and you finally decide to take the loan from the ABC bank. You return to the bank to sign the contract.

Upon arrival at the ABC bank you are led to the office of the bank representative to serve you. He brings you the contract to sign. To your great surprise, you notice that the interest rate that they are going to charge you has changed and is now 4.5%. You feel cheated and outraged. You cannot understand how banks can change the interest rates without informing customers. Naturally, you complain.

### ***Low distributive/low procedural/low interactional fairness***

You explain to the bank representative, sounding quite worried, that you had agreed to take a student loan with a rate of 3.5% and that this loan is very important for you to be able to attend the university of your dreams. The bank representative listens to you, sounding quite disinterested about your situation, and acts like you are the problem and that you are disturbing him. He says that you should wait until he has asked his manager to determine what can be done to address your case. You end up waiting for 30 minutes which seems like an age to you. The bank representative returns to the office and announces to you that, following his manager's direction, the rate they are going to charge you is 4.5%. He explains that they had previously made a mistake and this is the actual rate charged for student loans. You tell him that you are not at all impressed with their service. The bank representative addresses you in a rude and unfriendly manner, telling you that you cannot expect to take a student loan for free and that if you don't like it you can go to another bank. He concludes by saying that he has a queue of customers waiting to be served and that he doesn't have any more time to deal with your problem. Finally, he walks away and calls the next customer.

### ***High distributive/high procedural/high interactional fairness***

You explain to the bank representative, sounding quite worried, that you had agreed to take a student loan with a rate of 3.5% and that this loan is very important for you to be able to attend the university of your dreams. The bank representative listens to you, sounding quite concerned about your situation, and shows an understanding with regards to the inconvenience caused. He suggests that you should wait until he has asked his manager to determine what can be done to address your case. After a few moments, the bank representative returns to the office and

announces to you that, following his manager's direction, the rate they are going to charge you is 3.5%. He explains that they had previously made a mistake as the actual rate for student loans is 4.5% but, due to the inconvenience caused, they are going to charge you at the rate you were initially told. You tell him that you are not at all impressed with their service. The bank representative addresses you in a polite and friendly manner, telling you that he is terribly sorry about the change in the initial rate and that the bank is always concerned about trying to do its best to keep its customers satisfied. He concludes by saying that he is pleased they have been able to assist you and asks if there is anything else he can help you with.

## **Appendix B - Hotel overbooking scenario used in Experiments 1 and 5**

### *Low distributive/low procedural/low interactional fairness*

Imagine that you are planning a weekend in Edinburgh for you and a friend. The past few months have been quite busy for both of you and you need some time off to relax. You search for the available hotels and finally you decide to book a room at the ABC hotel for £90 per night. You are very excited about the trip and you cannot wait to reach your destination.

It is Friday when you arrive at ABC hotel. You notice considerable confusion at the ABC hotel reception. The receptionist informs you that there has been a mistake with your reservation and the hotel is overbooked, so you cannot have the room that you have previously booked. Instead, the hotel has arranged to book you a room in one of their other ABC hotels which is located three miles away from the current one. You are taken aback by the news. Naturally, you complain.

You explain to the receptionist of the ABC hotel, sounding quite worried, that you want the room you have previously booked. The receptionist listens to you, sounding quite disinterested in your situation, and acts like you are the problem and that you are disturbing him. He asks you to wait until he figures out what can be done to address your case. You finally end up waiting for 30 minutes which seems like an age to you. The receptionist returns to the reception desk and announces to you that the room he suggested is the only option they can offer you. He explains that it is against the hotel's policy to compensate customers for room changes. The receptionist addresses you in a rude and unfriendly manner, stating: "Overbooking happens from time to time in hotels. This is all we can do and if you don't like it you can find another hotel. In any case this is none of my business". He concludes by saying: "You must not take up more of my time as I have a queue of customers waiting to be served and I don't have any more time to deal with your problem." Finally, he walks away and calls the next customer.



### ***High distributive/high procedural/high interactional fairness***

Imagine that you are planning a weekend in Edinburgh for you and a friend. The past few months have been quite busy for both of you and you need some time off to relax. You search for the available hotels and finally you decide to book a room at the ABC hotel for £90 per night. You are very excited about the trip and you cannot wait to reach your destination.

It is Friday when you arrive at ABC hotel. You notice considerable confusion at the ABC hotel reception. The receptionist informs you that there has been a mistake with your reservation and the hotel is overbooked, so you cannot have the room that you have previously booked. Instead, the hotel has arranged to book you a room in one of their other ABC hotels which is located three miles away from the current one. You are taken aback by the news. Naturally, you complain.

You explain to the receptionist of the ABC hotel, sounding quite worried, that you want the room you have previously booked. The receptionist listens to you, seeming quite compassionate about your situation and showing an understanding with regards to the inconvenience caused. He asks you to wait until he figures out what can be done to address your case. You only wait for a few moments. The receptionist returns to the reception desk and announces to you that, due to the inconvenience caused, they are going to upgrade you to a better quality room for the same price. He explains that it is the hotel's policy to compensate customers for room changes. The receptionist addresses you in a polite and friendly manner, stating: "I am terribly sorry about the overbooking. Please let me assure you that our customers are very important to us and we will do our best to make your stay a pleasant one." He concludes by saying: "The hotel is concerned about what has happened and that I hope you understand we want to serve you better in the future". Finally, he asks if there is anything else he could help you with.

## Appendix C – Measures and Loadings (Experiment 1)

Items	Loading	Items	Loading
<b>Positive emotions</b>		Given the circumstances, I feel that the hotel did <b>not</b> offer adequate compensation.	
Happy		Compared to what I expected, the compensation offered was:	
Pleased		<b>Procedural fairness</b>	
Joyful		The hotel quickly reacted to my problem.	
Warm feelings		The length of time taken to resolve my problem was longer than necessary.	
Delighted		The employee was quick in dealing with my problem.	
Excited		<b>Interactional fairness</b>	
Enthusiastic		The employees seemed to care about me.	
Proud		The employees did <b>not</b> put the proper effort into resolving my problem.	
Being valued		The employees' communications with me were appropriate.	
<b>Negative emotions</b>		The employees did <b>not</b> give me the courtesy and respect I was due.	
In a bad mood		<b>Forgiveness</b>	
Annoyed		I will harbor a grudge.	0.694
Angry		I wish something bad would happen to them.	0.737
Upset		I will continue to think about how much I hate this hotel.	0.800
Enraged		I want to see them hurt and miserable.	0.716
Irritated		I'm going to get even.	0.604
Down-hearted		I'm not letting go of the offense.	0.789
Disgusted		I am willing to forget the past and concentrate on the present.	0.569
Contemptuous		I will make an effort to be more friendly and concerned in my future interactions with this hotel.	0.418
<b>Distributive Fairness</b>		I will cut off the relationship with the hotel.	0.603
Overall, the compensation I received from the hotel was fair.		I'm holding on to the hurt and anger.	0.739
I did <b>not</b> get what I deserved (i.e., regarding a compensation or a refund).			

<b>Items</b>	<b>Loading</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Loading</b>
<b>Marketplace Aggression (formative construct)</b>		<b>Third-party complaining</b> I would complain to the consumer agency (e.g. UK Consumer Protection Association)...	
I would damage property belonging to the hotel.		... to make public the behaviors and practices of the hotel.	0.862
I would deliberately bend or break the policies of the hotel.		... to report my experience to other consumers.	0.912
I would show signs of impatience and frustration to someone from the hotel.		... to spread the word about my misadventure.	0.895
I would hit something or slam a door in front of (an) employee(s).		... so that my experience with the hotel would be known.	0.860
<b>Vindictive Complaining</b> I complained to the hotel to...		<b>Scenario realism</b>	
... give a hard time to the representatives.	0.908	I think the incident described in the above scenario is:	
... be unpleasant with the representatives of the hotel.	0.894	I believe that such an incident could happen to someone in real life.	
... make someone from the organization pay for their services.	0.746		
<b>NWOM</b>			
I would spread negative word-of-mouth about the hotel.	0.928		
I would denigrate the hotel to my friends.	0.948		
When my friends are looking for a similar service, I would tell them not to go to the hotel.	0.891		

## **Appendix D – Airline flight delay scenario used in Experiments 2, 3, and 4**

Imagine that you are approaching the end of what feels like a particularly long semester. In an effort to take some time off for yourself and to relax during the Christmas break you decide to book a flight to Rome, Italy where you will be able to spend some quality time with close friends. You finally book a flight from London to Rome, via Geneva, Switzerland with ABC airline. You are very excited about this trip and you cannot wait to reach your destination.

Upon arrival at the airport, you notice considerable confusion at the ABC airline check-in counter. When you reach the counter you are informed that your flight will be delayed due to crew unavailability and will now depart three hours later than originally planned. Your flight from London now arrives after the departure of your connecting flight to Rome. Naturally, you complain.

You explain to the ABC employee, sounding quite worried, that this flight delay means that you are going to miss your connecting flight. The employee listens to you, sounding quite disinterested in your situation, and acts like you are the problem and that you are disturbing her. She asks you to wait until she figures out what can be done to address your case. You finally end up waiting for 30 minutes which seems like an age to you. The employee returns to the counter and announces to you that you should rebook your connecting flight and pay for the price difference of this change yourself. She explains that it is against the airline's policy to compensate passengers for missed flights as it works as a point-to-point carrier. The employee addresses you in a rude and unfriendly manner, stating: "Flight delays happen from time to time. You shouldn't expect the airline to pay for all the missed flights and if you don't like it you can find another airline". She concludes by saying: "You must not take up more of my time as I have a queue of customers waiting to be served and I don't have any more time to deal with your problem." Finally, she walks away and calls the next customer.

## Appendix E – Measures (Experiment 2)

Items	Items
<b>Marketplace Aggression (formative construct)</b>	Warm feelings
I would damage property belonging to the airline.	Delighted
I would deliberately bend or break the policies of the airline.	Excited
I would show signs of impatience and frustration to someone from the airline.	Enthusiastic
I would hit something or slam a door in front of (an) employee(s).	Proud
<b>Vindictive Complaining</b> I complained to the airline to...	Being valued
... give a hard time to the representatives.	<b>Negative emotions</b>
... be unpleasant with the representatives of the airline.	In a bad mood
... make someone from the organization pay for their services.	Annoyed
<b>NWOM</b>	Angry
I would spread negative word-of-mouth about the airline.	Upset
I would denigrate the airline to my friends.	Enraged
When my friends are looking for a similar service, I would tell them not to fly with this airline.	Irritated
<b>Third-party complaining</b> I would complain to the consumer agency (e.g. UK Consumer Protection Association)...	Down-hearted
... to make public the behaviors and practices of the airline.	Disgusted
... to report my experience to other consumers.	Contemptuous
... to spread the word about my misadventure.	<b>Distributive Fairness</b>
... so that my experience with the airline would be known.	Overall, the compensation I received from the airline was fair.
<b>Positive emotions</b>	I did <b>not</b> get what I deserved (i.e., regarding a compensation or a refund).
Happy	Given the circumstances, I feel that the airline did <b>not</b> offer adequate compensation.
Pleased	Compared to what I expected, the compensation offered was:
Joyful	

<b>Items</b>	<b>Items</b>
<b>Procedural fairness</b>	It is important that I do my job better than others.
The airline quickly reacted to my problem.	Winning is everything.
The length of time taken to resolve my problem was longer than necessary.	Competition is the law of nature.
The employee was quick in dealing with my problem.	When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.
<b>Interactional fairness</b>	If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud
The employees seemed to care about me.	The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.
The employees did <b>not</b> put the proper effort into resolving my problem.	To me, pleasure is spending time with others.
The employees' communications with me were appropriate.	I feel good when I cooperate with others.
The employees did <b>not</b> give me the courtesy and respect I was due.	Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.
<b>Anger-out tendencies</b>	It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.
I express my anger	Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.
If someone annoys me, I'm apt to tell him or her how I feel	It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.
I lose my temper	<b>Expected emotions</b>
I make sarcastic remarks to others	To what extent do you expect yourself to be in a negative emotional state by the end of the session?
I do things like slam doors	<b>Perceived hedonic properties of chocolates</b> Expect eating chocolates to
I argue with others	Make you feel good
I strike out at whatever infuriates me	Taste great
I say nasty things	Lift you up when you are in a bad emotional state
<b>Cultural Orientation</b>	Be pleasurable
I'd rather depend on myself than others.	Be healthy
I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.	<b>Scenario realism</b>
I often do "my own thing."	I think the incident described in the above scenario is:
My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me.	I believe that such an incident could happen to someone in real life.

## **Appendix F – Measures (Experiment 3)**

### **Mood-improvement beliefs**

Everyone feels angry or furious from time to time, but people differ in the ways that they try to get rid of angry feelings so they will feel better. A number of statements are listed below which people use to describe how they improve their moods when they are angry or furious. Read each statement below and then choose the answer which indicates how often you generally react or behave in the manner described when you want to get rid of angry feelings. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement.

- I express my anger
- If someone annoys me, I'm apt to tell him or her how I feel
- I lose my temper
- I make sarcastic remarks to others
- I do things like slam doors
- I argue with others
- I strike out at whatever infuriates me
- I say nasty things

## **Appendix G – Measures (Experiment 4)**

### **Impulsiveness scale**

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| – Impulsive       | – Restrained      |
| – Careless        | – Easily tempered |
| – Self-controlled | – Rational        |
| – Extravagant     | – Methodical      |
| – Farsighted      | – Enjoy spending  |
| – Responsible     | – Planner         |

## Appendix H – Advertisements

### Flyer



**Get £5 in cash for participation!**



### **PARTICIPANTS WANTED!**

#### **STUDY INTO CONSUMER RESPONSES TO SERVICE EXPERIENCES**

We are recruiting participants for a study investigating how consumers evaluate and respond to service experiences. You will be required to read a scenario about a hypothetical service experience and then answer a questionnaire.

The study will take about 15 minutes and will take place at 8W 1.25.

**If you are interested in taking part in this study please email**

**Marilena Gemtou on [emg24@bath.ac.uk](mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk)**



# Poster

**Get £5 in cash for participation!**



**PARTICIPANTS WANTED!**  
**STUDY INTO CONSUMER RESPONSES TO SERVICE EXPERIENCES**

We are recruiting participants for a study investigating how consumers evaluate and respond to service experiences. You will be required to read a scenario about a hypothetical service experience and then answer a questionnaire.

The study will take about 15 minutes and it will take place at 8W 1.25.

**If you are interested in taking part in this study please email**

**Marilena Gemtou on [emg24@bath.ac.uk](mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk)**

<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou
<a href="mailto:emg24@bath.ac.uk">emg24@bath.ac.uk</a>	Marilena Gemtou