

**The Power of Political Boycott in Online Communities and Blogs:
Exploring Online Political Debaters on the Korean Government's Beef Trade Policies
with the U.S.**

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Abstract

The research examines Korean political online communities' attempts to influence media content by conducting an advertising boycott against advertisers who placed advertising in the major newspapers that supported the Korean government's trade policies on beef imported from the United States. The sample includes leading individual bloggers and online community members who participated in organizing the boycott through their online communications. This study explores online political debaters' gratifications in using online communication to facilitate their boycott activities and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the two-way, internet-based communication in influencing the newspaper advertisers, newspaper content, and the ultimate result of the boycott activities. In addition, anti-governmental bloggers and OCMs (Online Community Member) saw more possibilities of their online communication information to influence directly involved advertisers than pro-governmental online groups.

Keywords: Online Community, Online Boycott, Online Communications, Uses and Gratifications

Introduction

Advanced internet technology has provided individuals with more opportunities to access a range of information sources, exchange data, and share their knowledge and opinions with others. Internet users are able to organize online communities quickly and create individual web sites or weblogs in order to express their personal opinions and influence them to others. These “Netizens” who are defined as those who spend a substantial amount of time on the internet (Ling, 2007), have begun to play an important role as opinion leaders in forming or influencing general public opinion on issues relating to elections, public policy, and social issues. At times, these collective voices can have a negligible effect on society, but other times, these voices that have come together for a common cause can have a substantive influence in the public sphere.

This paper explores such a case where individuals connected with each other through the Internet and voiced their displeasure over both a trade policy enacted in South Korea and the press’ coverage of this particular policy. Specifically, these individuals organized themselves to stage a boycott of newspaper advertisers as an attempt to influence newspaper coverage. However, it was the two-way, instantaneous communication that allowed for the coalescing of public opinion and accelerated the drive for action against advertisers. This research examines the role that bloggers and online community members play in organizing an online boycott and their perceptions of the effectiveness on such activities.

Background – Korean Boycott

South Korea, a country with one of the strongest internet infrastructures, has seen an intriguing activity emerge from within its internet community – advertising boycotts. After the Korean government announced on May 29, 2008 an agreement with the United States on beef imports to Korea, citizens became increasingly upset with this specific government trade policy because many Koreans were concerned about mad cow disease. Angry citizens even organized and participated in Candlelight Protests against this Korean government trade policy. At the same time, many people were upset about the news coverage of this issue, particularly the coverage by the three major daily newspapers. These three major dailies, with a combined market share of over 75% based on circulation figures among the top ten Korean daily newspapers, had a prominent voice in Korean society (Korea Press Foundation, 2006). In addition, their market share, based on sales figures for the same year, totaled almost 67%

with *ChoSunIlbo*, *JoongAngIlbo*, and *Dong-A Ilbo* at 24.5%, 22.9%, and 19.9% share, respectively (Korea Press Foundation, 2006).

The majority of the Korean people believed that the content of the three major newspapers was skewed toward the government's opinion (Ko, 2008). It is precisely because of their coverage of this beef import trade issue that all three newspapers finished so high in a survey gauging Korean citizens' lack of trust in the media, particularly Korean television and newspapers. In the rankings, *ChoSun* (19.5%) was first, *DongA* (5.2%) was second, and *JoongAng* (4.3%) was fourth (Ko, 2008). During the previous Korean president's term in office, these three newspapers were strongly against the proposed American beef import policy, but they then changed their position completely in supporting the new government policy. Furthermore, these newspapers made suspicious background checks on the protesters involved in the Candlelight Protests, probing into the protesters' ideological views and practices. In turn, some Korean netizens wanted to continue to express their views on the newspapers and the trade policy in order to try to influence Korean public opinion. As an outcome of the netizens' effort, an online community was launched, carrying the name, *The Press Consumerism*. On May 31, 2008, on the daum.net portal website, about 55,500 Korean netizens formed an online community as members of "The Press Consumerism" or OCM (Online Community Member).

The Press Consumerism quickly became the hub for Korean netizens who were against the three Korean major newspapers' coverage of the beef import trade issue. These netizens tried to conduct an advertising boycott against the companies running advertising in the three referenced newspapers. The idea was to strike at the revenue streams of the newspapers since advertising is the primary method for newspapers to generate revenue. An advertising boycott is more aggressive netizen activity compared to the previous protests against newspapers because of the significance of advertising revenue to newspapers' overall financial health. Specifically, the breakdown of the two main revenue streams for Korean newspapers is: 90% from advertising revenue and 10% from subscriptions (Shin, 2006). In addition, the method of generating newspaper circulation figures is not transparent, thus a modest decline in circulation rates will affect neither advertising funds nor subscription income.

The OCMs shared basic information and data on the advertisers that placed ads in the three major newspapers. This advertiser information included: company names, names of key individuals in the companies, email addresses, and phone numbers. Online community managers also created a section on the web page called “homework section,” encouraging members to call those companies and demand they withdraw their advertising from *ChoSun*, *JoongAng*, and *DongAIlbo*. As a result, many consumer-oriented companies made the expedient decision to withdraw their advertising from these major daily newspapers (Seop, 2008). Thus, the Korean netizens’ advertising boycott was considered an effective means to influence behavior of the traditional media in Korea.

Another group of citizens, considered more conservative in their political outlook, also opened an online community, named ‘*The Citizen Association against the Violent and Illegal Candlelight Protests*’ in naver.com portal websites on June 2, 2008. These OCMs supported the government trade policy and reacted by threatening advertisers to not pull their advertising from the three newspapers. They primarily focused their online content on the violence generated by the boycotting groups, the illegality of the boycotts, and the “disruptive” candlelight protest activities.

The Korean government also got involved in the netizens’ advertising boycott activity. Korean government legal entities prohibited twenty of the leading netizens from leaving the country. These netizens were prominent in the online boycott community because of their active collection and distribution of company information. Due to these travel restrictions of prominent netizens, others grew increasingly angry with the Korean government’s attitudes and actions, which only encouraged more people to join the advertising boycott and its associated activities.

Literature Review

Boycott

Friedman (1985) defines a consumer boycott as an “attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace.” Boycott, an organized group activity, involves a wide range of situations such as protests, mobilizations, and issue-relevant picketing (Friedman, 1999). The effectiveness of all types of boycott activities depends on the level of consumer

participation. In terms of consumer behavior, many studies about boycotts have focused on the motivations of participants. Garrett (1987) categorized six different motivations for boycott participation: the awareness of consumers; the values of potential consumer participants; the consistency of boycott goals with participant attitudes; the cost of participation; social pressure; and the credibility of the boycott leadership. Other studies looked at the different dimensions of the motivations of boycotting, such as one study of the specific individual incentives related to a small agent and free-rider problem (John & Klein, 2003) and the cost-benefit approach of individual customer research (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). Another study examined the individual participation that leads to successful boycotts. For example, some individuals participate in boycotts because of their desire to belong to a group, which serves as their primary motivation (Taifel, 1982). Other individuals' motivations for boycott participation are comfort and consistency of their beliefs with the targeted issues (Smith, 1990).

Boycotting is arguably the most effective consumer weapon in the market (Zureik, & Mowshowitz, 2005) because boycotts can negatively affect an organization's stock price (Pruitt & Friedman, 1986; Pruitt, Wei, & White, 1988). Boycotts can also adversely impact a targeted corporation's image (Garrett, 1987; Putnam & Muck 1991). In addition, specific product or brand boycotting activities can directly and immediately reduce sales for the targeted companies (Chavis, & Leslie, 2005; Etnenson, Smith, Klein, & John, 2006).

Essentially, a boycott is an active communication form expressed as consumer behavior. Therefore, communication with the public and the boycott target is an essential foundation of a boycott (Putnam & Muck, 1991). Because of the instant communication methods of the internet and its broad reach, people can be persuaded to participate in a boycott based on their beliefs and motivated by the vast amount of information available about a specific boycott target. Initiating a boycott in the digital age is a quick and relatively easy task (Zureik, & Mowshowitz, 2005).

Weblogs

Weblogs (blogs) are defined as web pages where regularly updated content is usually arranged in reverse chronological order (Blood, 2002; Walker, 2003). Individual blogs can contain email exchanges, messaging, bulletin board postings, and other interactive methods.

Thus, netizens can communicate with each other on a continual basis (Kaye & Johnson, 2004; Kaye & Medoff, 2001). Because blogs have the features of ease of participation and cost-free publishing (Kim, 2005), blogs provide more opportunities for sharing ideas, communicating individual emotions, exchanging information, and posting other sources of information (Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004).

A number of studies have focused on the motivations of bloggers. For those motivated to seek information, blogs provide faster up-to-date news and information than traditional media (Hamilton, 2003; Hastings, 2003; Levy, 2002, Ryan, 2003). In addition, those seeking information on blogs associate a higher degree of credibility with that information than those visiting blogs for purely entertainment reasons and motivations (Johnson, Kaye, Bichard, & Wong, 2008). Other research indicates that both groups who are motivated by information-seeking and entertainment are favorably disposed to accept the blog information source as being highly credible (Huang, Chou, & Lin, 2008).

As a new form of journalism, bloggers can also cover specific events, monitor major news stories, and uncover alternative news stories that perhaps are not possible with traditional news media (Palser, 2002). When compared to traditional media, blogs have a relatively higher trust level among web users for political information (Johnson & Kaye, 1998). More specifically, netizens who have a healthy distrust of government tend to use blogs to express their opinions freely and connect with individuals with similar mindsets (Kaye, 2005; Kaye & Johnson, 2004). In motivation expectancy analyses, a study found that most bloggers are driven by both intrinsic motivation that come from personal emotions, attitudes, and attachment and extrinsic motivation that stems from external rewards or pressures (Liu, Liao, and Zeng, 2007). Thus, a broad range of motivations at different levels of individuals, groups, and societies lead people to participate and exchange ideas and information in the blogosphere.

Online Community

An online community can be defined as “groups of people who engage in many-to-many interactions online” and it forms “wherever people with common interests are able to interact” (Williams & Cothrel, 2000, p.81). People can easily join any kind of online community based on their particular area of interest and motivations. This unbounded and loose membership of online communities provides people more opportunity to get involved in social events.

However, an online community is different from a weblog in terms of the content structure. For instance, online communities typically consist of message boards and chat rooms for members and nonmembers, but weblogs consist of instant messaging buddy lists and visitor sections for the site (Kim, 2000). Many netizens join one or more online communities because of their needs for communication with others, information, or just pure entertainment (Armstrong & Hagel III, 2000, p.86). As a special type of social network, OCMs connect with each other through their common interests (Wasserman, & Faust, 1994).

Information posted on an online community has a highly perceived level of credibility and has a strong ability to influence other members' decision-making processes because the information is not controlled by marketers (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2003, p.212). OCMs exchange factual information and personal views towards specific events through message boards. OCMs interaction is able to affect the future direction or planning of online communities. As a homogeneous group, OCMs within an online network easily reach an agreement and achieve their ultimate online community goals. More involved OCMs primarily interact with other members through the communication channel.

However, online community activity can be extended offline as well, and face-to-face interaction helps to build strong relationships among OCMs (Williams & Cothrel, 2000). Extending online community to offline can increase the impact of boycott activity because targeted corporations feel more significant threats from both online and offline boycott activity.

Motivation: Uses and Gratifications

Many studies have applied the uses and gratifications approach to explain individuals' uses of mass media. Media users choose and use specific media based on users' motivations (Blumler and Katz 1974). Furthermore, individual media users are driven by different types of motivation in terms of the level of needs, social and psychological origins, and expectations (Katz, Blumer, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 1983). McQuail divides different types of gratifications, such as information seeking, personal identity, integration and social interaction, and entertainment searching based on users' motivations derived from the various media (1983, p.82-83).

An audience member's medium selection and motivation are positively related to that audience member's satisfaction level (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979; Rayburn, Palmgreen, & Acker 1984). Many studies have tried to apply uses and gratifications to different types of media. Audience members considered television, newspaper, and books as stronger sources of gratification than radio, magazine, and films (Kippax & Murray, 1980). Media users also generally feel that television news, magazine news, and newspapers are more reliable for surveillance motivation than entertainment and avoid boredom (Vicent & Basil, 1997).

The uses and gratifications approach has also been applied to new communication media (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Palmgreen, Phillips, & Lum 1985). Although audience motivations are similar between television and new media, new media users do tend to prefer new media because of the wide range of content that is available (Lin, 1999). Internet users are able to choose news articles among content options (Newhagen & Rafieli, 1996) and distribute them to others for information sharing with other people through posting on an online community or a personal blog.

Model

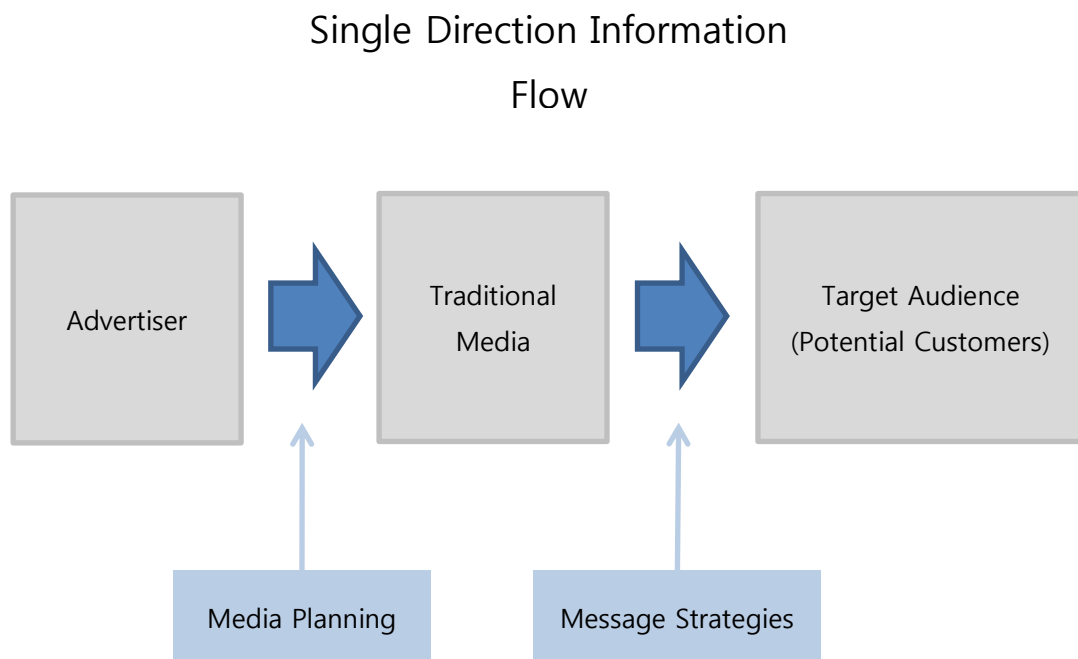


Figure 1- Traditional Media Information Flow

Advertising can be defined as a paid, mass-mediated attempt to persuade audiences. (O’Guinn, Allen, &Semenik, 2008, p.9). Advertisers use proper message strategies and select mass media based on cost-benefit efficiencies in order to persuade target audiences to think or act in a certain way (See model 1). Appropriate media selection is positively correlated with sales change (Korgaonkar, 1986). The traditional media audience exposed to advertising can be measured for advertisers and their advertising agencies through their analyses of audience viewing data. Audiences also have somewhat passive attitudes toward advertising, thus audiences can ignore the advertising or avoid media exposure when advertising becomes an irritant in the traditional media environment.

However, audience attitudes become more actively involved in the information flow in a combined environment of traditional media and new media. As the internet developed, netizens organized online communities and individual blogs in order to share information and affect advertisers. Thus, Model 2, combining both traditional and new media, a modification is added with an additional feedback loop.

Feedback Information

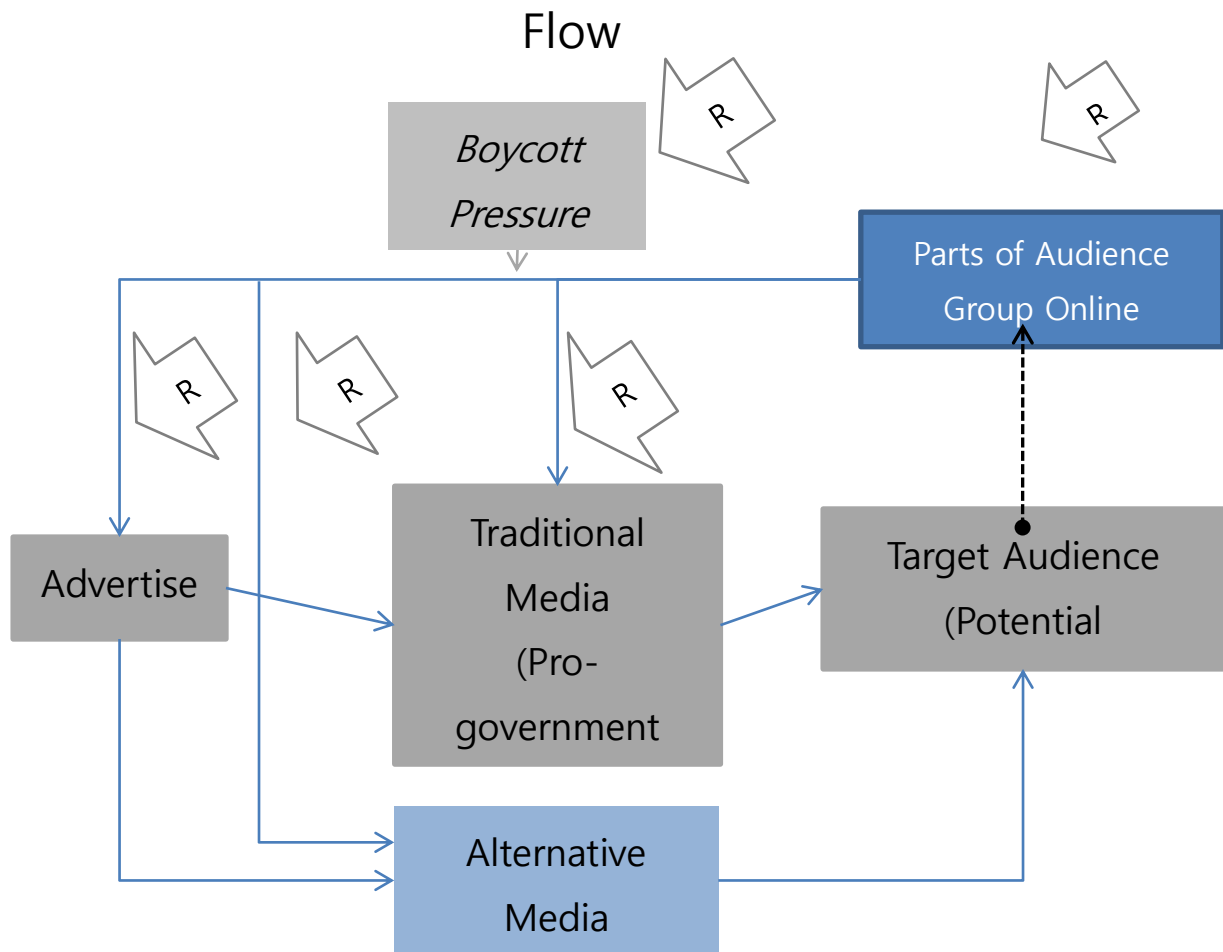


Figure 2 - Combine Traditional & New Media

In other words, this feedback loop exists due to the online community and individual blogs based on the internet. As a result, well-organized consumer groups, using internet technology, can conduct ‘boycotts’ as an effective means to convey their opinions and views to advertisers or the media.

In the specific Korean advertising boycott case reviewed in this paper, organized Korean netizens put pressure on advertisers who placed advertising in three major newspapers, *ChoSunIlbo*, *JoongAngIlbo*, and *DongAIlbo*. The boycott was intended to pressure advertising companies to withdraw their advertising from the three referenced newspapers. This Korean netizens’ advertising boycott was partially successful because forty-three

companies withdrew their advertising from these newspapers and thirty-four companies apologized to customers in June, 2008 (Seop, 2008).

The three major newspapers' number of advertising pages was also reduced compared to the previous year. For example, *ChoSunIlbo* had 65 pages between June 9 and June 17 in 2007, but only 49 pages in the same time period in 2008. *JoongAngIlbo*, and *DongAIlbo* also had reduced numbers of advertising pages from 56 to 46, and from 54 to 44 (Kwon, 2008). However, the Korean Communication Standards Commission made the decision that advertising boycotts should be considered an illegal behavior. The commission ordered the blog leaders to delete any company contact information from their community websites. This decision is still being debated.

Research Questions

The research was designed to answer the following five questions:

RQ1: What are the uses and gratifications of bloggers and OCMs involved in the Korean newspaper advertising boycott?

RQ2: Do bloggers and OCMs believe in the effectiveness of online feedback (two-way) communication to affect changes in media advertisers' attitudes or behaviors?

RQ3: Do bloggers and OCMs believe in the ability of the online boycott to influence the diffusion of their voices over non-target media coverage?

RQ4: Do bloggers and OCMs believe in the power of online feedback (two-way) communication to affect changes in target pro-government media coverage?

RQ5: Is there a difference in how pro-government and anti-government bloggers and OCMs perceive the effects or results of online network activities?

Method

Sample

The internet survey was conducted among Korean netizens who were interested in newspaper advertising boycotts. The researchers randomly chose 235 Korean individual blogs which had posted, at least once, news about the advertising boycott. In addition, the researchers chose the two largest online communities in which one supported the newspaper advertising boycott and the other was against the boycott. Specifically, individual blogs were selected from

naver.com, yahoo.co.kr, and daum.net, which represented the top three largest portal websites in Korea. The two largest online community groups were selected: (1) the pro-boycott blog, The Press Consumerism, with 55,500 members from www.daum.net; and (2) the anti-boycott, The Citizen Association against the Violent and Illegal Candlelight Protests, with 36,100 members from www.naver.com.

Posting messages on the online communities and emails were sent twice in order to increase response rates. The initial emails and online messages were sent on September 1 and 2, 2008, and the follow-up reminder emails and online messages were sent on September 8 and 9, 2008. The researchers' contact information and link to the questionnaire posted to Surveymonky.com were included in the email messages. It should be noted that advertising boycotts activities were regarded as illegal in Korea, and some of the online community managers were arrested during the survey periods. Thus, many netizens were hesitant to participate in the online survey despite the direct communication with researchers' full personal information, such as name, affiliation, and contact information. A total of 172 individuals participated in the online survey. Among the total samples, 56.2% (N=73) were bloggers and 43.8% (N=57) were OCMs, and 75.6% (N=130) were pro-boycott and anti-government individuals and 24.4% (N=42) were anti-boycott and pro-government individuals. The survey questionnaire was translated into Korean by the researchers.

Measurement

The online questionnaire is a straightforward and handy tool for online community studies, although they can have problems, such as lower response rates and the inability to generate a successful scientific sample (Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece, 2003). The questionnaire included questions about participants' demographics, such as age, gender, party identification, and education levels.

In order to measure bloggers and OCMs' gratifications for online network activities, this study adopted the categorical constructs from Papacharissi's (2002) uses and gratifications typologies for the internet and utilized more categories to be more adaptive to blog and online community studies by our pilot-studies. The survey asked respondents to select the most important motivation of their Weblog management and participation from the theoretically pre-categorized lists of sharing information, having fun, use as a simple communication tool, leisure time, keeping personal records, and social activity. The survey also asked participants'

beliefs or perceptions about the effects of online network boycotts in changing target media contents, boycott information diffusion over other media, and changes in advertisers' attitudes. These items were measured using a 5-point agree-disagreement scale.

Rationale

Previous boycott studies were focused on a range of issues based on the specific boycott cases. However, the Korean newspaper advertising boycott case is unique because a specific traditional medium was targeted by a specific consumer group, and this consumer group attacked the main financial source of those newspapers by using a powerful weapon: the boycott. Korean consumer groups were easily organized and efficiently communicated with other netizens through online communities and individual blogs.

In contrast to other scholars' work, this research focuses on the motivations and beliefs of individual bloggers and OCMs. Both bloggers and OCMs communicate with other netizens online and act in similar ways to produce, distribute, and reproduce information. However, there might be differences between the two groups in the degree of their beliefs, expectations, and motivations.

As a communication tool, the internet was used as an organizing mechanism in consumer boycott activities, and it helped communication among boycott members. Online communities and individual blogs are at the center of the Korean newspaper advertising boycott. This example demanded that more boycotts can be conducted using the internet because the internet provides more efficient communication and reduces boycott participation costs. Therefore, examining motivations and beliefs of the online boycott members will be helpful in anticipating other online generated boycotts in the future.

Results

Demographically, males (73.5%) were more likely to engage in online network communication and activities than females (26.5%). The average age of bloggers and OCMs was 32.42, and most of them had bachelor degree or higher level of education (72.7%). More bloggers and OCMs seemed to be the third or the opposite political party supporters (30.3%) rather than the current dominant party (21.2%), although it was not statistically significant. Their major information source was the internet (75.8%), and traditional media, such as

newspapers (12.9%) and television (9.8%), were their secondary or marginal information sources.

Among the multiple gratifications for online boycott activities, sharing information (35%) was the most frequent motivation of bloggers and OCMs’ internet network communications. In addition, having fun (20.5%), use as a simple communication tool (19.2%), leisure time (spare time) (15.1%), keeping personal records (8.2%), and social activity (1.4%) were popular gratifications for bloggers and online OCMs’ internet network activities as well (RQ1). Therefore, it can be inferred that the purpose of online network activities is simply sharing information rather than any purposive intention for social or political change.

Bloggers and OCMs believed that online networks empowered the general public to have and use the communication feedback loop to influence information sources and to alter traditional media communication patterns. However, they did not believe that the online network activities actually changes information coverage habits of the pro-governmental traditional media. In order to test participants’ attitude neutrality, the researchers utilize one-sample T-tests anchoring the neutral stand (value=3) on the 5- disagree and agree scale. When bloggers and OCMs were asked about their beliefs about online boycott effects, they were more likely to believe that the online network boycott influenced other general media contents (M= 4.29, SD= .692, t=24.426, p≤.001) (RQ3) and changed target advertisers’ attitudes or behavior (M=3.61, SD=.954, t=8.247, p≤.001) (RQ2). However, bloggers and OCMs tended to be pessimistic about the possibility that their online activities actually changed the pro-governmental target media contents (M=2.64, SD=1.179, t=-4.010, p≤.001) (RQ4). The results indicated that bloggers and OCMs had expectation for positive information flows but did not find evidence (See Table 1).

Table 1: One sample t-tests on perceptions in the effects of the online network boycott

	M	SD	t	p
Media Content Diffusion Effect	4.29	0.692	24.426	0.001
Target Media Content Change	3.61	0.954	8.247	0.001
Overall Online Boycott Effect	2.64	1.179	-4.010	0.001

Bloggers and OCMs, however, have different degrees of perceptions about the effects of an online network boycott on the information diffused over other media and changes in advertisers' attitude or behavior. After controlling for demographic factors of age, level of education, gender, party affiliation, and the level of attitudes toward online boycott activities, these differences were clear. According to ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) tests, bloggers more strongly believed that their online network activities spread their information over other media ($M=4.441$, $SD=1.199$, $F[1, 129]=5.060$, $p\leq.026$) and influenced advertisers' attitude or behavior to drop their commercials from the blamed target media ($M=3.464$, $SD=1.392$, $F[1, 129]=5.171$, $p\leq.025$) than ordinary OCMs ($M=4.140$, $SD=1.063$ & $M=3.111$, $SD=1.222$ respectively). It infers that bloggers tend to have stronger beliefs in positive outcomes of their online performance than general online community members (RQ5) (See Table 2 & 4).

Table 2: Perceptual differences in the effects of the online network boycott between bloggers and OCMs

	Target Media Content Change		Media Content Diffusion Effect		Advertisers' Attitude Change	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
OCMs	2.696	1.980	4.140	1.063	3.111	1.222
Bloggers	2.876	2.229	4.441	1.199	3.464	1.392

The ANCOVA analysis also found that there was a difference in belief in the power of online network activities between pro- and anti-government online boycott groups. After controlling demographic variables, such as age, level of education, gender, and party identification, and blogger vs. OCM status, the direction (pro vs. con) of online blog activities had a statistically significance for participants' perception on the online network effect. Pro-online boycott bloggers ($M=3.932$, $SD=1.097$) and the OCMs ($M=3.611$, $SD=1.358$) were more likely to believe that their online activities changed target advertisers' attitude or behaviors to reflect the boycott voices than bloggers ($M=2.997$, $SD= 2.738$) and the OCMs ($M=2.610$, $SD=2.229$) who are against the online boycott ($F[1, 129]=21.374$, $p\leq.001$) (RQ 5). In other words, anti-governmental bloggers and OCMs saw more possibilities of their online communication information to influence directly involved advertisers than pro-governmental online groups.

Table 3: Perceptual differences in the effects of the online network boycott between pro-political and anti-political bloggers and OCMs

		Target Media Content Change		Media Content Diffusion Effect		Advertisers' Attitude Change	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Pro Boycott	OCMs	2.716	2.285	4.090	1.222	3.611	1.358
	Bloggers	2.454	1.833	4.406	0.984	3.932	1.097
Against Boycott	OCMs	2.675	3.598	4.190	1.923	2.610	2.229
	Bloggers	3.298	4.412	4.476	2.365	2.997	2.738

Table 4: Anova tests on perceptions in the effects of the online network boycott

	Target Media Content Change		Media Content Diffusion Effect		Advertisers' Attitude Change	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
Intercept	21.921	0.000	191.536	0.000	118.881	0.000
Gender	0.002	0.965	1.423	0.235	2.048	0.155
Age	0.251	0.617	0.898	0.345	8.817	0.004
Education	0.840	0.361	0.354	0.553	7.823	0.006
Party ID	3.950	0.049	8.627	0.004	1.866	0.175
Blogger vs. OCMs	0.519	0.473	5.060	0.026	5.171	0.025
Pro vs. Anti Boycott	1.333	0.251	0.207	0.650	21.374	0.000
Blog Status * Boycott Attitude	3.232	0.075	0.013	0.911	0.045	0.832
R Squared	0.064		0.166		0.394	

Discussion

This research examined bloggers and OCMs' boycott activity conducted within a new media environment. As the researchers anticipated, bloggers and OCMs' primary motivations in online network activity is basic information sharing. In this specific case, their goal was clearly to influence participation in the advertising boycott activity, and their role was one of gathering, distributing, and reproducing information through individual blogs and online communities. Therefore, their online activities were the central power base of the advertising boycott.

According to the results, bloggers and OCMs strongly believed that their online boycott activity had information spill-over effects over the content produced by other media. In addition, these online leaders perceived that their activities influenced targeted advertisers' behaviors while their online network activity did not change the news coverage pattern of the target pro-governmental traditional media. The finding that bloggers and OCMs believed their online activity would not change the target media content is intriguing because of legal supports of their status that prohibited some illegal online boycott activities during the boycott period. The online boycott groups might be thinking mainly about big companies, such as Samsung, SK, and Nong Shim that are more stable and more immune to external changes or

perhaps they believe the legal issue and the relationship with government could be more important for the pro-governmental media.

Another interesting finding is that bloggers were firmer in their belief that their online network activities changed other general media content and influenced the target advertisers' attitudes versus OCMs. It is clearly understandable because individual bloggers could be regarded as heavy online users and strongly involved in the advertising boycott activity. OCMs were represented by all group members no matter how strongly involved or how much time they spent on a network activity. In other words, there is a wide range of involvement among OCMs. This indicated that individual bloggers had stronger motivations than OCMs. Anti-government pro-boycott groups have stronger beliefs about the effect of the boycott activity than pro-government online groups. This indicated that the former boycott groups are more likely to be motivated in their online activities and would unite more strongly than the latter.

Limitations & Future Research

This research had several limitations. First of all, it is debatable whether or not the Korean newspaper boycott was successful. The results are difficult to measure because some corporations were withdrawn their advertisings from the three major Korean daily newspapers for a while. However, Korean government did not change their American beef import policy. Furthermore, the Korean government regarded advertising boycotts as an illegal activity, thus this adds a further complicated dimension to analyzing boycott activity in Korea. Therefore, the ultimate effect of this Korean advertising boycott can be a topic of the future research. Following that boycott, it would be interesting to once again gauge bloggers and OCMs perceptions on the effects of their activities.

Beyond the current study that primarily focused on Korean netizens' boycott activities, future studies can extend the combined traditional & new media model to cases of international boycotts (See Model 2). In addition, this specific research was limited by not incorporating reactions from both advertisers and traditional media. Advertisers' reaction from advertising boycott will be different based on their product category, market position, and power of boycott activity. Traditional media can respond differently to the advertising boycott based on the financial structure, public opinion, the relationship with the government, and power of the

boycott activities. Responses from advertisers and traditional media should be examined in future research.

Lastly, the legal issue involved in this advertising boycott case is based on the conflict between consumer rights and protection for business. From the process of this advertising boycott, several legal issues emerged that could be explored, such as the effectiveness of the new law related to netizen activity, the new law's consistency with other regulations regarding media, and the Korean people's reaction to such restrictive laws. Legal issues frame the activity online and offline and would be a valuable exploration in the future.

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