CONSUMER REVENGE BEHAVIOR: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article proposes a conceptual model of consumer revenge behavior. Drawing on the cognitive appraisal theory, it suggests that revenge may be viewed as a coping process and influenced by cultural values. The article reviews existing models on revenge behavior and adapts the Lazarus cognitive-emotive model of coping to the revenge context. In an attempt to extend revenge to other cultures, the paper relates its cognitive, emotional and motivational patterns with individual-level differences in cultural values. More specifically consumer allocentrism and idiocentrism tendencies are introduced in the study model as a moderator. The psychological mechanisms as well as coping strategies are emphasized throughout the main body of the discussion. The article concludes with salient issues for future research.

Keywords: Service failure; Consumer revenge; Idiocentrism-allocentrism; Coping behavior.

Introduction

Marketing scholars have paid little attention to consumer revenge behavior, although outraged customers are found to be the most aggressive actors in the workplace. According to a survey conducted by Northwestern National Life 44% of employees who had been physically aggressed at work, were attacked by a client or customer (cited in Diamond, 1997). Wronged customers are likely to react aggressively to betrayals by vandalizing firm properties, insulting and physically attacking employees (Harris and Reynolds 2003; Funches et al., 2008). To comfort themselves psychologically, angry customers often seek to get back at the firm and want
to hit where it hurts the most (Bougie et al., 2003, Xia et al., 2004). Amazingly, offended customers may even find instructions on how to get even with transgressing firms (e.g., consumer guide to getting even on www.consumer-revenge.com).

The widespread occurrence of the consumer revenge phenomenon is particularly alarming. A Customer Rage Survey (CRS) conducted in 2005 revealed that 15% of shoppers who received unsatisfactory service are seeking revenge for their suffering and 1% of them admit already exacting revenge. More strikingly the 2007 CRS showed that Hispanic-American customers experience greater rage at how their complaint were handled and were three times more likely than Anglos-Americans to seek revenge against firms. In the same vein a recent research (2008) on customer rage subsidized by the Australian Research Council reports differences in the way mistreated customers react in Thailand and China compared to those from Australia. For instance, when customers from China and Thailand are badly treated they tell as many people as possible and boycott the firm for long periods (non-confrontational strategies), whereas customers from Australia publicly exhibit their anger and are more likely to undertake vengeful acts such as verbal insults and even violent attacks. This evidence also points to the influence of cultural differences on consumer revenge patterns.

An overview of major studies on revenge behavior highlights a serious limitation: most of them were conducted in Western cultures (e.g., Bradfield and Aquino, 1999; Aquino et al., 2006; Stuckless and Goranson, 1992, etc.) and there are reasons for questioning their relevance for non-Western cultures. For instance, although Bechwati and Morrin (2003) found that interactional and procedural unfairness are strong predictors of a consumer’s desire to exert revenge among US undergraduate students, Mattila and Patterson (2004) showed that collectivist consumers are more sensitive to interactional justice than individualist ones, while Hui and Au (2001) found that consumers from individualist cultures are more sensitive to the procedural fairness than their collectivist counterparts. Further, Folkes (1983) showed that before exerting revenge, undergraduate student respondents from the US experienced strong anger; whereas Shteynberg (2005) found that shame emotion was more predictive of revenge than anger for individuals with interdependent self-construal. In this light one can argue that bad treatment may be more predictive of revenge in collectivist cultures than in individualist cultures given that it threatens harmony and connectedness and leads to loss of face with other group members.

Cross-cultural studies on conflict resolution have recognized that collectivists are more likely to prefer non-adversarial strategies to deal with interpersonal conflicts, whereas individualists generally tend to use adversarial strategies over non-adversarial ones (Ohbuchi and Takahashi, 1994; Takaku, 2000). This implies that consumers from collectivist cultures may be less inclined to seek revenge than their individualist counterparts. Obviously, culture affects the manner in which we frame, blame, and attempt to tame conflicts (LeBaron, 1992).

Drawing upon the literature on the influence of culture on psychological processes and social behavior (e.g., Triandis, 1994; 1989), numerous marketing researchers have demonstrated that consumers react differently according to their cultural values (e.g., Schutte and Ciarlante, 1998; Liu and McClure, 2001; de Mooij, 2004; Lee, 2000). As a specific type of social behavior, consumer revenge may also be influenced by culture, pointing to the need to elucidate the specific patterns of influence. Others, outside the marketing literature, also echo this need. For instance, Cota-McKinley et al., (2001), suggest that revenge is linked to religious background and culture of honor, and call for further investigation on the role of culture in shaping revenge. A number of potential research questions arise: Why are customers from a given culture so strongly motivated to seek revenge, while customers from other societies do not feel the same
degree of hurt and motivation for revenge? Why does resentment in a given cultural context lead to a propensity to hurt a firm’s business, whereas in another context these feelings lead to non-confrontational tactics? Failure to understand these differences could lead to disaster when managing confrontational encounters following negative product or service experiences. Knowledge of cross-cultural differences in the mediating process of revenge may enhance managers’ ability to intervene in preventing and managing such destructive behavior to the firm’s business, especially in a context of globalization, where firms serve international markets as well as multiethnic markets.

To address this shortcoming the paper discusses how revenge behavior may be viewed as a coping process. Based on the stress and coping framework advanced by Lazarus and colleagues (e.g., Lazarus 1991; Lazarus and Folkman 1984), we adapt the cognitive-emotive process model to consumer revenge behavior, and extend it to the contexts of collectivistic and individualistic cultures by introducing a moderator variable namely idiocentric/allocentric tendencies.

The topics are organized in the following fashion: first, the revenge concept is clearly defined along with its cognitive, emotional and motivational patterns. Second, the literature of cultural psychology focusing on core concepts of collectivism (allocentrism) and individualism (idiocentrism) is reviewed. Third, the potential effects of cultural value orientations on consumer revenge motivations are discussed. As we proceed, we develop a set of propositions and we conclude with some research avenues for further research.

**Revenge Conceptualization**

Vengeance and revenge are considered in the literature as synonyms. Indeed many authors used both concepts interchangeably (e.g., Stuckless and Goranson, 1992; Bechwati and Morrin, 2003); there is no consistent usage of these terms in the literature.

From a sociological perspective, Stuckless et al., (1995) defined vengeance as “the infliction of punishment or injury in return for perceived wrong” (p.1). In the same vein, Cota–McKinley et al., (2001) conceptualized vengeance as “the infliction of harm in return for perceived injury or insult” (p.343). Similarly Aquino et al., (2006), Aquino and Bradfield (1999) defined revenge in a workplace context as “an effort undertaken by the victim of harm to inflict damage, injury, discomfort or punishment on the party judged responsible for causing the harm” (p.654). In a consumer context, Bechwati and Morrin (2003) extended the definition of revenge to the desire for consumer vengeance and conceptualized it as “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” (p.6).

More interestingly, many scholars (e.g., Stuckless and Goranson, 1992; Bradfield and Aquino, 1999; Ysseldyk, 2005) have outlined the distinction between revenge and other similar concepts of negative reciprocity such as retaliation, hostility and retribution. For instance, revenge can be distinguished from retaliation in terms of rationality, affect and behavior goal. Indeed the essential purpose of revenge is to give the avenger relief from anger, it is not necessarily rational; whereas the primary purpose of retaliation is deterrence, it does not necessarily involve affect and it is basically rational in its intent. Furthermore, revenge differs from hostility in that the justification and motivation for vengeful aggressive acts rest on the perception of having being wronged rather than undifferentiated feelings of hostility toward others (Stuckless and Goranson, 1992). Moreover, revenge differs from retribution because of its greater emotional and behavioral intensities. In addition, unlike revenge the primary emphasis of retribution is on the denial of the offender’s implicit claim of relative superiority and the
assertion of the victim’s value through punishment of the offender (Bradfield and Aquino, 1999). Overall, comparisons between revenge and other forms of negative reciprocity highlight affective, cognitive and motivational differences in patterns that shape revenge behavior. In broad terms, revenge can be conceptualized as “an intense emotional state requiring relief, based on the perception and motivation that one has been wronged, rather than on rational thought, undifferentiated anger, or retributive justice” (Ysseldyk, 2005; p.12).

Revenge Viewed Through Cognitive-Emotive Coping Model

Few ambitious works have attempt to model revenge behavior (see Table 1). However, most of the existing models have disregarded the emotional component, although negative emotions such as anger are found to be the main catalyst of revenge behavior. For example the panel model for revenge (Tsang et al., 2006), the dispositional styles of forgiveness and revenge model (Yesseldyk, 2005) as well as the revenge-forgiveness model (Bradfield and Aquino, 1999), emphasize cognitive and motivational aspects of revenge, but they neglect the emotional one. In contrast, the coping model (Lazarus, 1991) as we suggest places a great emphasis on the individual’s transaction with his environment and takes into account the emotional dimension.

In claiming so, we propose that Lazarus (1991) stress and coping model may provide a theoretical framework for unifying the existing body of research on revenge behavior (see Figure 1). This model seems to be well suited to study the underlining psychological mechanisms of these behaviors for at least two main reasons: first it encapsulates cognitive, emotional and motivational patterns. Second, it emphasizes a situation where harm was experienced with such severe unfairness that consumers are left to cope with a serious stress. As argued by Xi et al., (2004), severe perceptions of unfairness typically come with heat and passion, anger and outrage, and they insistently press for action or redress. In this regard, the process one goes through in order to exert revenge against the offender may be considered as a means of increasing stress reaction. Conversely, a process one goes through in order to forgive an offender may be viewed as a means of reducing the stress reaction (Worthington and Sherer, 2004).

In this paper, we are mainly interested in two coping strategies namely revenge (problem focused strategy) and avoidance (emotion focused strategy). This refers to the Cannon’s fight-flight behavioral responses' dichotomy (1939). In the first case a consumer decides to engage in a confrontation (fight) and seeks to inflict harm in return for a severe experienced unfairness; this leads to revenge. While in the second the wronged customer tries to ignore the problem in order to escape from an uncomfortable emotional state caused by anger. In so doing he adopts a passive response which leads to avoidance behavior (flight).

A Potential Moderator: Allocentrism/Idiocentrism

In the cultural psychology literature as well in the marketing field, the individualism-collectivism paradigm was recognized to be the key dimension of cultural variability. As a matter of fact, in a same culture, consumers may not always behave in a strict individualist or
In this light, allocentrism refers to person-level collectivism, whereas idiocentrism refers to person-level individualism. More specifically, allocentrics tend to emphasize the interdependent self more often, leading to a greater concern for norms, obligations, and duties than do idiocentrics. They cling to in-group similarity and often show little or no distinction between in-group and personal goals. While idiocentrics tend to sample the independent self more often, leading to a greater consideration of attitudes, personal needs and rights than do allocentrics. Moreover idiocentrics tend to differentiate themselves from their in-groups and give priority to personal goals over in-group goals.

Manifestly, these differences in values or orientation toward group members (in-groups and out-groups) may have great implications not only on how individuals define themselves but also on how they behave. In this regard, Aaker and Maheswaran (1997) claim that behavior of members of individualistic cultures (idiocentrics) tends to be motivated by personal preferences and inner drives, while behavior of members of collectivist cultures (allocentrics) tends to be more influenced by preferences and needs of close others.

**Revenge process across cultures**

**Cultural differences in harm/loss primary appraisal**

In marketing field, the concept of perceived unfairness lies at the heart of an experienced harm or loss that induces revenge (e.g., Xia et al. 2004; Bechwati and Morrin 2003; Folkes 1984). Previous works have shown that culture influences outcomes directly by defining them as fair or unfair. For instance, Choi and Mattila (2006) found that South Korean customers (allocentrics) assess variable pricing practices as unfair (distributive unfairness) while American ones not (idiocentrics). This is due to the fact that in East Asian societies, receiving a better or worse deal than someone else is not as favourably received as getting the same price, because it threatens equity among group members.

Offended customers mentally assess unfairness based on three determinants namely: goal relevance (i.e., whether the perceived injustice is relevant to their well-being and personal stake or not), goal incongruence (i.e., the extent to which the wrongdoing prevents customers from achieving their wants and desires) and ego involvement (i.e., whether it touches one’s self esteem, moral values and meanings and ego ideas) (Nguyen and McColl-Kennedy, 2003).

In fact, research on primary appraisal has traditionally focused on personal goals’ achievement. This perspective reflects an individualistic value orientation where it is more
common for people to place greater priority on achieving their own goals over that of the group (Strelan and Covic, 2006). Even so, this may not be the case of collectivistic individuals who make the welfare of the in-group as a requirement of the welfare of the individual. In this regard, Rabin (1993) advocates that people within a group are willing to sacrifice their own well-being to help those who are helping them and to hurt those who are hurting them. This suggests that depending on whether they cling to their own well-being and personal stake or that of the group, people may assess differently harmful events.

Thus one can argue that as allocentric consumers are very sensitive to the group connectedness and keeping harmonious relationships between their members, they will evaluate a harmful service encounter as more relevant to their well-being than do idiocentric ones, especially when the conflict involves other customers and employees (indirect conflict). Conversely when they are part of the conflict (interpersonal conflict), allocentric consumers assess an offence as harmful to their well-being but at a lesser extent than do idiocentric ones, because they are lesser innate oriented. Hence:

**P1:** When faced with an interpersonal (indirect) conflict, the greater consumer cling to allocentrism (idiocentrism), the lesser (greater) they perceive the harm.

“In addition to affecting goal relevance, cultural differences could also affect goal incongruence, inasmuch as the issue for this appraisal component is whether or not an important goal is being harmed or endangered” (Lazarus, 1991, p.368).

In fact, the goals inculcated in collectivist societies may differ to some extent from those in the individualistic ones. For instance saving money and time was recognized to be the most common customers’ goals in marketing field (e.g., Xia et al., 2004). Nevertheless some cultural differences were found in unfairness assessment when such goals are hampered (goal incongruence). For example complaint-handling failure is acknowledged to inflict money and time losses to customers. In this vein Hui and Au (2001) report that Chinese customers (allocentric) perceive higher level of unfairness in complaint-handling process failure than do Canadians consumers (idiocentric). Indeed as Chinese customers emphasize values’ respect, status, and face in their social behaviors, they hold less positive attitudes toward complaining and therefore perceive less justice of the complaint-handling process than Canadian customers. Accordingly, there is evidence that in some circumstances allocentric consumers may assess an event as more incongruent with their goals than do idiocentric ones. Thus we posit:

**P2:** When faced with a harmful service encounter (e.g., unfair price), allocentric consumers assess the event as more incongruent with their goals than do idiocentric ones.

With respect to ego involvement, this dimension is usually associated with self-esteem, self-identity and moral values. At first glance this approach seems to be self oriented as it focuses on ego concept regardless group members. However, Lazarus (1991) supports that patterns of ego involvement may differ across cultures as it relates on the commitment nature; whether it refers to the commitment to the individual or the community. In this light, a collectivist tends to subordinate the personal side of his ego-identity to the group whereas an
individualist may develop a strongly autonomous and independent identity capable of challenging the group (Lazarus, 1991).

In marketing literature, the ego involvement is generally attacked when an interactional unfairness occurs (e.g., ignorance, bad treatment, etc). In this vein, Mattila and Patterson (2004) reveal that East Asian consumers (allocentrics) are more sensitive to the interactional justice than their American counterparts (idiocentrics) given that people in Asian societies strive to maintain smooth and harmonious personal relationships, commitment to the group, and to avoid losing face related to a sense of dignity, honor, and reputation. Hence we posit:

P3: When faced with a harmful service encounter, allocentric consumers will perceive more harm to their ego involvement than do idiocentric ones.

Cultural differences in harm/loss secondary appraisal
Secondary appraisal is a judgement about what might and can be done. This stage involves three components namely: blame (controllability and accountability of the wrongdoing), coping potential (assessing possible ways to get even), and future expectancy (the likelihood of success or failure when reacting to an injury) (e.g., Lazarus 1991). Culture affects the manner through which a person may frame each component. Regarding blame, Cross-cultural studies have pointed out many contrasting patterns in different cultural contexts. For instance, Chun et al. (2006) and Kawanishi (1995) found that unlike individualists, collectivists have a stronger sense of external locus of control versus a weaker internal locus of control (and vice versa), because they attribute success to good luck, and stress to bad luck.

In the context of marketing, Poon et al., (2003) found that unlike Chinese consumers (allocentrics), Canadians consumers (idiocentrics) are more likely to believe that service failure are actually controllable by the service provider or employees.

As idiocentrics are more sensitive than allocentrics to their own rights and invest more efforts in protecting them, they are more likely to focus on the controllability dimension when assessing harmful encounters. Conversely, regarding accountability, allocentrics are more likely to refer to the actor role in blaming the wrongdoing because they emphasize mainly on social norms and duties in guiding social behavior (Shteynberg, 2005).

Overall, one can argue that in blaming an offender, idiocentrics emphasize the control on the part of the wrongdoer (controllability) and to a less extent the actor’s role (accountability), while allocentrics focus more on the social role of the offender rather than actor control. Hence:

P4: In assessing a harmful encounter, idiocentric (allocentric) consumers refer more (less) to the controllability dimension and at a lesser (greater) extent the accountability one.

With respect to the issue of coping potential, Hui and Au (2001) and Mattila and Patterson (2004) suggest that, allocentrics prefer non confrontational strategies whereas idiocentrics tend to adopt direct confrontation strategies. Accordingly it is fair to assume that before engaging in vengeful acts allocentrics think about indirect vengeful reactions (e.g., stealing, sabotage, etc.), whereas idiocentrics are more likely to contemplate direct actions (e.g., verbal insults, physical aggression, etc). Hence:
**P5:** When assessing possible ways to react to an inflicted harm, idiocentric (allocentric) consumers, privilege (disapprove) confrontational strategies over non-confrontational ones.

Regarding future expectancies (success or failure likelihood in getting even with the offender), they are basically related to the stability dimension (Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). In this vein, Betancourt and Weiner (1982) found that in stable causes of service failure, expectancy of future success was higher for Americans than Chileans, whereas expectancy of future failure was higher for Chileans than Americans. Thus:

**P6:** In stable cause of service failure, the expectancy of revenge success will be higher for idiocentric consumers than for allocentric ones.

Overall, these findings suggest that consumers’ sensitivity to the harm severity may induce different coping styles and future expectancies depending on customer cultural orientations. Thus we posit:

**P1:** The allocentric/idiocentric tendency moderates the interplay between the primary and secondary appraisals.

### Negative emotions across cultures

The process that follows blame and precedes revenge behavior is of an emotional nature (Shteynberg, 2005). Negative emotions such as anger, shame, and outrage, were shown to be the major experienced emotions that promote revenge behavior (e.g., Bougie et al., 2003; Folkes, 1984; Xia et al., 2004, etc.). However, experienced and expressed emotions may vary across cultures in terms of intensity and situation in which they occur (Stephan et al., 1996).

Regarding experienced emotions, Shteynberg (2005) revealed that anger was recognized to be a revenge trigger for individuals with interdependent self-construal as well as those with independent construal of self. However, when anger level is controlled, revenge intentions of the former become a function of their shame emotion to a greater extent than for the latter. Thus, shame is more predictive of revenge intentions for interdependent self-construal sample. Hence:

**P7:** When faced with a harmful encounter, idiocentric (allocentric) consumers experience more (less) anger than shame.

Furthermore, Roseman et al., (1995) found that Indians reported lower sadness, fear and anger than Americans. Since, Indians perceive negative outcomes as less modifiable than Americans do, they resign themselves more readily to what happened and thus perceive less discrepancy from what is desired and feel less negative emotion. Overall we posit:
**P8:** When faced with a harmful encounter, the more consumers cling to idiocentrism (allocentrism), the greater (lesser) negative emotions (e.g., shame, anger) they will direct at the transgressing firm.

With respect to expressed emotions, Stephan et al., (1996) reported that in cultures such as Tahiti, China and Japan, expressions of anger are considered to be inappropriate and rarely occur, whereas in other cultures, such as the United States, expressions of anger are considered to be acceptable and may be actively encouraged. Moreover, the authors found that in contrast with individualists (Americans), collectivists (Costa Ricans) are more reluctant to express negative emotions (e.g. annoyance, distrust, disapproval), given that in collectivistic cultures people are likely to experience strong normative pressures to express emotions that facilitate interpersonal relations even they are not feeling these emotions.

Likewise, Liu and McClure (2001) argued that unlike individualists’ consumers, collectivists ones tend to not express their emotions outwardly, especially negative emotions that are often repressed in public settings, to avoid losing face. If negative emotions are expressed, they are likely to be discussed in intimate social settings. In this vein, Schutte and Ciarlante (1998) refer to the value placed to maintain smooth and harmonious interpersonal relationships that discourage negative emotions' demonstration of people with interdependent self construal.

Overall the literature suggests that, collectivistic cultures may discourage the expression of negative emotions due to the disruption of interpersonal relations; whereas individualistic cultures may encourage the expression of negative emotions that enhance in some way the individual’s sense of distinctiveness and independence. Consequently,

**P9:** When faced with a harmful encounter, idiocentric consumers are more likely to express their negative emotions outwardly than do allocentric ones.

Notwithstanding cultural differences in experiencing and expressing negative emotions, the emotion antecedent appraisal processes has not been deeply studied across cultures (Graham, 1991). Given that literature on psychology showed that particular attribution dimensions give rise to specific set of emotions (i.e., Graham, 1991; Weiner, 2000) and as the perceived weight of causal dimensions as well as emotional reactions may depend on cultural values’ orientations, we can expect that allocentrism/idiocentrism tendency may alter the impact of secondary appraisal on emotions. Hence, we posit:

**PII:** The allocentric/idiocentric tendency moderates the effect of secondary appraisal on consumers’ negative emotions.

*Revenge and avoidance as coping styles and cultural differences*

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguished between two styles of coping namely: (1) problem-focused coping that is directed at managing or altering the problem causing the distress to resolve it or at least to reduce its impact, and (2) emotion-focused coping that is directed at regulating emotional response to the problem to reducing displayed negative emotions such as anger, frustration and irritation.
Accordingly, some customers may behave in such a way that their emotions will be appropriate to the situation, so they express outwardly their emotions and engage in problem solving by seeking confrontation and revenge, whereas others may be unable to express the appropriate emotions, so instead they try to modify their perception of the situation by regulating their emotional responses to the problem and try to escape from it by avoidance. For example, a customer may repress his negative emotions due to the fact that the adversarial part has more power and because he is fearful of retaliation.

Since coping behavior is influenced by both intrapersonal (i.e., appraisals and choice of coping strategies) and interpersonal (i.e., social and situational events) factors, behavioral responses such as fight (direct coping or problem focused strategy) and flight (indirect coping or emotion focused strategy) are also impacted by social and cultural factors. In this regard, Hardie et al., (2006) advocate that individuals from independent Western cultures prefer direct coping, whereas people from interdependent Eastern cultures are likely to adopt indirect coping. In the same vein, Cross (1995) found that independence of self construal (American students) predicted the use of direct coping style while the interdependence of self construal (Asian students) did not.

To provide more insight to such relevant findings we refer to the work of Chun et al., (2006). It suggests that for idiocentrics persons, “Interpersonal conflicts arise when there are constraints or restrictions placed on their individual freedom and rights, threatening the individual’s perception of autonomy. Thus, the primary goal of conflict resolution is to remove the barrier to their desired outcome and to assert their individuality and autonomy. Compromise and accommodation are regarded as an undesirable conflict resolution strategy because they involve giving up part of one’s needs or wishes” (p.40).

Accordingly persons from individualistic cultures are more likely to use problem-focused coping strategies that reflect their desire to influence the external environment to achieve their coping goals. On the other hand, allocentrics perceive interpersonal conflict as a major threat to the harmony of the relationship, and as Chun et al., (2006) state: “The goal for conflict resolution is not necessarily to remove the conflict but rather to manage the conflict, to “ride it out” without shaming anyone in the process so that the interdependence is reinforced and strengthened” (p. 41).

In this light, individuals from collectivistic cultures are expected to feel most likely helpless and thus reliant upon passive or avoidance coping strategies that reflect their greater desire to control their internal states. Hence: 

**P10:** When faced with a harmful encounter, idiocentric (allocentric) consumers are more (less) likely to engage in a revenge behavior, rather than avoiding the offensive firm.

In sum, it is plausible to assume that, as experienced emotions that give rise to behavioral reactions as well as coping styles (fight or flight) may vary across cultures, the effect of emotions on revenge willingness or avoidance tendency will depend on cultural values’ orientations. Thus we posit:
PIII: The allocentric/idiocentric tendency moderates the effect of negative emotions (inward/outward) on coping styles (revenge/avoidance).

**Conclusion and further research**

This paper has sought to explore how differences in cultural values’ orientations influence ways whereby offended consumers evaluate an experienced harm, express their emotions and engage in either revenge or avoidance behaviors (fight or flight).

Although both behaviors may be observed in both collectivistic and individualistic cultures, allocentric consumers seem to be more adopters of avoidance (non-confrontational style) as they are more assertive to keeping harmonious relationship and connectedness with group members, while idiocentric consumers are more likely to get back at the firm and to exert revenge (confrontational style) as a way to restore their self integrity and self worth.

With respect to the emotional responses, allocentric consumers are unwilling to express outwardly their negative emotions because they are sensitive to the saving face issue whereas idiocentrics are socially encouraged to express outwardly their negative emotion given that self expression is an important value within individualistic societies.

In this light, we believe that marketers would take advantages of learning about cultural differences in shaping destructive behaviors such as revenge. More specifically local firms that operate on multiethnic markets as well as multinational firms that serve foreign markets should incorporate in their training programs simulations and play roles exercises about confrontational situations that imply customers and employees with different cultural. This may be helpful in identifying early patterns of revenge and avoidance behaviors and in making proactive contingency plans.

As idiocentric consumers are more likely to exhibit their anger outwardly, sales persons should try primarily to absorb their anger and dilute the confrontational nature of the harmful encounter. In this case they should give higher priority to acknowledging the ego damage and the emotional impact of a harmful encounter on wronged customer. This may help them to control and manage customer anger before trying to resolve the problem. Conversely as allocentrics are more reluctant to display their negative emotions publicly and try to mask them, acknowledging the emotional impact of a harmful encounter will be a great a mistake because this may contradict their great concern of saving face. Indeed this may induce a feeling of embracement and shame and force them to avoid the company. Instead sales persons should primarily focus on ways to resolve the conflict rather than focusing on the emotional support.

Overall, the existence of more intense customer reactions such as revenge remains an intriguing area in need of further research. To advance this work, we argue that there are numerous research avenues that could be pursued.

With respect to primary appraisal determinants, further research is needed to review the conceptualization of goal relevance, goal incongruence and ego involvement within collectivistic cultures. Indeed, as allocentrics consider the welfare of the in-group as a prerequisite of the welfare of the individual and may sacrifice their well-being to save that of group, their goals appear to be quite different from the individualistic ones that are oriented toward the self.

Moreover, the interplay between primary and secondary appraisals is an important issue to investigate. As noted by Stephens and Gwinner (1998), an event may be assessed as harmful to well-being in a primary appraisal; however if the individual is confident to successfully cope with that event, the encounter might be reevaluated as non-stressful in a secondary assessment.
Additional research is also required to understand direct and interaction effects of appraisal determinants in elucidating emotional responses in both cases of allocentric and idiocentric consumers.

Further, we recognize that the coping strategies suggested in the proposed model are not exhaustive, so other strategies such as forgiveness may provide a full accounting of the coping tactics. However, forgiveness and revenge may not be seen as mutually exclusive strategies. Indeed a lack of vengeful behaviors does not necessarily reflect forgiveness and revenge cannot simply be equated with a lack of forgiveness (Brown, 2004; 2003).

With respect to the empirical validation of the theoretical model, we argue that paper-and-pencil techniques such as scenarios (e.g. Bechwati and Morrin, 2003; Folkes 1984) may be used to gather data and to test the proposed model. After reading scenarios describing severe offences (e.g. insult, bad treatment, inflicted to customers, etc.) participants will be asked to respond to a survey. The latter should cover 3 main parts: the first one pertains to assess the allocentrism/idiocentrism tendency of the respondent. Based on the median split technique (e.g., Dutta-Bergerman and Wells, 2002) subjects will be classified into 2 pools: allocentric group and idiocentric one. The second part will include items assessing the severity of the inflicted harm (regarding goals achievement) after experienced unfairness. At the last part, attribution dimensions, emotions as well the dispositions toward revenge or avoidance will be measured. In sum two competing models (the first is performed with data gathered from allocentric subjects and the second is performed with data collected from idiocentric ones) will be tested to contrast links between constructs.

Finally, as literature on revenge suggests that vengeance may vary with gender, age, power distance and relationship intimacy (Cota-McKinley et al., 2001, Stuckless and Goranson, 1992, Brown 2004, Sommers et al., 2002), it will be salient to examine the moderator effects of these variables on the process of shaping revenge behavior.
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### Table 1: Revenge Models

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<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Theoretical approach</th>
<th>Model description</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Revenge and forgiveness behavior model</td>
<td>Organization management</td>
<td>Attribution theory and cognitive consistency theory.</td>
<td>The model relates offence severity, blame attributions, offender likableness, revenge and forgiveness cognitions, and revenge and forgiveness behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bradfield and Aquino (1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naming, blaming and claiming (NBC) model</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
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<td>The model explains revenge through three sequential stages: naming (perception of an injuries event), blaming (assigning the responsibility for the injury to another party) and claiming (seeking compensation from the blamed party).</td>
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<td>Shteynberg (2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenge model</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Transgression related interpersonal motivations (TRIM) of revenge.</td>
<td>The model examines the relationship between closeness/commitment, transgression severity and revenge motivation.</td>
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<td>Tsang et al., (2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dispositional styles of forgiveness and revenge model</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Appraisal theory</td>
<td>The model relates dispositional forgiveness, dispositional revenge to depressive affect and life satisfaction.</td>
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<td>Ysseldyk (2005)</td>
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### Figure 1: Consumer Revenge Model

```
Primary Appraisal (Harm/Loss)
Unfairness severity assessment regarding:
- Goal relevance (i.e., affecting personal well-being or that of the group)
- Goal incongruence (i.e., inconsistency with own wants and desires or that of the group)
- Ego involvement (i.e., touching one's self esteem or the group moral values)

Secondary Appraisal
- Blame
  - Control
  - Accountability.
- Coping potential
  - Verbal/physical aggression
  - Direct aggression
  - Indirect aggression
  - Displaced aggression
- Future expectancy
  - Success/failure

Negative Emotions
- Inward focused emotions (e.g., Shame, Frustration)
- Outward focused emotions (e.g., Anger, Hostility)

Coping behaviors
- Revenge (fight)
  - Problem focused strategies:
    * Adopting problem solving techniques,
    * Undertaking aggressive acts, etc.
  - Avoidance (flight)
    - Emotion focused strategies:
      * Passive resignation,
      * Emotional containment,
      * Self and other blame denial

Allocentrism / Idiocentrism
```

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10