

## Chapter 9

# When Multiple Actors' Online Interactions Lead to Value Co-Destruction: An Explorative Case Study

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter explores the value co-destruction and deviant behavior during multiple actors' online interactions. While several studies have highlighted its benefits, researchers have often failed to consider the negative consequences of these interactions. Previous studies focused on offline dyadic interactions and have not completely explained the causes of these problematic interactions in an online context. To this end, by using JetStar Airways, this chapter explores VCD by investigating the online context of the tourism industry, as characterized by the often complex relations among multiple actors. This study contributes from a theoretical standpoint by extending VCC literature considering the negative consequences of deviant behaviors in an online context and by identifying five deviant behaviors related to multiple actors' interaction: performing illegal actions, supporting illegal actions, making insults, lacking transparency, and providing false information. This chapter provides guidance to practitioners on how to handle an interactive crisis caused by deviant behaviors.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In contrast to the majority of research on service dominant logic (S-D logic) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008), recent studies have noted that the relationships among actors sometimes lead to value co-destruction (VCD) (Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Vartiainen & Tuunanen, 2016) rather than value co-creation (VCC). VCD is defined as “an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the system’s well-being” (Plé & Cáceres, 2010, p. 431).

According to some scholars (Lindgreen, Hingley, Grant, & Morgan, 2012; Plé & Cáceres, 2010), the S-D logic has an optimistic and favorable view of VCC, especially in one of its fundamental premises: the customer is always a co-producer (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 10). For this reason, other researchers have considered the eventuality of value destruction, even though they still follow the S-D logic (Crowther & Donlan, 2011; Grönroos, 2011; Gummerus, 2013; Lambert & Enz, 2012; Worthington & Durkin, 2012). In particular, they observe that co-creation experiences are not always positive because “not everyone enjoys such an interactive co-creation process” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2013, p. 21).

Nevertheless, VCD has been addressed by only a limited number of studies (Echeverri & Skålén, 2011; Kashif & Zarkada, 2015; Robertson, Polonsky, & McQuilken, 2014) that have focused on the misalignment or misuse of resources (Plé, 2016; Smith, 2013) and/or practices (Echeverri & Skålén, 2011) with a desirable outcome. While previous studies provided valuable insights into the processes underpinning value co-destruction, few studies have considered how VCD involves the interaction among multiple actors (Prior & Marcos-Cuevas, 2016; Dootson, Johnston, Beatson, & Lings, 2016).

The current research on VCD has focused on the dyadic interactional process overlooking the wider network of interactions among multiple actors within the service ecosystems (Vafeas, Hughes, & Hilton, 2016; Worthington & Durkin, 2012). Therefore, the dyadic vision of the interactional process limits our comprehension of VCD because we are facing a more connected economy in which value formation is influenced by several actors who could have different or conflicting interests. Furthermore, another gap in the VCD research is the limited number of studies focused on the online context (Quach & Thairachon, 2017). A specific VCD in an online environment is particularly important due to the growth of e-commerce and interactive media (Robertson, Polonsky, & McQuilken, 2014). There is a growing sense that the Internet presents some unique opportunities for deviant behaviors (Rogers, Smoak, & Liu, 2006, p. 246), because it confers new opportunities for deviance, such as the development of virusware, cyber terrorism, computer hacking, and online harassment (Joinson, 2005).

The tourism industry is not immune to these deviant behaviors. On the contrary, the tourism sector could be a fruitful setting where deviant behaviors, such as misleading or fake online reviews, fake online profiles, provision of false online information, and so on, can be observed (Munzel, 2016; Sigala, 2015). Although increasing attention is directed to misleading and fake reviews in online websites like TripAdvisor or Yelp (Liu, Pennington-Gray, Donohoe, & Omodior, 2015; Luca & Zervas, 2016), the attention on fake profiles and the provision of false information in social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, is missing.

All in all, there is an imperative need to develop an understanding of VCD from a multi-actor point of view in the online service setting. For all these reasons, the purpose of this paper is to shed light on the phenomenon of VCD and deviant behaviors during multiple actors’ online interactions in the tourism sector. To do so, this research seeks to answer two critical research questions: 1) What are the typologies of online deviant behavior in tourism that lead to VCD? 2) How do multiple actors’ interactions influence online VCD?

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Given to the exploratory nature of our research, the study uses a qualitative approach and a retrospective single case study method (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994) represented by JetStar Airways and its online community. Amid the myriad of tourism sub-industries, the study has concentrated on the airline sector as it is subjected to delays, flight cancellations, strikes, and other events that can comprise the ordinary service provision, which, in turn, can trigger problematic multi-actor interactions and deviant behaviors. The retrospective research design allows us to show the evolution of the problematic interactional process over a past period and to better highlight the deviant behaviors.

This study makes the following two contributions: 1) extends VCC by considering the potentially negative consequences of deviant behaviors in an online context and 2) identifies five deviant behaviors related to online interactions among multiple actors: performing illegal actions, supporting illegal actions, making insults, lacking in transparency, and providing false information.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **The Interactional Process From a VCD Point of View**

Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres define VCD as “an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline in at least one of the systems’ well-being” (2010, p. 431). The interactional process is a course in which two or more actors have reciprocal actions and influences over time (Plé & Cáceres, 2010). The interaction between actors is necessary to initiate value *co*-creation and/or *co*-destruction (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Echeverri & Skålén, 2011).

Researchers have pinpointed four different kinds of problematic interactional processes connected to VCD. The first, *customer misbehavior*, is defined as actions by customers who intentionally, overtly, or covertly disrupt functional interactions by violating the accepted norms of conduct (Echeverri, Solomonson, & Aberg, 2012; Kashif & Zarkada, 2015). The second, known as *contradictory interactions*, happened when the actors involved in a business relationship have divergent opinions that effectively spoil their interactions. The third, defined as *conflictual interactions*, is, as like the previous one, the result of divergent opinions, but, in this case, lead to real conflicts between actors (Vafeas et al., 2016). Finally, *negative interactions* refers to all interactions that are undesirable for one or more actors (Smith, 2013).

The above-mentioned problematic interactions have turned on a lively and still open debate in the sub-field of VCD. According to some scholars, problematic interaction is a determinant for VCD (Echeverri & Skålén, 2011; Worthington & Durkin, 2012) or value diminution (Vafeas et al., 2016). For example, an empirical study conducted in four different industries explained how workers handled clients’ misbehavior and the resources they used (Echeverri et al., 2012). In this research, both the client’s misbehavior and the non-integration of resources caused VCD. This view is complemented by other scholars who maintain that misbehavior, contradictory, conflictual, and negative interactions trigger and encourage misuse of resources (Kashif & Zarkada, 2015; Smith, 2013), which, in turn, is an input for VCD.

On the other hand, some scholars disagree by claiming that contradictions and conflicts might be a source of VCC (Fyrberg & Yngfalk, 2013; Laamanen & Skålén, 2014). For instance, Fyrberg & Yngfalk (2013, p. 1163) suggest that, “contradictory resource integrations and interactions are fundamental for value to be co-created” because they start a process of “new interpretations and meaning creation” for innovative solutions. Resonating with the previous studies, Laamanen and Skålén (2014) suggested that

conflicts promote innovation and creativity. In their view, conflicts are an inherent characteristic of human interactions and conflictual interactions are, “neither positive nor negative” (Laamanen & Skålén, 2014, p. 382).

In the Information System (IS) literature, early signs of both value creation and destruction are depicted showing that an IS artifact may be internally contradictory in the way that users of IS co-create and co-destruct value at the same time (Vartiainen & Tuunanen, 2016).

All in all, the *interactional process* is acknowledged as inherent in the collaborative formation of value, while it is somehow unclear how it can be characterized as a source of VCC or VCD. In the next subparagraph, the authors suggest a possible path to get out from this mazy debate.

## **Deviant Behavior and VCD**

VCD has been related to deviant customer behavior (Dootson et al., 2016). “Behavior is generally defined as ‘deviant’ when it differs from some norm or standard (Deutsch & Kraus 1965; Sarason 1972). These standards or norms are in the form of customs, manners, rules and regulations, laws, and more. To the extent that the individual’s behavior deviates from such norms, it is considered by society to be undesirable, unacceptable, or dysfunctional--i.e., deviant” (Moschis & Cox, 1989, p. 732).

Research on customer behavior has contributed to our comprehension of deviant behavior by defining it as “the phenomenon of customers who deliberately act in a dysfunctional, thoughtless, or abusive manner and cause problems for the company, its employees, and other customers” (Echeverri, Salomonson, & Aberg, 2012, p. 428).

In the literature, the phenomena have been captured under different labels, such as “jaycustomers” (Lovelock, 1994); “aberrant consumer behaviour” (Fullerton & Punj, 1993); “dysfunctional customer behaviour” (Harris & Reynolds, 2003); “deviant customer behaviour” (Moschis & Cox, 1989); and “problem customers” (Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994). Within an online context, *deviant behavior* encompasses the entire array of deceptive online reviews, fake online profiles, and of false information provided online (Munzel, 2016; Luca & Zervas, 2016; Sigala, 2015).

Despite the definitional divergence, there exists a relative consensus within the literature that deviant behavior involves VCDs (Ertimur & Venkatesh, 2010; Chowdhury, Gruber, & Zolkiewski, 2016). Furthermore, research into customers’ misbehavior does not capture a holistic perspective of VCD, as it adopts a customer-centric perspective that fails in considering multiple actors dynamics during the interactional process.

For all these reasons, this study uses and fosters the use of *Deviant Behavior* to detect the VCD in a multiple-actor environment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The S-D logic perspective and the VCC represent the theoretical boundaries within which the study was performed (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Both permit us to understand the process behind the deterioration of the interactions connected with the multiple actors’ participation in social networking sites. Thus, the analysis will follow the theoretical steps underlying the causes behind the triggering of an online interaction crisis. The concept of “deviant behavior” is of particular importance in identifying and grouping

the disruptive interactions that have the effect of co-destroying value (Moschis & Cox, 1989). The lack of studies on VCD and the online/social media focus of this work make the selection of an explorative retrospective qualitative research the most appropriate method (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994).

## **Case Selection and Research Setting**

As the authors wanted to identify deviant behaviors connected to multiple actors in an online tourism environment, it was looked for a case: 1) a company active in the social media world, 2) a company experiencing tension with its customers in this setting; 3) the other actors who took part in the interactional process; and 4) the problematic interactional process that ended in a short period of time (e.g. few days, a week).

Employing these criteria, a multinational profit-making organization was selected that had experienced an online and social media crisis: JetStar Airways.

JetStar Airways is an Australian low-cost airline group controlled by Qantas. It is based in Melbourne and its services cover Australia, New Zealand, and the Asia-Pacific region. Ever since the airline company was launched in May 2004, it has had a strong online presence, especially in social media with different accounts for Facebook and Twitter, one for each section of the brand (see Table 1). If customers experience problems, such as delayed or cancelled flights or lost baggage, they can complain on the organization's social media pages (Ott & Theunissen, 2015).

## **JetStar Airways and the Online and Social Media Crisis**

November 22, 2012, JetStar cancelled several flights on route from Melbourne to Auckland that were supposed to run during the Christmas period. This holiday is one of the most claimed of the year, and people have huge expectations, especially in Australia and New Zealand where this period coincides with their summer. Usually, people book the flights far ahead of time to make sure of getting a seat for a reasonable price (Garrett-Walker, 2012). The wave of anger provoked by this decision was extraordinary and customers' complaints started to increase online, especially on JetStar's social media accounts.

A day after the cancellation announcement, a fake profile created on Facebook was distributing rude answers to angry customers' complaints, compromising the already problematic interactions between company and customers.

On the following day, e-mails containing false information (i.e. the customers' flight itinerary), were sent to customers and some of them accused JetStar of having a serious breach in its system. In the meantime, an anti-JetStar-branding site was created for collecting customers' comments, stories, photos,

*Table 1. JetStar's social media presence*

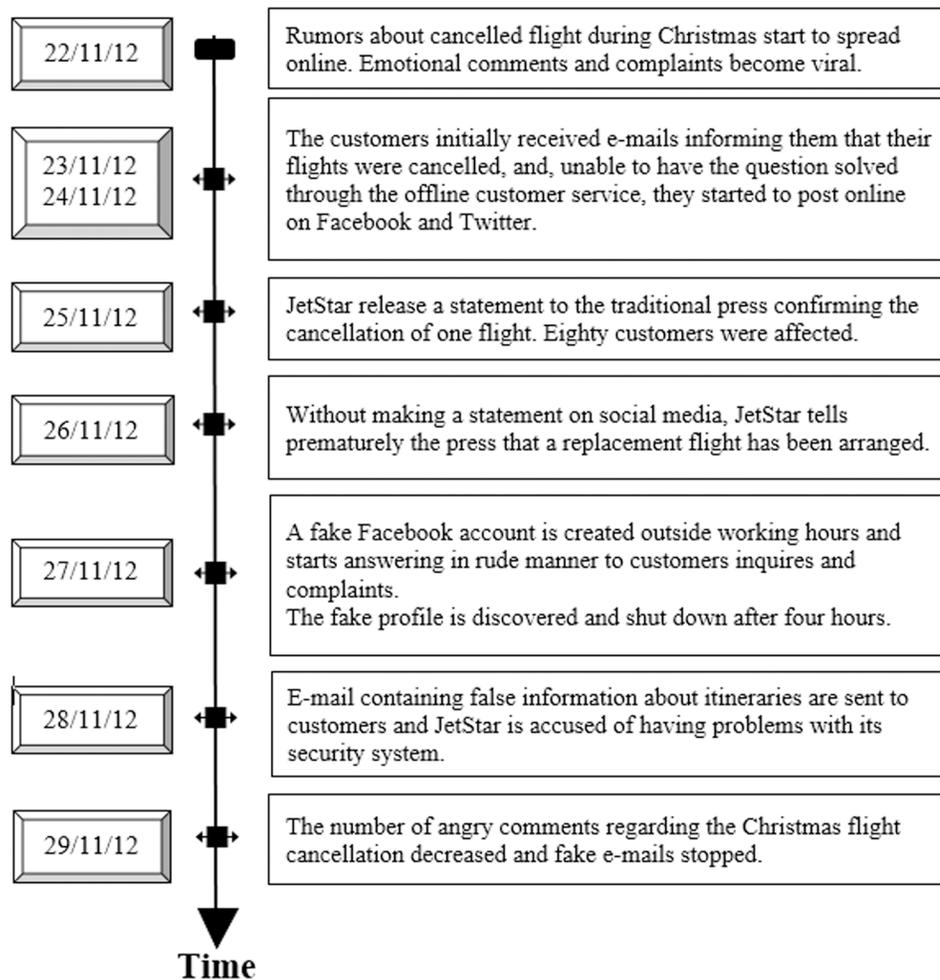
<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Facebook likes</b>	<b>Twitter followers</b>
JetStar Australia	591.215	159.000
JetStar Asia	773.419	89.500
JetStar Pacific	1.556.381	1, 203
JetStar Japan	407.697	-

and videos, making the already compromised interactions between the firm and the online interlocutors even worse. The interaction process crisis within Facebook and Twitter almost ended the November 28, seven days after company's social media manager team's intense work (see Figure 1).

## Data Collection

All the data necessary for the purposes of this work have been collected on the Internet, taking into consideration that the online interaction crisis considered by this study began and evolved mainly on the Web. Primary data was gathered from Facebook and Twitter accounts, such as posts, photos, links, tags, videos, and the company's replies to its social media members' comments. Secondary data were founded using a browser search function of keywords that led to a series of blogs, online newspapers, and online pages where stories, screenshots, and time frames are contained. Primary and secondary data were

*Figure 1. Interactional process online crisis calendar*



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collect in the form of datasets of PDFs employing NCapture, which is a browser application of NVivo software. The data were then triangulated in order to obtain an unbiased database. The rich collection of data allowed us to analyze a many-to-many interaction process. This multiple-actor perspective gave us the possibility to understand the dynamics of the company and the other actors' interaction and identify deviant behaviors that lead to VCD.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of such largely qualitative data was done through the Nvivo10 software as it supports the storage, cross-referencing, and analysis of large amounts of data in multiple different formats, such as text, images, audio files, etc. (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The authors employed inductive logic to analyze the database and arrive at identifying deviant behaviors, formulating a theoretical framework based on the interpretation of the data, rather than an established predetermined hypothesis to prove or disprove. By these actions, a within-case analysis was performed (Eisenhardt, 1989). The unit of analysis is the "post," which is an individual comment logged in by a submitter.

The authors designed a three-step coding process to analyze our database. First, two of the authors coded the posts considered as a good unit of text. They provided a definition and an illustrative example of codes every time a new potential code was identified (Boyatzis, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The authors kept implementing and enhancing the codes during the first step of the coding process.

Second, the authors compared the first step results and identified common problems and found a solution with the aim of shaping the emerging themes and establishing the first connections among them. The list of codes changed as the coding continued, and new codes were added and some other that were similar were merged. Throughout the data analysis process, the authors compared the new contents with the already coded ones to create consistent themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The coding process was interrupted when theoretical saturation was achieved (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Third, it was started a process of pattern identification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Here, the outcomes from the two previous steps of coding were refined and reduced into a smaller number of constructs that it was considered relevant for the understanding of the emerging deviant behaviors.

Finally, it was measured the agreement between the two authors who performed the data analysis by running a coding comparison query with NVivo: coefficient K was above 0.75, so excellent.

Five deviant behaviors emerged from our data analysis: performing illegal actions, supporting illegal actions, making insults, lacking in transparency, and providing false information. The authors also identified four main actors: the firm, customers, an anti-brand organization, a fake profile, and a hacker (these last two are anonymous people or organizations). Table 2 summarizes the main themes according to label, definition, description, and illustrative example.

### **FINDINGS**

Our findings show that problematic interaction processes between multiple actors is related to five deviant behaviors that, in turn, have negative effects on the value formation process and causing VCD. In the following subparagraphs, it is listed and described the deviant behaviors by highlighting the roles played by each actor of the multiple relations (see Figure 2).

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Table 2. Actors' deviant behaviors: definitions, descriptions, and illustrative examples

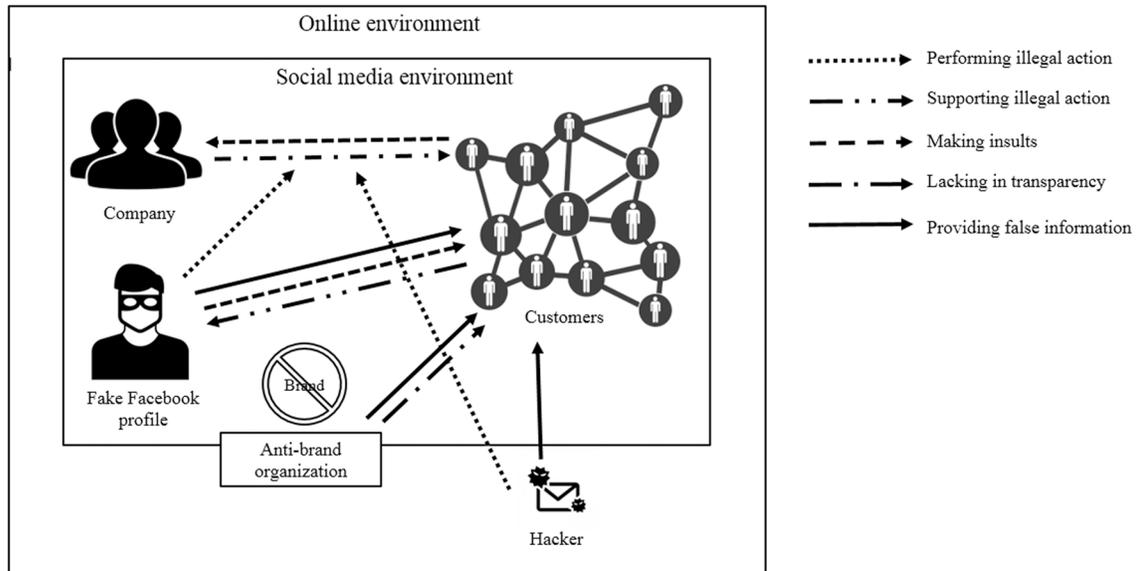
Deviant Behavior	Actor	Definition	Description	Example
<b>Performing Illegal Actions</b>	<b>Fake Profile</b> (unknown person or organization)	Behavior that goes beyond the limits of what is lawful and not respecting a rule, a law, or a regulation.	Description of the behavior that breaks the law.	On November 27, 2012, a fake account with JetStar's features was created, and it behaved as if it were the original page altering the normal traffic of users' messages.
	<b>Hacker</b> (unknown person or organization)			On November 28, 2012, a malware spam campaign claiming to be a JetStar flight itinerary started hitting mailboxes. Infected e-mails contain an attachment with a name "JetStar Flight Itinerary."
<b>Supporting Illegal Actions</b>	<b>Customer</b>	Behavior that an actor puts in place to support with his/her work or influence, help, promote an illegal activity.	A event in which an actor sustained an illegal activity against another member of the community.	"Well done to the person who created this [the fake account], well done"
<b>Making insults</b>	<b>Customer</b>	Behavior that voluntarily causes serious offense to a person and his/her dignity with insulting words, with acts that tend to humiliate or cheat, with intentionally provocative content.	Actors sharing insulting and/or provocation contents against the company or any other member of the community.	"The fake account probably deals with customers service better than you, clowns"
	<b>Fake Profile</b>			"[...] Don't be such a tight [xxx] and pay the full price. It's cheap anyway." "Have you ever heard of giving up? We have a lot of complaints and unfortunately can not process them all within allocated times. Please stop acting like a spoilt brat and grow up"
<b>Lacking in Transparency</b>	<b>Company</b>	A behavior, act, situation, and way of proceeding, especially in relation to the community, which is lacking in clarity and which is characterized by the will to conceal an event.	Actors giving generic information about a specific problem or they do not provide information at all.	"Sometimes these changes need to be made for a variety of reasons."
	<b>Anti-Brand Organization</b>			This organization doesn't provide any information about who is running the anti-brand activities. There are no official contacts, not even the possibility to send them a message through Facebook Messenger. This makes the anti-brand organization closed and completely anonymous.
<b>Providing False Information</b>	<b>Fake profile</b>	Behavior that implies the voluntary transferring of untruthful information to other people.	A content in which an actor is intentionally giving or giving access to wrong information.	"Thanks for leaving a comment. We have now cancelled your flights as requested."
	<b>Hacker</b>			"Yourself, check-in details are attached [...] your itinerary is attached as a file to print [but it was malware]."
	<b>Anti-Brand Organization</b>			"Post your complaints on www.dontflyjetstar.com and they will automatically be posted on the Facebook page"

## Performing Illegal Actions

According to the definition of deviant behavior generically considered (Moschis & Cox, 1989, p. 732), *Performing an illegal action* is a behavior that clearly differs the norm or standard, in this case, from the law. In the JetStar online environment, two actors showed this deviant behavior: a fake profile and a hacker, both anonymous. They acted with the intention to ruin the interactional processes between the firm and its customers. The fake profile and the hacker performed their illegal actions in two different

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Figure 2. Deviant behaviors which lead to VCD in an online and social media environment



areas of the online environment. The fake profile attacked the interactions in the social media area, in particular on Facebook, while the hacker damaged the interactions hitting the e-mails (Figure 2).

During the evening of November 27, 2012, a fake profile with JetStar's official logo was created outside of the social media managers' working hours and the person/organization behind started to provide false information and respond in a rude manner to angry users' comments (Starke, 2016). The fake account was responding to by using the real names of JetStar's social media managers, and therefore the users believed they were interacting with an authentic Facebook page. The fake profile was active at a time when the interactions were very negative, which complicated an already critical situation. The interactional process between the firm and its customers was harmed because, even if the deviant behavior was performed by the fake profile, in the eyes of the customers, it was the company that started to respond in a rude and impolite manner. The fake account got discovered and taken down after four hours, during which it succeeded in substituting itself for the original account, thus provoking serious damages in terms of VCD. Although the company managed to block and cancel the fake posts thus distancing itself from what was said by the fake profile, this event triggered another deviant behavior conducted by the consumers, as it can be seen in paragraph 4.2.

As if this was not enough, the day after, during the evening of November 28, 2012, a hacker started a malware spam campaign hitting JetStar customers' mailboxes. The e-mails contained a message claiming to open an attachment called "JetStar Flight Itinerary." Once again, a third actor replaced itself for the company and convinced several customers to open the infected attachment. The interactional process between the firm and its customers was damaged again as, from the customers' perspective, the company sent an infected e-mail, even though the deviant behavior was performed intentionally by the hacker. Also at this time, the JetStar case showed how another actor can interfere in the interactions between firms and customers and trigger a process of VCD.

Given a strong online presence from the company side, in some situations, like the creation of a fake account or a malware campaign, it is difficult for firms to limit the VCD provoked by deviant behaviors.

During a moment of crisis and when a company is perceived as liable, it could be easy for another actor to exploit the situation and worsen the interactional process between firm and customers. It could especially happen in an online contest where the firm could be more vulnerable and the barrier of virtual reality could make actors perform deviant behaviors by feeling invulnerable behind the screen.

### **Supporting Illegal Actions**

In supporting illegal actions, an actor behaves accordingly. Here, the actors involved are some of the customers. In the situation described in paragraph 4.1., it would be expected the “victimization of JetStar” that was attacked in a moment of weakness and therefore customers sympathized for the affected parts. However, this was not the only reaction from customers and, surprisingly, some of them took the opportunity to engage the company in problematic interactions by cheering and supporting the fake account actions. For example, “*Oooh. That’s an idea [create a fake account]. I’ll put it on my list of ‘interesting stuff to do’ and, who knows, sometimes I might even do it.*” a customer posted. Supporting illegal action has serious implications in the customer-to-firm and in the customer-to-customer interactions (Figure 2). In such conditions, the interactions may start with the appearance of a normal and positive one, with the company trying to be helpful, but the customers’ may respond adversely to the company, and some other customers made the interactions worse (See Table 3 as an example).

### **Making Insults**

*Making insults* has an immediate connection with the problematic interactional processes because it is a behavior that intentionally causes grave offenses to the interlocutor and his/her dignity with humiliating, cheating, or publishing provocative contents. In doing so, it differs from normal or standard behavior, and it is considered unacceptable by society. For these reasons, making insults can be considered a deviant behavior. This behavior was observed both within the customer-to-company interactions and in the fake profile-to-customers (Figure 2).

Concerning the customers, in November 22, 2012, the company cancelled some flights on the route Melbourne-Auckland, which would have run during the Christmas period. The customers started spreading the information online and reaching other customers who did not know yet their flight was cancelled. Consequently, the company was unable to respond to the multitude of complaints on Facebook and Twitter. Meanwhile, rumors on the possible reasons for the flight cancellations, like overbooking or tickets sold multiple times for a higher price, went viral. The unofficial information, combined with the lack of transparency of the company, triggered a wave of anger that erupted into a myriad of insults

*Table 3. Customer-to-firm problematic interaction triggered by supporting illegal action as deviant behavior*

<b>Customer’s post</b>	<b>Firm’s response</b>	<b>Customer’s reaction</b>	<b>Community’s reaction</b>
“Is this the real one or the funny one? [Facebook page]”	“Hi, this is the official JetStar Australian Facebook page. Is there something I can help you with? Thanks”	“Yes please, could you direct me to that fake account? Was hoping to get a laugh out of them.”	“I don’t need to see the fake account, you get enough laughs from this one”

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from the customers to the company, such as “*shame on you, JetStar*” and “*JETSTAR, YOU SUCK*” to mention some of the politest posts. Here, the interactional process got evidently compromised by the deviant behavior with clear repercussion on the value formation process.

As regards the fake profile, as it was created outside the social media managers' working hours, it was free to interact with customers, mining company customer relationships, and spread confusion and anger. For example, in a conversation with a customer who wrote a long and detailed post explaining his/her problem in the hope that “*the issue is cleared up publicly,*” the fake profile replied, “*Hi [customer name], this is a 'comment box' not a 'write a long story box.' Please shorten it and send to someone who cares. Thank –Anita.*” In this case, the interactions between the customer and the firm are clearly damaged. Despite the deviant behavior conducted by the fake profile, the customer felt as if the insulting post was written by the firm. The deviant behavior started a problematic interaction process with consequence of VCD.

This case study is an example of how the online environment, in particular, social media, can threaten the interactional process in different ways or in the same ways but with different actors. The online environment is accessible every day at any time and this gives the possibility of reaching different audiences depending on the time of action, but also different time-zones and countries. Regarding our case study, even if the fake profile was late on Australian time, it could reach customers in other countries, thus pointing attention to the fact that JetStar was apparently responding in very rude way. The company was then forced to make a statement late in the night and outside the working hours.

### **Lacking in Transparency**

Lacking in transparency happens when someone behaves with the will of concealing an event, act, or situation to the rest of the community. Transparency is the key to maintaining or regaining the public's trust. *Lack of transparency* can have devastating effects that sometimes leave a permanent stain on a company or brand's image. In our case study, it was observed this deviant behavior in two actors: the company and the anti-brand organization. Both actors manifested the deviant behavior to the same community: the customers (Figure 2).

When the customer started listening to the rumors about cancelled flights during Christmas, the company, on November 23 and 24, sent e-mails informing customers that their flights got cancelled. After not being able to have the question solved through the offline customer service, customers started to post online on Facebook and Twitter. In order to provide more details, on the 25, the company confirmed that one flight was cancelled (Table 4). Nonetheless, the company's declarations were underestimated and customers soon discovered that social media were used to exchange information over the evolution of the situation. Some customers realized that more than one flight got cancelled and that Melbourne was not the only city interested in the disservice, but Perth got involved, too (Table 4).

Effectively, the spectrum of the problem was much bigger than disclosed by the company: all the flights with destination Auckland were cancelled from the 18 to the 27 of December with more than 80 customers left to land. Moreover, JetStar's excuses were not published online on social media, but instead were released to the press.

Seeing that the number of complaints was increasing, the company started responding with the same formula to avoid giving a specific reason for those cancellations (Table 4). For customers, these justifications were not enough, and the statement was criticized on social media pages for lack of transparency (Table 4).

*Table 4. Firm-to-customer problematic interaction triggered by Lacking in transparency deviant behavior*

Firm's declaration	Customers exchange of information	Firm's explanation	Community's reaction
A flight, with take-off foreseen from Melbourne and landing in Auckland, got cancelled on the 23rd of December and that the 80 customers affected would have been contacted by phone, Facebook, and Twitter.	"80 people seem like a huge understatement" "They cancelled all flights from the 19-27th [...]" "[...] After reading the comments yesterday, more than one flight has been affected."	"I'm really sorry to hear your flight to Auckland has been cancelled. We do try to avoid change to your flight times, especially during busy times, but it's sometimes inevitable [...]" "we try to avoid timetable changes but in certain situation is just unavoidable in order to continue on offering diary low-fares"	"the CEO of JetStar had promised more transparency... is the CEO not living up to his words?" "let's see what excuses the CEO comes up with this time" "It's because JetStar lies"

The anti-brand organization reported the news and customers started to write their complaints on the anti-brand website and Facebook page. Even if the main discussion took place on Facebook, Twitter played an important role in this interactional process. The customers started using the hashtag #dontflyJetStar: "So @jetstar\_nz moved return flight from Melbourne by 10 days to the other side of Christmas! Would be funny if it wasn't true #dontflyjetstar" a customer tweeted. Apparently, the anti-brand organization is amplifying the voice of the customers, which is not a deviant behavior. On the other hand, the anti-brand organization does not provide any information about itself or the people behind the organization. Moreover, it does not provide any official contacts not even the possibility of sending them a message through Facebook Messenger. This makes the anti-brand a closed organization which is fully anonymous. Lack of transparency affects the interactions among the customers and the anti-brand organization since the last one puts a fence that impedes the customers' understanding of the reasons why the anti-brand organization is helping them publicly complain about the company. By doing so, the anti-brand organization is facilitating the process of VCD within the customers and the company, while it is avoiding a direct interaction with the company.

### **Providing False Information**

*Providing false information* entails the voluntary divulgation (or giving access) to other people about information that does not correspond with the truth. It is a deviant behavior because providing false information is considered undesirable and dysfunctional. This deviant behavior was observed in three of the five actors involved in the study: the fake profile, the hacker, and the anti-brand organization (Figure 2).

The fake profile convinced a woman that her holiday got cancelled by her request (see Table 5). The customer got incredulous, angrier, and very confused about what was happening, and which information to trust. Other customers were involved in the conversation causing a rising spiral of anger with consequence on VCD. This example is representative of how the fake profile affected the interactions among the company and its customers.

The hacker based its malware spam campaign providing false information regarding the JetStar's customer itinerary by sending the following e-mail: "Your self-check-in details are attached [...] your itinerary is attached as a file to print." Of course, the attachment was not the itinerary, but instead an

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Table 5. Firm-to-customer problematic interaction triggered by Providing false information deviant behavior conducted by the fake profile

Customer's post	Fake profile's response	Customer's reaction	Community's reaction
"I keep getting e-mails from JetStar saying they've changed my flights, but I click on the link to view and accept the changes and it just comes up with the home page! [...] HELP! [...]"	"Hi, thanks for leaving a comment. We have now cancelled your flights as requested. We look forward to having you on JetStar in the future. Thanks, Anita."	"What? I didn't want my flights cancelled! I just wanted to view and accept the changes! Are you kidding me? You've just cancelled my families Gold Cost holiday! Please tell me you are joking"	"Oh, that's [xxx]. Sorry, I can't help."

infected file. When the firm clarified its position and claimed it had nothing to do with the malware campaign, some customers publicly accused JetStar of "*having a serious breach into its system and to expose private information to the public.*" In this case, JetStar's name was taken in vain in the online environment and its interactions with its customers were interfered by a third part that, in turn, produced VCD.

Finally, it was observed that the anti-brand organization is a potential provider of false information as this actor claims on his Facebook page. All the contents regarding customers' complaints "*will automatically be posted*" on the anti-brand website and Facebook page. This means that the anti-brand organization is not checking the sources of information and the circumstances described in these posts. The lack of controls may encourage users to post fake reviews. Considering the visibility and the lack of control on the posts showed on the anti-brand organization's web pages, the anti-brand organization is giving access to untrustworthy information to thousands of Internet users.

## DISCUSSION

With the increasing need to involve multiple actors in the development of services, understanding what deviant behaviors are conducted by actors during the interactional process with the firm is imperative. Nevertheless, very few studies have empirically examined the multiple-actor relationship during the interactional process that leads to VCD (Fyrberg & Yngfalk, 2013).

In this paper, the authors have offered an explorative empirical study regarding the deviant behaviors in relation to problematic interactions that, in turn, cause VCD. The study was conducted in an airline context by looking at the interactions between five actors: the firm, its customers, a fake Facebook profile, a hacker, and an anti-brand organization (Figure 2).

Previous studies have considerably enhanced our understanding about VCD by explaining the problematic interactional process as customer misbehavior (Echeverri, et. al. 2012; Kashif & Zarkada, 2015); contradictory interactions; conflictual interactions (Vafeas et al., 2016); and generically as negative interactions (Smith, 2013). On the other hand, these explanations have opened a heated debate in the literature that has left the issue still unresolved. Our study participates in the debate by suggesting the use of a concept that gives less doubt about the interaction process impairment.

The authors have adopted the definition of deviant behavior (Moschis & Cox, 1989), through which five deviant behaviors were pinpointed: performing illegal actions; supporting illegal actions, making

insults, lacking in transparency; and providing false information. In doing so, this work contributes to the literature about VCC and complements its view about the interactional process among multiple actors (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Gummesson & Mele, 2010). At the same time, our study extends research on VCD by providing another explanation to the problematic interactional process (Echeverri et al., 2012; Kashif & Zarkada, 2015; Vafeas et al., 2016).

## **Managerial Implications**

An online environment is a place where companies cannot avoid being present because it is a source of great opportunity, but it can also cause serious issues that demand attention from firms. As shown in the case study, the risks could mostly come in the form of social media interaction crises that can rise fast and from many different and unexpected actors. Therefore, it is essential for firms in the service industry to develop appropriate capabilities for preventing and handling deviant behaviors.

- **Scanning Conversations to Prevent Deviant Behaviors:** Companies should be proactive in monitoring multiple actors at least in the social media environment to detect risky actors in the early stages of their deviant behaviors. The pool of deviant behaviors identified in this work can help a firm identify patterns of behavior before their evolution into an interaction crisis. Scanning conversations could help in establishing whether to respond, ignore, or delete a comment.
- **Training and Improvement of Employees' Competences:** Firms should have a social media management team to deal not only with customers' deviant behavior but also with several other actors' ones. This needs extra training for the employees to develop their competences. It would be helpful to have some employees specialize for each risky actor.
- **Customer Engagement:** Building a personal relationship with the customer may help to prevent deviant behaviors and improve the interactions quality. This may trigger the customers' perception of the company as a collective of human beings who care about customers' problems.
- **Portfolio of Strategies:** An organization should know in advance how to deal with deviant behaviors on the Internet. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a portfolio of strategies, depending on the combination of actor and deviant behavior.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research is based on a single industry —airlines— on a single geographical market —Australia— and on a single case study —JetStar Airways—. Therefore, it would be interesting for future research to exploit the multiple case study research design in the same industry, but expanding the geographical areas in order to validate our findings. In addition, our research was conducted without collecting data from interviews with the actors involved in the VCD process, therefore, future research should consider this source of data to strengthen their findings. Furthermore, given the explorative purpose of this research, the authors focused on qualitative data that was certainly improved when placed side by side to quantitative information. Future research may go into greater depth by exploiting the resource integration process in each of the deviant behavior identified in this study. In this way, scholars can shed light on another important VCD determinant.

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Finally, this study focused only on few areas of the online context. For example, it only considered an anti-brand website, the e-mail box, and two social media: Facebook and Twitter, while future research may enlarge or shift the analysis to other areas of the web and consider different social media platforms, depending on the industry and characteristics of the firm.

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