

“Don’t Go, Don’t Buy”: Understanding the Motivations of the Anti-Japan Boycott Movement in South Korea During an International Conflict

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Abstract

Using the case of the 2019 boycott of Japanese products in South Korea, this study aims to investigate how consumers are motivated to participate in a national boycott movement during an international conflict via a theoretical model. Drawing insights from conflict management, consumer behavior, and public relations literature, this study identified key predictors of consumer animosity, which motivated Korean publics to engage in negative peer communication and boycott Japanese products and services. The results of an online survey revealed that Korean consumers’ patriotism, susceptibility to normative influence, and perceived quality of relationship with the foreign (Japanese) government significantly increased their animosity toward the country, Japan. Consumer animosity played an important role in publics’ conflict management strategies, including activeness in negative communication with their peers about Japan and Japanese products and intentions to participate in the national boycott movement. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

A large boycott movement against Japan and Japanese products has been actively conducted in South Korea since the summer of 2019. The unprecedented calls for South Koreans to boycott Japanese goods ranging from food, beer, cosmetics, and automobiles to travel intensified after the Japanese government placed restrictions on exports of semiconductor materials and removed South Korea from its “white list” of preferred trading partners (Lee & Dooley, 2019). Sales of Japanese fashion brands, such as UNIQLO, plummeted in South Korea, and airline companies reported a sharp decrease in bookings for Japan. This trade tension between the two countries has shown how foreign consumers in the globalized market environment are sensitively influenced by political conflicts (Brazinsky, 2019).

When facing a conflictual situation, in general, individuals tend to experience negative emotions and engage in behaviors to manage and cope with the emotional state (Nair, 2008). The conflict management literature explains the role of emotions in affecting individuals’ conflict resolution strategies (e.g., Bell & Song, 2005). In an international setting, scholars have also shown that individuals are increasingly behaving collectively in response to the negative emotion they have toward a hostile country. For example, existing consumer behavior research has identified consumer animosity, referring to antipathy toward countries due to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events (Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998), as a major driver for public behaviors especially when there is an ongoing conflict between the countries (e.g., Huang, Phau, & Lin, 2010; Luo & Zhai, 2017). In the context of the anti-Japan boycott movement in South Korea, one of the biggest motivators of individuals’ collective actions has been negative emotions shared by publics (Tai, 2019). Consumer animosity toward a foreign country becomes more salient when an international event or conflict occurs (Ettenson & Klein, 2005), and it tends to last longer and poses a severe threat to the country (Shoham, Gavish, & Rose, 2016).

An important question is, can foreign publics’ animosity be managed so that the negative impacts of publics’ collective movements (e.g., boycott) are minimized? As the conflict management literature has suggested, conflict resolution focuses on ways that parties can work toward ending animosities and repair relations (Chaitin, Steinberg, & Steinberg, 2017), arriving at agreed-upon solutions through mediation and negotiation (Schellenberg, 1996), trust-building (Lewicki, 2006), emotion management (Lindner, 2006), cultural sensitivity (Kimmel, 2016), and dialogical and non-violent modes of communication (Rosenberg, 2015). This is, in fact, consistent with the notion of public relations, which aims to increase organizational effectiveness “by building quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies” (Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 1992, p. 86) and manage conflict and reduce the cost of conflict that results from regulation, pressure, and litigation between the organization and its publics (Grunig, Grunig, & Verčič, 1998). In an international setting, the government-foreign public relationship as a “soft-power” (Tam et al., 2018) may play an important role in managing the conflict between the two countries. Strategic relationship management efforts at a national level are thus necessary to minimize publics’ animosity during an international conflict and avoid any collective movements against the country.

Existing studies on animosity and consumer behaviors have focused on individual-level motivators of animosity such as patriotism, ethnocentrism, or nationalism (Ishii, 2009; Park & Yoon, 2017; Yang et al., 2015). Given that a national boycott movement, such as the anti-Japan boycott movement in South Korea, may indicate a lack of relationship management efforts between the two countries, a public relations perspective can provide significant insights to understand publics’ collective behaviors toward a foreign country and its products derived from negative emotions in a conflicting situation. However, only a few studies have adopted an integrative approach using public

relations and consumer behaviors to examine the public's collective actions as their conflict management strategies in the context of an international conflict.

Therefore, the current study aims to understand foreign publics' motivations to engage in a collective movement (i.e., national boycott) toward a hostile country's products/services, integrating insights from multiple disciplines including conflict management, public relations, and consumer behavior. Specifically, individuals' patriotism, susceptibility to normative influences, and perceived relationship quality established between a foreign government (i.e., Japanese) and the public (i.e., South Korean) are suggested as key antecedents of consumer animosity during an international conflict. Furthermore, focusing on three categories of the boycott movement (i.e., food, clothing, and travel), this study tests how animosity and individuals' active communicative actions with peers affect boycotting intentions in the context of the South Korea-Japan international conflict. The present research will contribute to the extant conflict management literature by extending the context of individuals' conflict management strategies in response to emotions to an international conflict setting. By incorporating a relational perspective from public relations and using concepts from consumer behavior research in a conflict situation, this study will present one of the few empirical efforts testing the simultaneous effects of individual-level characteristics and managerial-level factors on publics' animosity, communicative behaviors, and boycotting intentions.

Literature Review

Conflict Management Strategies and Emotion

There is no generally accepted definition of conflict, but for the purpose of this study, conflict is conceptualized as the situation arising when parties hold or perceive incompatible interests, goals, resources, prestige, power, and so on (Deutsch, 1973; Putnam, 1995). Scholars have extensively studied individuals' specific behavioral patterns to effectively manage conflict situations, namely, conflict management strategies (e.g., Rahim, 1983). For instance, one of the predominant typologies of conflict resolution strategies was categorized into five types based on one's level of concern for self and concern for others (e.g., Rahim & Bonoma 1979): avoiding (low concern for self, low concern for other), dominating/contending (high self, low other), obliging/accommodating (low self, high other), integrating (high self, high other), and compromising (moderate self, moderate other).

Recognizing that emotion and conflict are inextricably linked (Nair, 2008), scholars have emphasized the role of emotions in conflict management strategies. Incompatibility perceived in a conflict situation produces emotions, mostly negative, and influences individuals' subjective experience and response to the conflict situation (Forgas & George, 2001). By predisposing a person toward specific behaviors, emotions can impact one's conflict resolution strategies (Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994). Given that, Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) extended the conflict typology by including three more styles (i.e., emotional expression, third-party help, and neglect), highlighting that individuals who use the emotional expression style rely on the expression of feelings to guide their responses to conflict situations (Khakimova et al., 2012). Hawdon et al. (2017) also noted that "self-help" conflict management style was the handling of a negative emotion (e.g., grievance) with unilateral aggression, and it ranged from acts of disapproval to mass violence. In particular, anger, one of the most common negative emotions, was relevant to more exploitative conflict behaviors (e.g. Allred, 2000) and aggressive thoughts and impulses (Roseman et al., 1994), producing inefficient outcomes.

Similarly, in an international conflict situation, individuals tend to feel negative emotions against the opponent country, making them engage in conflict management strategies. Previous conflict research has extensively examined individuals' conflict management strategies in various

contexts, including a team or an organizational setting (e.g., Behfar et al., 2008; De Dreu et al., 2001), hospitals (e.g., Valentine, 2001), online (e.g., Dineva et al., 2020; Hauser et al., 2017), and environmental setting (e.g., Soliku & Schraml, 2018). The current study attempts to extend this line of research by investigating how individuals use conflict management strategies in an international context, especially in response to their negative emotions. Specifically, in the context of the anti-Japan boycott movement in South Korea, this study views publics' boycotting behaviors and negative communication behaviors as their conflict management strategies respectively, in response to animosity toward a country.

Consumer Animosity in Response to International Conflict

Studies found that consumers responded to international conflicts with multiple behaviors, ranging from product quality judgments to avoidance, purchase intentions, and intentions to visit a country to boycott movements (e.g., Antonetti, Manika, & Katsikeas, 2019; Leonidou et al., 2019; Pandya & Venkatesan, 2016; Sánchez, Campo, & Alvarez, 2018; Yang et al., 2015). One of the most important drivers of such actions is animosity or negative emotions toward a foreign country (e.g., Yang et al., 2015). The reason is that negative emotions or feelings toward a given country are vital in their purchasing decisions about foreign products, thereby resulting in a decrease in consumption (Park & Yoon, 2017). Thus, extensive research has theorized consumer animosity (CA) to understand consumption behaviors.

Klein et al. (1998) introduced the concept of CA, defined as the remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events. In the earlier conceptualization of CA, two major types of animosity were identified, namely, war animosity (i.e., CA ignited by past war or military issues) and economic animosity (i.e., CA resulting from a fierce economic rivalry between the countries). Since then, scholars have suggested different dimensions of CA depending on various contexts. For example, in their four-dimensional construct of animosity, Nes, Yelkur, and Silkoset (2012) suggested two additional dimensions—people and politics/government animosity—along with economic and military/war animosity. Other scholars (Ang et al., 2004; Jung et al., 2002) identified four types of animosities: stable versus situational and national versus personal animosities. Stable animosity is based on general antagonism accumulated over the years due to historical events, whereas situational animosity is situation-specific and temporary in nature. National animosity stems from acts that harm the nation, while personal animosity is derived from individuals' personal experiences (e.g., losing jobs due to economic troubles initiated by the hostile country).

Developing this taxonomy of four types of animosities, scholars have summarized that CA can be facilitated by longstanding antipathy (i.e., historical animosity) and "recent" or temporary hostility newly instigated by a conflict between countries (i.e., contemporary animosity; e.g., Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Rose, Rose, & Shoham, 2009; Yang et al., 2015). In the dual-dimension model, Lee and Lee (2013) conceptualized historical animosity as strong antagonistic emotions accumulated over time that stem primarily from past war/military hostility, and contemporary animosity as situational and underpinned by recent hostile economic disputes sparked by recent or ongoing conflict, such as South Korean consumers' response to the latest economic crisis.

Among many elements of CA, the present study conceptualizes and tests a multidimensional CA by delineating economic, historical, and contemporary animosity as three distinct constructs given the background of the current study (i.e., anti-Japan boycott movement in South Korea). The animosity of South Korean consumers against Japan is multi-faceted, as it is not merely derived from the historical problems that the two countries have faced but also from a contemporary economic issue.

First, historically, many disputes between South Korea and Japan have existed since diplomatic relations were established in 1965 (Kazianis et al., 2019). Statements about Japanese colonial rule in South Korea made by several prominent politicians and officials in Japan have created outrage and anti-Japanese sentiment among South Koreans owing to Japan's insincerity, thereby leading to chronic diplomatic scandals in Korea-Japan relations. One of the most notable disputes between the two countries was compensation for "comfort women," who were forced to work in Imperial Japanese military brothels during World War II. The Korean comfort women were enlisted to the military "comfort stations" by force, including kidnapping, coercion, and deception; the majority of the women were under 18 years old and forced to serve as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers (Choe, 2015). As the few surviving comfort women continued to demand acknowledgment and sincere apology, the Japanese court rejected their compensation claims, causing longstanding antipathy among South Korean citizens toward Japan.

With this historical background, South Korea and Japan engaged in a massive trade spat in 2019. In July, Japan placed restrictions on the exports of semiconductor materials key to South Korea's manufacturing industry by removing South Korea from a list of trusted trading partners (i.e., "white list"; Denyer, 2019). This trade dispute, a so-called Japan-South Korea economic war, has been perceived as Japan's attempt to subjugate South Korea economically (Choe, 2019). Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe attributed the responsibility for the tensions between the two countries to South Korea, saying that the conflict was initiated by South Korean court rulings that required Japanese companies to compensate South Koreans for forced labor during World War II (Yamaguchi, 2019). This economic conflict is therefore rooted in a dispute over the legacy of Japanese colonialism of the Korean peninsula, particularly the issue of compensation for forced labor and comfort women. Infuriated by this action, Koreans began to punish the Japanese government by boycotting Japanese brands and canceling or avoiding travel to Japan.

As shown, Korean publics' animosity toward Japan is derived from their feelings of economic dominance or aggression directed toward South Korea (i.e., economic animosity; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004) and antagonism accumulated over the years because of historical events (i.e., historical animosity; Rose et al., 2009). At the same time, contemporary animosity is salient when an international conflict occurs (Lee & Lee, 2013); Korean publics' animosity is exacerbated by a recent and ongoing conflict between the two governments, specifically the Japan-Korea trade dispute in 2019. Therefore, the combined effects of a recent government conflict, previous historical clashes, and ongoing economic trade disputes between the two countries have resulted in a wide range of boycotting movements and a major disruption in sales of Japanese products. To understand the role of animosity in publics' conflict management strategies during the conflict between Japan and South Korea, we propose patriotism, susceptibility to normative influence, and government-public relationship as antecedents of CA in the following section.

Antecedents of CA

Patriotism

Patriotism, which is defined as love of one's own country and the level of one's identification with one's nation and its symbols (Sharma, Shimp, & Shin, 1994), has been studied to understand consumers' motivations for purchasing foreign products. Patriotism is related to two different perceptions of the sense of belonging to one's nation: instrumental and sentimental attachments (Meier-Pesti & Kirchler, 2003). Instrumental attachment implies the benefits that a person can gain as a citizen of a certain country. By contrast, sentimental attachment develops in situations in which

personal values coincide with national ones. Kosterman and Feshbach (1989) suggested that patriotism was associated with individuals' sentiments of attachment, affection, and loyalty to their own country. Patriotism is also based on emotional attachment to one's own country, thereby acting as a defense mechanism for the in-group (Mihalyi, 1984). Therefore, people with patriotism feel a sense of pride and affection for domestically made products that leads them to prefer domestic products over foreign ones (Han, 1988).

Consumer behavioral studies found that consumers who were patriotic are likely to have high levels of animosity toward a hostile country (Klein & Ettenson, 1999). Given that patriotism indicates inherently favorable attitudes toward one's native country, consumers' strong patriotism was closely related to their animosity toward another country (Yang et al., 2015). According to the realistic group conflict theory, which has been used to explain the nature of consumer animosity (e.g., Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2010), when individuals perceive threats to the in-groups' survival, prejudice and discrimination with respect to out-groups are likely to occur (Bobo, 1983; Levine & Campbell, 1972). Feelings of membership, solidarity, cohesiveness, and common identity within the in-group strengthen this perceived out-group threat, causing individuals to regard the out-group as potential rivals in a zero-sum conflict and develop hostile attitudes accordingly (Correll & Park, 2005; Esses et al., 1998).

In the context of the study reported here, South Korea is in an intergroup conflict with Japan as the result of a long history of political and economic conflicts as well as situational conflict. Individuals who feel a greater emotional attachment to the country (i.e., high level of patriotism) are thus more likely to view the conflictual situation as a threat by the out-group (i.e., Japan), which may enhance their feelings of animosity. The present study thus expects that when an international dispute such as Japan–South Korea economic crisis occurs, patriotic South Korean consumers are likely to have antagonistic emotions toward Japan. That is, South Korean consumers who are highly patriotic toward Korea may exhibit substantial animosity toward Japan during periods of international dispute. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H1.** Patriotism is positively associated with South Korean consumers' animosity toward Japan during an international conflict.

Susceptibility to Normative Influence

Normative influence is defined as the motivation to blend in with a group's norms, characteristics, and attributes (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955) or conformity with the beliefs and behaviors of others to align with the expectations of referents (Park & Lessig, 1977). This concept has been used as a key individual-level factor to understand consumer behaviors. Scholars coined the term "susceptibility to normative influence" (SNI; Bearden et al., 1989) to indicate consumers' tendency to choose products as a vehicle for conforming to the expectations of another person or group (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975) or for improving their social image within a reference group (O'Cass & Frost, 2002).

Numerous studies suggested that this influence of others affected consumers' attitudes and behaviors (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Individuals who are susceptible to normative influence became substantially concerned with public appearance and seek to gain social acceptance by conforming to others' expectations (Wooten & Reed, 2004). Moreover, consumers' decisions are affected by their desire to be respected by their reference groups and avoid presenting themselves in a manner that may result in socially unacceptable outcomes (Wooten & Reed, 2004). In line with realistic group conflict theory, consumers who are susceptible to normative influence are also hostile to products

and services from “out-group” countries (in this case, Japan) because they tend to follow the negative opinions of their referents (in this case, other Korean consumers) (Tharp & Marks, 1991) and their judgment, evaluation, and behaviors are influenced by a desire to be respected by fellow members of their in-group.

Supporting this viewpoint, several studies have empirically demonstrated the positive effect of SNI on consumer animosity (Abraham & Reitman, 2018; Huang et al., 2010; Park & Yoon, 2017). These consumers also easily join their peers who participate in boycott movements (Sen, Gürhan-Canli, & Morwitz, 2001). Sari, Mizerski, and Liu (2017) similarly noted that peer pressure was a strong reason for consumers to boycott foreign products. Based on these previous studies, we propose that South Korean consumers who are susceptible to normative influence will feel considerable animosity toward Japan during conflict situations owing to their tendency to comply with social norms or their reference groups (e.g., other Korean consumers). Therefore, we present the following hypothesis:

H2. SNI is positively associated with South Korean consumers’ animosity toward Japan during an international conflict.

Government-Foreign Public relationship

This study also examines how the relationship quality established between Japan and South Korea will predict consumers’ animosity toward a foreign country. Studies in public relations have long emphasized the significant role of the relationship management approach (i.e., OPR) in increasing organizational effectiveness (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Hon & Grunig, 1999). The quality of the relationship between various types of organizations and the public has been extensively studied in diverse contexts (e.g., Huang & Zhang, 2013 provides a review), including the four components of trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. In the public sector, this concept has also been applied and tested in terms of the relationship between the government and its citizens (Hong, 2013; Chon, 2019), or the relationship between a foreign government and the public (Lee & Jun, 2013; Tam & Kim, 2017). We draw from this line of research and conceptualize the government-foreign public relationship as the relationship quality between the government of Japan and its foreign public (i.e., South Koreans).

Relationship management theory particularly noted the value of relationship quality between an organization and the public in a conflict or a crisis situation. A positive relationship established has a “buffering” effect when a conflict occurs, as it enables the public to trust an organization to address the situation (Kim & Sung, 2016), reduce negative actions (Huang, 2001), encourage information behaviors (Ni et al., 2019), and advocate an organization externally in a crisis situation (Lee, 2019). Although there is little evidence in the literature of the direct effect of relationship quality on publics’ negative emotions (i.e., animosity) during a crisis, previous studies have provided several important cues. For example, in the government setting, it was suggested that a positive relationship between the government and its publics led to favorable outcomes, ranging from publics’ positive attitudes to behavioral intentions to benefit the government (e.g., Hong, 2013; Waymer, 2013). Moreover, in an international context, a good-quality relationship between the government and its foreign publics discouraged foreign publics’ behaviors of sharing negative things about a country with people around them, while encouraging their positive information-sharing behaviors (Tam et al., 2018). These studies imply that a negative government-foreign public relationship results in unfavorable outcomes during a crisis such as publics’ antagonistic emotions toward a country. Leong et al. (2008) further noted that deep-rooted negative perceptions toward the country caused individuals to feel even more negative emotions when a crisis occurred. Based on this line of reasoning, we predict that South Korean publics

or consumers who perceive an unfavorable relationship with the Japanese government will be more likely to have a negative emotion or animosity toward a country when an international conflict occurs. The following hypothesis is thus proposed:

- H3.** The relationship quality between the government (i.e., Japan) and foreign publics (i.e., South Koreans) is negatively associated with Korean consumers' animosity toward Japan during an international conflict.

CA, Negative Peer Communication, and Boycott Intentions

The literature has strongly established the negative effects of CA on the willingness to buy products of countries for which consumers have animosity (e.g., Klein et al., 1998; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Yang et al., 2015). Apart from testing the effects of CA on the public's boycotting intentions in the context of the South Korea-Japan conflict, the current study further aims to extend the existing consequences of CA. By incorporating a communication perspective, we consider consumers' communication behaviors, namely, negative peer communication, as their conflict management strategies in response to CA and expect that this behavior plays a critical role in encouraging boycott intentions.

Peers generally refer to people who have similar backgrounds in terms of age, education, or social hierarchy (Pedersen, Razmerita, & Colleoni, 2014), and peer communication is defined as evident peer interactions among the public (Churchill & Moschis, 1979). Interactions with peers who act as important socialization agents influence individuals' attitudes and decision-making processes (Churchill & Moschis, 1979). Accordingly, the importance of consumers' peer communication (as information giver) in determining their choices of purchasing or recommending products or services has been emphasized (Lee, 2010; Wang Yu, & Wei, 2012).

Although individuals are likely to engage in positive and negative peer communication, the current study particularly focuses on negative peer communication, given the context of this research. During the periods of a boycott movement derived from international conflict, the public is more likely to share negative things than positive things about an event, country, or relevant phenomena. Therefore, we draw from the previous literature on peer communication (e.g., Men & Muralidharan, 2017) and define *negative peer communication* as a type of interpersonal communication by which people proactively engage in negative discussions with peers regarding a country or its products/services.

When the public is annoyed because of a "hot" international issue, such as the 2019 Japan-South Korea trade dispute, they are likely to actively talk about it with people close to them to manage the negative emotion caused by the conflictual situation. Public relations scholars explained that emotions such as anger considerably affected the public's behaviors (Jin, Pang, & Cameron, 2012). That is, the public utilizes various communication strategies to address crisis-stimulated stress, such as obtaining information and taking actions to deal with the situation. Harmeling, Magnusson, and Singh (2015) also similarly noted that individuals engaged in communicative behaviors as coping processes for animosity.

Similarly, negative emotions (i.e., animosity) experienced due to an international dispute may encourage publics to communicate about the dispute to cope with their stress and vent negative feelings. Numerous consumer behavior studies have suggested that the desire to vent their negative feelings was one of the important motivations for consumers to engage in negative word-of-mouth (WOM) behaviors about a company or its products/services, which is conceptually similar to negative peer communication (e.g., Wetzler, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2007). CA is thus expected to not only evoke

the public's intention to boycott foreign products but also their engagement in conversations with peers. Hence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4. South Korean consumers' animosity toward Japan is positively associated with their negative peer communication during an international conflict.

H5. South Korean consumers' animosity toward Japan is positively associated with their boycotting intentions during an international conflict.

Negative peer communication is also expected to increase individuals' behavioral intentions. According to socialization theory, individuals' attitudes and behaviors affect and are affected by peer groups (Churchill & Moschis, 1979). Normative influence is established through interactions with peer groups, which play an important role in socialization, motivating them to follow and conform to peer groups' behaviors (Moschis & Churchill, 1978). Thus, public behaviors are significantly affected by peer communication as a form of socialization (Wang et al., 2012). That is, as an outcome of the socialization process when the public expresses negative opinions on objects with peers, these peers are likely to develop similar perceptions of it (Men & Muralidharan, 2017). In the context of an organization, if peers convey negative attitudes toward an organization, then the public can develop unfavorable perceptions of the organization and vice versa (Malthouse et al., 2013). Similarly, in the present study, it is expected that when consumers communicate with their peers (e.g., family members, friends) by talking negatively about Japan, they are likely to share similar negative perceptions of this country, thereby prompting them to engage in boycott movements. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H6. Negative peer communication is positively associated with South Korean consumers' boycotting intentions during an international conflict.

The conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

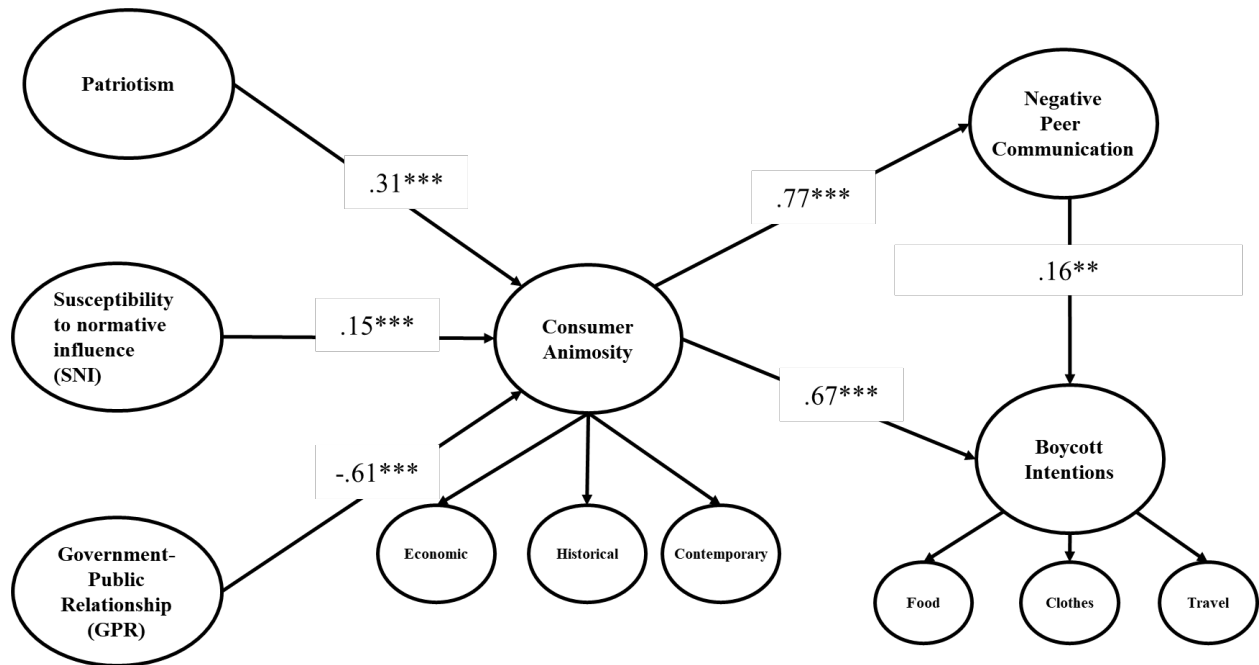
Method

Participants

The researchers conducted an online survey with South Korean consumers recruited through a Korean research firm, Embrain, located in Seoul, South Korea. Research panels from Embrain were asked to participate in the survey through a web page created by the research firm. The data were collected during one week in the early stage of the boycott movement, between July 26 and July 31, 2019. Participants received 4,500 won (approximately \$4.50) from the research company for completing a 15-minute survey. The questionnaire was originally developed in English. Two bilingual Korean researchers translated the questionnaire following the back-translation method. The translated version and the source version were carefully compared to ensure translation equivalence.

Using a nonprobability stratified sampling method through the research firm, participants were recruited from different gender and age groups as well as household income and education levels. The final sample included 470 people (54% male, $n = 254$; 46% female, $n = 216$). The age range of participants was from 20 to 59 years old, with an average age of 39.7. In terms of education level, 75.9% ($n = 357$) of the participants had at least a bachelor's degree. A large portion of the participants ($n = 225$, 47.8%) had an annual income of more than \$50,000. Regarding political identification, 56.4%

Figure 1
Results of the Hypothesized Model



** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$
CFI = .951, $\chi^2(549) = 1674.166$, RMSEA = .066 [.062, .070], SRMR = .046.

of the respondents ($n = 265$) identified themselves as politically neutral. Table 1 summarizes the sample characteristics.

In the survey, each participant was asked to answer the questions of boycott intentions about all three product/service categories (i.e., food, clothes, and travel). The researchers controlled for the order in the survey by randomly assigning a sequence of questions to the participants. Given the purpose of the current study, participants were also asked whether they have visited Japan and whether they have purchased Japanese products in the past six months. A total of 36.6% ($n = 172$) of the participants responded that they had not ever visited the country. Approximately 53.4% ($n = 251$) had experiences of purchasing Japanese food products (e.g., beer, snacks) in the past six months, while 38.9% ($n = 183$) had purchased Japanese clothing brands (e.g., UNICLO). The majority of the participants ($n = 380$, 80.9%) said that they know well about the recent international conflict between Japan and South Korea.

Table 1
Participant Profiles (N = 470)

Sample Characteristics	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	254	54.0
Female	216	46.0
<i>Age</i>		
20-29	120	25.5
30-39	112	23.8
40-49	102	21.7
50-59	136	28.9
<i>Education level</i>		
High school diploma or equivalent	62	13.2
Some college, no degree	51	10.9
Bachelor's degree or equivalent	301	64.0
Master's degree or higher	56	11.9
<i>Annual income</i>		
\$0 - \$10,000	21	4.5
\$10,001 - \$30,000	89	18.9
\$30,001 - \$50,000	135	28.7
\$50,001 - \$70,000	121	25.7
\$70,001 - \$99,999	80	17.1
\$100,000 or more	24	5.1
<i>Political identification</i>		
Liberal	132	28.1
Neutral	265	56.4
Conservative	73	15.5

Measures

A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was used to measure all items in the current study.

First, consumers' boycott intentions for three product/service categories (i.e., food, clothes, and travel) were measured.¹ Five items adopted from Antonetti et al. (2019) were used for food ($\alpha = .98$) and clothes ($\alpha = .98$), respectively. Consumers' intentions to visit Japan were measured with three items ($\alpha = .92$) adopted from Sánchez et al. (2018) and reverse-coded to indicate consumers' boycotting intentions.

To measure consumer animosity, we used 14 items adopted from previous research (Yang et al., 2015), including four items for economic animosity ($\alpha = .73$), five items for historical animosity (α

¹ Although Koreans participating in the boycott refused to buy a wide range of Japanese products (e.g. car, cosmetics), three product/service categories (i.e., food, clothes, and travel) are selected in this study as examples because these are the major goods/services that Koreans joined in boycotting and that took the hardest hit in their industry especially during the early stage of the boycott movement (*The Korea Times*, 2019), the time when the data was collected.

= .88), and five items for contemporary animosity ($\alpha = .93$). CFA results showed that the second-order model fit the data well (CFI = .971, $\chi^2(332) = 887.217$, RMSEA = .052 [.044, .060], SRMR = .043), providing evidence that the three types of animosity were key indicators of consumer animosity.

Negative peer communication was measured with six items ($\alpha = .89$) adapted from Wang et al. (2012). Next, in terms of the antecedents of consumer animosity, patriotism was measured with five items ($\alpha = .92$) adopted from Kosterman and Feshbach (1989). To measure the government-foreign public relationship, we used five items adapted from Tam and Kim (2017) ($\alpha = .87$). Susceptibility to normative influence (SNI) was measured with four items ($\alpha = .87$) from Bearden et al. (1989). Table 2 provides a list of all items.

Analysis

To test the proposed model, the researchers used two-stage structural equation modeling (SEM²), following Anderson and Gerbing (1988). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model, followed by testing the structural model. Hu and Bentler’s (1999) joint-cutoff criteria were used to evaluate the acceptable model fit: comparative fit index (CFI) > .95 and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) < .10 or root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) < .05 and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) < .10 were considered as a satisfactory model fit.

Table 2
Measurement Items

Constructs	Measurement Items	Standardized Factor Loadings	CR	AVE	The square root of AVE
Boycott Intentions					
	<i>Food</i>	.99*			
	<i>Clothes</i>	.97*			
	<i>Travel</i>	.77*			
Boycott Intentions (Food)	I intend to participate in Boycotting the food products related to Japan.	.95*	.97	.86	.93
	I would avoid purchasing Japanese food products whenever it is possible.	.98*			
	If possible, I would choose another food product over Japanese food products	.94*			
	From now on, I am less willing to buy Japanese food products.	.97*			

² Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to identify a model that explains the interrelated relationships among multiple latent variables (Kline, 2016). As SEM is a statistical tool to test the hypotheses through empirical data, sampling methods do not affect SEM results if sample size is secured (Hair et al., 2018; Kline, 2016).

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	I would spend as little as possible on Japanese food products.	.79*	.97	.86	.93
Boycott Intentions (Clothes)	I intend to participate in Boycotting the clothing products related to Japan.	.94*			
	I would avoid purchasing Japanese clothing products whenever it is possible.	.98*			
	If possible, I would choose another clothing product over Japanese food products	.95*			
	From now on, I am less willing to buy Japanese clothing products.	.97*			
	I would spend as little as possible on Japanese clothing products.	.78*			
Boycott Intentions (Travel) ®	I intend to visit this country (Japan) in the future.	.89*	.93	.81	.90
	I would choose this country (Japan) for my next holiday.	.96*			
	I would prefer to visit this country (Japan) rather than other similar destinations.	.84*			
Consumer Animosity					
<i>Economic</i>		.70*			
<i>Historical</i>		.88*			
<i>Contemporary</i>		.95*			
Economic	Japan takes advantage of Korea in trade.	.75*	.72	.53	.73
	Japan causes economic problems in Korea.	.74*			
	Japan has too much economic influence in Korea.	.66*			
	The Japanese are doing business unfairly with Korea.	.76*			
Historical	I have always disliked the Japanese.	.64*			
	I have always felt angry toward the Japanese.	.66*	.86	.56	.75
	I dislike this country because of past historical events.	.83*			
	I will never forgive Japan for the Japanese military sexual slavery.	.86*			
	Japan should pay for what it did to Japanese military sexual slavery.	.74*			
Contemporary	Recently, I dislike the Japanese.	.77*	.94	.75	.87

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	These days, I feel annoyed by this country.	.89*			
	I will never forgive Japan for the current economic retaliation.	.94*			
	Japan should pay for what it did to Korea during economic retaliation.	.91*			
	Japan has recently caused political conflicts between Japan and Korea.	.81*			
Negative Peer Communication	I talk negatively about Japan with my friends or family members.	.80*	.89	.59	.77
	I talk about boycotting the Japanese products with my friends or family members.	.82*			
	I obtain negative information about Japan from my friends or family members.	.80*			
	My friends or family members encourage me to boycott the Japanese products.	.73*			
	I ask my friends or family members for advice about boycotting the Japanese products.	.74*			
	I talk about negative experiences with Japan with my friends and family members.	.71*			
Patriotism	I love my country.	.87*	.93	.72	.85
	I am proud to be Korean.	.88*			
	I am emotionally attached to my country and emotionally affected by its actions.	.92*			
	Although at times I may not agree with the government, my commitment to South Korea always remains strong.	.82*			
	When I see the Korean flag flying I feel great.	.74*			
Government-public Relationship	Japan seeks to build mutually beneficial relationships with South Korea.	.76*	.88	.59	.77
	Japan considers South Korea's interests when making decisions.	.63*			
	Japan treats South Korea fairly and justly.	.84*			
	Japan is satisfied with their interactions with South Korea.	.81*			

	Japan wants to maintain a long-term relationship with South Korea.	.77*			
Susceptibility to normative influence	It is important that others like the products (and brands) I buy.	.66*	.81	.52	.72
	I like to know what products (and brands) make good impressions on others.	.71*			
	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products (and brands) they purchase.	.71*			
	I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products (and brands) they purchase.	.81*			
* $p < .001$					
Note. CR(composite reliabilities); AVE(average variance extracted)					

Results

Preliminary Data Analysis

Table 3 reports the means, standard deviations, scale reliabilities, and correlations among the variables used in this study. Respondents overall reported high levels of animosity ($M_s > 3.6$) and boycott intentions ($M_s > 4.4$). All types of animosity had positive and significant correlations with negative peer communication and boycott intentions ($p_s < .01$). The scale reliabilities were satisfactory as the values of Cronbach's α ranged from .73 to .98.

A series of t -tests, ANOVAs, and regression analyses were conducted to examine the effects of demographic variables on the main variables. Results showed that female respondents were more likely to participate in the boycott movement ($t[468] = 3.25, p = .001$), negatively talk about Japan with peers ($t[468] = 3.73, p < .001$), and feel animosity toward the country ($t[468] = 3.05, p = .002$) than male counterparts. The more an individual was liberal, the more he/she was likely to participate in the boycott movement ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) and engage in negative peer communication ($\beta = .23, p < .001$). Age also had a significant and positive effect on boycott intentions ($\beta = .28, p < .001$), negative peer communication ($\beta = .19, p < .001$), and animosity ($\beta = .26, p < .001$). Participants' purchasing experiences of Japanese food ($\beta = .12, p = .007$), clothes ($\beta = .10, p = .026$), and traveling experiences ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) all significantly influenced their intentions to boycott Japanese products. Respondents' education level and income level had no significant effects on any of the variables used in this study. Based on these results, participants' gender, age, political affiliations, and their experiences of purchasing Japanese products or visiting Japan were controlled in the following SEM analysis.

Assessment of Measurement Model and Structural Model

The results of CFA showed that the measurement model reached satisfactory model fits overall: CFI = .996, $\chi^2(547) = 1275.217$, RMSEA = .062 [.059, .075], SRMR = .048. All factor loadings were significant at the $p < .001$ level. To assess the reliability and validity of the model, we estimated

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables (N = 470)

	M (SD)	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Patriotism	4.12 (0.77)	.92	-									
2. Susceptibility to normative influence	2.89 (0.84)	.87	.03	-								
3. Government-public relationship	1.62 (0.75)	.87	-.16**	.06	-							
4. Economic animosity	3.98 (0.73)	.73	.23**	.09	-.42**	-						
5. Historical animosity	3.65 (0.90)	.88	.37**	.07	-.49**	.44**	-					
6. Contemporary animosity	4.09 (1.01)	.93	.38**	.12*	-.57**	.51**	.72**	-				
7. Negative peer communication	3.40 (0.91)	.89	.33**	.19**	-.39**	.38**	.60**	.65**	-			
8. Boycott intentions (food)	4.43 (0.99)	.98	.24**	.09	-.53**	.45**	.62**	.77**	.64**	-		
9. Boycott intentions (clothes)	4.48 (0.96)	.98	.24**	.07	-.52**	.45**	.61**	.75**	.62**	.96**	-	
10. Intentions to visit country	4.48 (0.87)	.92	.24**	.04	.55**	.40**	.58**	.63**	.54**	.72**	.73**	-

composite reliability (CR) for each latent variable. All the variables indicated acceptable CR values, ranging from .72 to .97 (see Table 2). The average of variance extracted (AVE) values were also calculated. As shown in Table 2, all the values were higher than .5 and the values of the square root of AVE were greater than the correlations among the variables. The convergent and discriminant validity of the measures were thus satisfactory. As the measurement model demonstrated its construct validity, the researchers then tested the structural model. The model fits were all acceptable $CFI = .951$, $\chi^2(549) = 1674.166$, $RMSEA = .066$ [.062, .070], $SRMR = .046$. Thus, the hypothesized paths were interpreted.

Hypotheses Testing

In H1, we expected a positive effect of patriotism on consumer animosity. As expected, the path was positive and significant ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$; see Figure 1). H1 was thus supported. H2 investigated the effect of susceptibility to normative influence (SNI) on consumer animosity, and the effect was positive and significant ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H2 was also supported. H3 examined whether the government-public relationship had a negative effect on consumer animosity. Results showed that the path was negative and significant ($\beta = -.61$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H3 was supported. That is, Korean consumers who were patriotic and susceptible to normative behaviors of other consumers and perceived an unfavorable relationship with Japan were more likely to exhibit higher levels of animosity when an international conflict occurred.

H4 examined whether consumer animosity was associated with consumers' negative peer communication. It had a significant and positive influence on negative peer communication ($\beta = .77$, $p < .001$), which supported H4. In H5, the relationship between consumer animosity and Korean consumers' boycotting intentions toward Japanese products was examined. Results showed that consumer animosity had a positive and significant effect on Korean consumers' intentions to boycott Japanese products ($\beta = .67$, $p < .001$). Thus, H5 was supported. Therefore, consumer animosity played an important role in encouraging Korean consumers to negatively talk about Japan to their peers and to participate in the national boycott movement. H6 investigated the effect of consumers' negative peer communication on their boycotting intentions. As shown in the results, it had a significant and positive effect on consumers' boycotting intentions ($\beta = .16$, $p = .005$), which supported H6. This suggested that Korean consumers were more likely to boycott Japanese food and clothing products and not to travel to Japan when negatively talking about Japan.

Discussion

Guided by conflict management, public relations, and consumer behavior literature, this study attempted to understand through a theoretical model why Korean publics engage in an anti-Japan boycott movement when their government is in conflict with the Japanese government. The results of this research showed that individuals' patriotism, SNI, and negative government-foreign public relationship are critical antecedents that increase CA, thereby enhancing negative peer communication and boycott intentions. Given the results, we suggest the following theoretical and practical implications.

The current study advances the conflict management literature by emphasizing the importance of negative emotion, animosity in particular, in an international conflict setting. Focusing on the Japan-South Korea trade dispute in 2019, this study investigated publics' behaviors (e.g., boycotting, negative peer communication) as a type of individual conflict management strategy in response to negative emotions toward another country. Our results showed that animosity, which

comprises economic, historical, and contemporary animosity, significantly increased South Korean consumers' boycott intentions against Japanese products. Supporting realistic group conflicts theory, this result indicates that conflict at an international level leads to publics' hostility to another group (country) as the conflict itself is perceived as a root of threat for their in-group, resulting in a collective movement that is largely driven by animosity. More importantly, the results demonstrated that consumers' animosity triggered their boycotting intentions across product categories (e.g., food, clothes, and travel). This finding suggests that regardless of product categories, national sentiment during an international conflict has significant power to motivate the public to engage in a collective boycotting movement.

Moreover, this study provides evidence that consumers' negative communication about a country (i.e., Japan) or its products with their peers partially mediates the relationship between CA and boycott intentions. That is, individuals tend to communicate with others who are close to them to manage their negative emotions caused by a conflict situation their country is involved in, which in turn enhances their intentions to boycott Japanese products. In line with socialization theory, a norm is established by peer groups through negative peer communication during a conflict, and it plays an important role in motivating publics to follow peer groups' behaviors, boycotting in this case. Therefore, the current study sheds light on conflict management research by revealing the role of negative emotions (i.e., animosity) in affecting the way individuals manage the conflict situation, that is, communicating with peers and joining collective actions.

Second, this study advances communication and public relations research in the global setting by suggesting the relationship quality between the government and its foreign publics as an important antecedent of consumer animosity. Boycotting behaviors have been extensively studied in consumer research (e.g., Yang et al., 2015). From an organizational-level perspective, the present study adds to the previous line of research that has generally theorized animosity from the individual perspective. By incorporating the public relations perspective, specifically relationship management theory, the current research empirically demonstrated that relationship quality between the government (e.g., Japan) and its foreign public (e.g., Korean consumers) is a strong predictor of CA. The government-foreign public relationship has been suggested as an important outcome of public diplomacy and public relations (Tam & Kim, 2017). Given that, the findings of the current study suggest the importance of the government's public relations effort in effectively solving and preventing conflicts, specifically by showing that the long-term relationship critically influences the extent to which the foreign public is angered toward a country during a conflict situation and their intentions to participate in the public movement against the country. In other words, the findings of this study highlight the value of relationship management in managing publics' affective and behavioral responses to an international conflict; public relations can thus function as a critical international conflict management strategy. By showing the theoretical utility of the relationship management approach in conflict management, the study further suggests ample spaces for future research on conflict management integrating a public relations perspective.

Third, this study enhances the theoretical understanding of CA by revealing the positive and significant effects of individuals' patriotism and susceptibility to normative influence in an international conflict. Consumers who are patriotic inherently have favorable attitudes and high levels of emotional attachment toward their home country. Therefore, they are likely to have a sense of pride and affection for domestically made products. When an international conflict occurs, patriotic South Korean consumers in the context of economic tension between South Korea and Japan are likely to have antagonistic emotions toward Japan, which threatens their own identity. In the context of the present study, consumers' susceptibility to normative influence was also significantly related to animosity. During periods of a boycott movement caused by international conflict, consumers with

high-level SNI may feel enormous pressure to form a negative attitude to comply with social norms or expectations of reference groups. Those consumers tend to avoid presenting themselves in a manner that may result in social disapproval. Thus, they are likely to follow the social atmosphere during international conflict situations by generating animosity.

This study also provides several practical implications. As shown in the results, a favorable nation-to-nation relationship established between the two countries can mitigate the foreign public's animosity, negative peer communication, and boycotting behaviors during international conflicts. From the public relations perspective, this result emphasizes the important role of relationship management approaches in government and diplomatic relations in preventing and managing a nationwide crisis during conflict situations. Thus, governments should work together to build a positive national relationship in the long term. Given that the relationship management approach that aims to achieve "mutually beneficial" outcomes by communicative practices is aligned with public diplomacy efforts (Tam & Kim, 2017), governments should endeavor to resolve trade disputes or potential future issues by engaging in active public diplomacy through public and private exchange-based diplomacy strategy. For example, existing exchange programs (e.g., joint higher-education programs) between the two countries organized by local governments and private-sector organizations should be continued and developed, regardless of ongoing international conflicts, to cultivate people-to-people exchanges at an individual level. In addition, given that networked effects may be generated through negative peer communication among the foreign public, governments should establish a system to listen and respond to the foreign public's needs, concerns, or interests and to incorporate those opinions in the decision-making process through a variety of communication channels. These relational efforts will promote mutual understanding and influence between the publics in different countries and help the government to build a positive relationship with the foreign public, thereby minimizing the threats and facilitating a "buffering" effect of relationships when an international dispute occurs.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this study should be addressed in future research. First, this study examined consumers' boycotting intentions toward three categories (e.g., food, clothes, and travel) without considering individuals' product involvement level. Future researchers should examine the effects of product characteristics because individuals' preferences and purchasing habits for each product category may differ from one another (Park & Yoon, 2017). Second, although the current study provides a rigorous conceptual model, it is limited to the context of the South Korea-Japan international conflict that occurred in 2019. Therefore, future researchers should replicate the model in other international contexts to provide enhanced insights. Third, although the boycott movement persisted for more than a year, the survey was conducted during the "hot issue" period (Aldoory & Grunig, 2012) when extensive negative media coverage was generated in South Korea in July 2019. This situation limits the understanding of whether and why consumers consistently avoid foreign products after the issue has cooled down. Therefore, replicating studies should be conducted using a variety of research methods, such as a longitudinal design, for an in-depth understanding of consumers' motivations to participate in a national boycott movement.

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