

RESEARCH ARTICLE

How Does Consumer Animosity Affect Consumer Behavior? The Case of Filipino College Students as Consumers Amid the West Philippine Sea Conflict

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There are consumers who participate in political consumerism by avoiding, rejecting, or condemning products and services from countries perceived as aggressors through their military or economic action. This study examines how Filipino college students in Metro Manila, Philippines, who are frequently exposed to social media, will be affected as consumers amid the current tension in the West Philippine Sea. Using the theories of social identity, uses and gratifications, and echo chamber as frameworks, 770 college students from private and public universities in Metro Manila were surveyed. The Results show that consumer animosity strongly predicts both purchase intention ($\beta = 0.591$, $p < 0.001$) and negative word of mouth ($\beta = 0.529$, $p < 0.001$). These findings confirm that animosity toward a country (China, in this case) translates into behavioral intentions to avoid its products and dissuade others through negative word of mouth. This supports, the existing literature that shows that animosity-driven behavior is a robust indicator of anti-consumption.

Keywords: consumer animosity, West Philippine Sea, purchase intention, negative word of mouth

Global geopolitical tensions are increasingly permeating commercial markets, fundamentally transforming consumption patterns into vehicles for sociopolitical expression. Contemporary consumers transcend their traditional role as passive economic actors, actively participating in political consumerism through strategic rejection, avoidance, or public condemnation of products and brands associated with nations engaged in territorial conflicts or political aggression (Akhtar et al., 2023; Klein et al., 1998). The Philippines–China territorial dispute over the West Philippine Sea exemplifies this phenomenon, in which escalating diplomatic tensions have catalyzed widespread public antipathy toward Chinese products

among Filipino consumers. This animosity operates within complex digital media ecosystems that actively construct, disseminate, and emotionally contextualize narratives concerning national sovereignty, cultural identity, and perceived international aggression.

Filipino consumers, particularly university students who represent digitally native demographics, are increasingly deriving their understanding of international conflicts through multifaceted digital media consumption, encompassing online news platforms, social media networks, blogs, and user-generated content. These digital environments function not merely as information conduits but also as influential behavioral determinants that elicit emotional responses, including anger, fear,

and moral indignation (Janiszewski & Laran, 2024). Within this evolving communicative landscape, consumer animosity emerges as a critical theoretical construct for understanding how geopolitical attitudes become internalized and subsequently manifested in tangible behavioral outcomes, particularly in the form of negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) and diminished purchase intentions toward products originating from perceived aggressor nations.

Existing consumer animosity research has predominantly examined Western contexts, including the U.S.–France diplomatic tensions (Klein et al., 1998), the Russia–Ukraine conflict (Akhtar et al., 2023), and the Israel–Palestine dispute (Tsika, 2024). However, scholarly investigation remains conspicuously limited in Southeast Asian contexts, particularly regarding asymmetric power conflicts in which smaller nations confront regional hegemony. Furthermore, empirical examination of how specific digital media constructs—including source credibility, echo chamber exposure, and media framing—systematically influence animosity formation and its consequential behavioral effects remains underdeveloped. Previous research has typically examined these media variables in isolation or within political communication paradigms rather than integrating them within comprehensive consumer decision-making theoretical frameworks.

Additionally, although global identity has been conceptualized as a moderating mechanism potentially reducing ethnocentric responses and fostering cross-cultural tolerance (Türken & Rudmin, 2013), emerging empirical evidence suggests it may paradoxically amplify normative disapproval when consumers perceive foreign nations as violating universally shared values, including sovereignty, peace, or human rights (Magnusson et al., 2015). This theoretical duality of global identity—simultaneously embodying cosmopolitan openness and moral expressiveness—remains insufficiently tested within consumer animosity and behavioral intention frameworks, representing a significant gap in contemporary consumer behavior scholarship.

Research Gaps and Theoretical Context

This study addresses these theoretical and empirical lacunae by strategically integrating three complementary theoretical frameworks that collectively illuminate the complex mechanisms underlying digitally mediated

consumer animosity. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) provides a foundational understanding of how intergroup conflict systematically generates enhanced in-group cohesion while simultaneously fostering out-group antipathy, thereby establishing the psychological preconditions for consumer animosity formation. Uses and gratifications theory (Katz et al., 1973) elucidates the active, purposive nature of consumer media engagement, explaining how individuals selectively seek, process, and utilize digital content to satisfy specific cognitive and emotional needs within geopolitical contexts. Echo chamber theory (Sunstein, 2001) reveals how algorithmic content curation and homophilous social networks create self-reinforcing information environments that systematically amplify ideological convergence and attitudinal polarization.

The theoretical synthesis of these frameworks establishes a comprehensive analytical foundation for examining how digitally mediated exposure to geopolitical content, when filtered through distinct cognitive processing mechanisms and emotional response patterns, systematically influences consumer behavioral intentions within politically sensitive market environments. This integrated approach transcends the limitations of single-theory explanations by capturing the multidimensional nature of contemporary consumer decision-making, wherein technological mediation, social identity dynamics, and information selectivity converge to shape marketplace behaviors that extend far beyond traditional economic considerations.

Novel Contributions

This study advances multiple theoretical and methodological contributions to the scholarly domains of international consumer behavior and media influence research:

First, this study constitutes the inaugural empirical examination of how specific digital media constructs—including media framing, source credibility, and echo chamber exposure—systematically influence consumer animosity formation within the Philippines–China territorial conflict context, thereby addressing a significant geographical and contextual void in existing literature.

Second, this study develops and empirically validates a comprehensive mediation framework in which consumer animosity serves as the primary psychological mechanism through which media-

based antecedents translate into tangible behavioral outcomes, specifically the suppression of purchase intention and the propagation of NWOM.

Third, the study introduces global identity as a theoretical moderator, providing novel insights into how cosmopolitan orientations may paradoxically either attenuate ethnocentric responses or amplify moral disapproval when universally shared values are perceived as being violated, thus challenging conventional assumptions about the effects of global citizenship.

Fourth, the study employs advanced analytical methodologies, utilizing partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) for a comprehensive assessment of structural relationships and importance–performance map analysis (IPMA) to identify strategically actionable variables for policy formulation and marketing strategy development.

Fifth, this study strategically focuses on Filipino university students, representing a digitally native demographic that, while systematically underrepresented in political consumerism scholarship, exercises disproportionate influence in shaping both immediate market behaviors and long-term national sentiment formation.

Through its systematic examination of the convergence between digital media consumption, identity construction, and consumer behavior within territorial conflict contexts, this study generates actionable insights for governmental institutions, multinational corporations, and digital media platforms seeking to comprehend and strategically respond to the behavioral manifestations of geopolitically induced animosity. Furthermore, this study contributes to theoretical advancements in cross-cultural consumer behavior by demonstrating how emotionally charged narrative construction, institutional trust perceptions, and identity activation interact synergistically to generate systematic market resistance patterns against foreign nations, thereby expanding the conceptual boundaries of political consumerism theory.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a tripartite theoretical framework that combines social identity theory, uses and gratifications theory, and echo chamber theory, which together explain how digital media exposure

and global identity shape consumer animosity and ultimately influence NWOM and purchase intention.

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, forming in-group (e.g., national identity) and out-group (e.g., foreign entities) affiliations. In the context of geopolitical conflict—such as the territorial tensions between the Philippines and China—Filipino consumers may display heightened loyalty to local products and increased hostility toward Chinese goods. Consumer animosity, in this framework, is seen as a defensive response to perceived national threat, often manifesting in boycott behavior, product avoidance, and NWOM. This aligns with the findings of Fernández-Ferrín et al. (2015), who noted that perceived political aggression by foreign nations can significantly alter consumer behavior through intensified out-group derogation.

Complementing this, uses and gratifications theory (UGT; Katz et al., 1973) helps explain why and how consumers selectively engage with media content. Individuals consume media not passively, but rather to fulfill their psychological and informational needs. In this study, Filipino students may seek out specific types of news coverage—such as conflict-framed or morally charged narratives—that validate their national identity or moral beliefs. These preferences can shape perceptions of the West Philippine Sea conflict and contribute to emotionally driven responses, such as animosity. As Janiszewski and Laran (2024) argued, emotionally loaded media consumption leads to stronger behavioral intentions, such as spreading NWOM or rejecting products associated with the perceived aggressor.

Echo chamber theory, as articulated by Sunstein (2001), further supports the model by elucidating how digital environments reinforce existing beliefs and perspectives. Algorithms on social media and news platforms tailor content to user preferences, often creating echo chambers that reduce exposure to dissenting views. For students repeatedly exposed to anti-China narratives, this insular information environment may intensify their resentment and reduce the likelihood of forming a balanced judgment. Empirical support for this mechanism comes from Ruth et al. (2019), who demonstrated that echo chambers can entrench political attitudes, leading to rigid consumer preferences and reduced openness to foreign products.

An important dimension in this study is the role of global identity as a moderating variable. Global identity, defined by Türken and Rudmin (2013) as an individual's sense of belonging to a worldwide community beyond national borders, may temper the effects of animosity. Consumers with a high global identity may still perceive conflict-related grievances, but are less likely to let these translate into retaliatory behaviors, such as NWOM or product avoidance. Magnusson et al. (2015) found that individuals with a strong global identity are more open to cross-border commerce and less likely to support boycotts, even during international disputes.

Together, these theories offer a cohesive explanation for the proposed framework. Media-related constructs, such as source credibility, echo chamber exposure, and media framing, influence consumer animosity, which in turn drives negative behavioral outcomes, including NWOM and reduced purchase intention. However, this animosity-behavior relationship is moderated by global identity, highlighting the interplay between media influence, cultural orientation, and consumer action in politically charged contexts.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows how digital media constructs—namely, source credibility, echo chamber exposure, and media framing—influence consumer animosity, which subsequently affects NWOM and purchase intention. Moreover, the model incorporates global identity as a moderating variable between consumer animosity and its behavioral outcomes. This integrated structure is grounded in theories from media psychology, consumer behavior, and international marketing, offering a comprehensive understanding of how media-based and identity-driven mechanisms influence consumer responses in geopolitical contexts.

The framework begins with source credibility, which refers to the degree to which consumers perceive online media as trustworthy, accurate, and unbiased. Prior research highlights that credible sources influence the perceived legitimacy of conflict-related information, thereby increasing emotional investment and shaping nationalistic reactions (Freeman & Spyridakis, 2009). In the context of the West Philippine Sea dispute, credible news reporting can intensify feelings of threat or injustice, contributing to consumer animosity

toward the aggressor country (Akhtar et al., 2023). Simultaneously, echo chamber exposure—defined as the selective filtering and sharing of ideologically congruent content—reinforces pre-existing beliefs, reducing exposure to diverse perspectives. As shown by Ruth et al. (2019), echo chambers contribute to belief polarization, often intensifying collective sentiment such as hostility toward foreign nations or brands associated with them.

Media framing further contributes to this process. Drawing on Tsika's (2024) typology, the framing styles of human interest, conflict, morality, economic consequences, and attribution of responsibility determine the emotional tone and interpretive lens through which consumers engage with news content. These frames can elicit distinct emotional reactions—such as fear, anger, and guilt—that heighten consumer animosity. The mediation of animosity is supported by Fernández-Ferrín et al. (2015), who demonstrated that perceived political and moral violations by foreign nations strongly predict consumer hostility and retaliatory behavior.

The framework posits consumer animosity as the key mediating construct influencing two downstream behaviors: NWOM and purchase intention. NWOM includes the sharing of unfavorable opinions about Chinese brands with peers, which is a documented behavioral expression of political dissatisfaction (Gregoire & Fisher, 2008). Purchase intention, on the other hand, reflects consumers' willingness to avoid or reject Chinese products due to the national origin effect exacerbated by perceived political aggression (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Klein et al., 1998). These relationships are theoretically grounded in social identity theory, which argues that geopolitical tensions strengthen in-group loyalty and out-group antagonism (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), leading consumers to distance themselves from foreign brands perceived as symbolic of out-group harm.

Finally, the moderating role of global identity is crucial in tempering these animosity-driven outcomes. Global identity is defined as an individual's self-perception as part of a broader, transnational community (Türken & Rudmin, 2013). Consumers with a strong global identity tend to prioritize cosmopolitan values over nationalistic concerns, which may weaken the relationship between animosity and behavioral reactions, such as NWOM and product avoidance. This aligns with the findings of Magnusson et al. (2015),

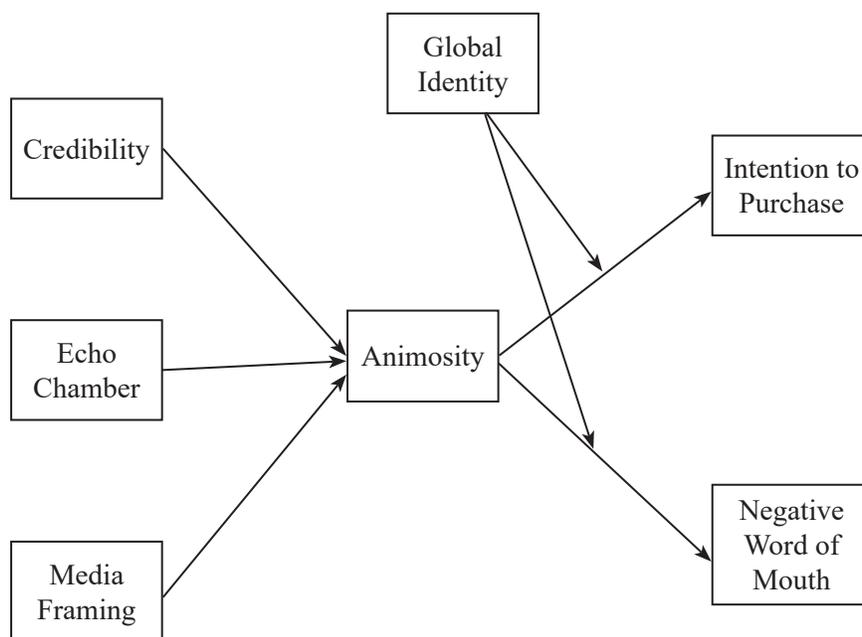


Figure 1
 Conceptual Framework of Does Consumer Animosity Affect Consumer Behavior?
 Filipino College Students as Consumers Amidst the West Philippine Sea Conflict

who demonstrated that globally oriented consumers are less susceptible to ethnocentric or conflict-induced consumption biases.

Overall, the framework provides a theoretically sound and empirically testable model that explains how media exposure and identity shape consumer animosity and its behavioral consequences in the context of geopolitical conflict. It integrates constructs validated in international marketing and media studies, aligning with advanced statistical modeling techniques such as PLS-SEM and IPMA, making it suitable for high-impact scholarly dissemination.

Hypotheses Development

The conceptual framework of this study investigates how digital media factors—source credibility, echo chamber exposure, and media framing—influence consumer animosity, which, in turn, affects negative word of mouth (NWOM) and purchase intention toward Chinese products amid the West Philippine Sea conflict. It also tests the moderating role of global identity, a construct that reflects cosmopolitanism and a sense of transnational belonging.

Source Credibility and Consumer Animosity

Source credibility refers to the extent to which online media is perceived as accurate, trustworthy, and unbiased (Freeman & Spyridakis, 2009). In conflict situations, credible media sources influence how individuals assess the actions of foreign governments, potentially intensifying public perceptions of threat and injustice (Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2015). Higher credibility amplifies the persuasiveness of the message, which can trigger stronger emotional reactions, including anger and resentment toward the aggressor nation (Akhtar et al., 2023). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1: Source credibility is positively related to consumer animosity.

Echo Chamber Exposure and Consumer Animosity

Echo chamber exposure refers to the repeated consumption and sharing of ideologically consistent information, often reinforced through algorithm-driven digital platforms (Sunstein, 2001). As users limit their exposure to opposing viewpoints, their biases are intensified, contributing to political polarization and emotional reactions (Ruth et al., 2019). In the context of

international conflict, echo chambers can foster rigid, nationalistic sentiments and escalate animosity toward perceived aggressors. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H2: Echo chamber exposure is positively related to consumer animosity.

Media Framing and Consumer Animosity

Media framing influences how audiences interpret international events. Frames such as conflict, morality, and human interest have been shown to evoke emotional responses like fear, anger, or moral outrage (Tsika, 2024). When a conflict is framed in a way that emphasizes harm to one's in-group or moral violations by the out-group, it can increase consumer hostility toward the aggressor country (Janiszewski & Laran, 2024). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H3: Media framing is positively related to consumer animosity.

Consumer Animosity, Negative Word of Mouth, and Purchase Intention

Consumer animosity is defined as anger or resentment toward a foreign country due to past or ongoing political events (Klein et al., 1998). When animosity is high, consumers are more likely to avoid products from the offending nation and spread negative evaluations to others (Gregoire & Fisher, 2008). Prior research supports the view that animosity reduces purchase intention and increases negative word of mouth (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Akhtar et al., 2023). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H4: Consumer animosity is positively related to negative word of mouth.

H5: Consumer animosity is negatively related to purchase intention.

Moderating Role of Global Identity

Global identity reflects a person's identification with the world rather than with a specific nation (Türken & Rudmin, 2013). Individuals with high global identity tend to value inclusivity and tolerance, which may buffer the emotional impact of international conflicts on consumer behavior. Magnusson et al. (2015) found that consumers with a strong global identity are less likely to engage in ethnocentric behavior or exhibit retaliatory

consumption patterns during periods of political tension. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H6a: Global identity moderates the relationship between consumer animosity and negative word of mouth, such that the relationship is weaker for consumers with high global identity.

H6b: Global identity moderates the relationship between consumer animosity and purchase intention, such that the relationship is weaker for consumers with high global identity.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design, utilizing an online, self-administered survey. The research aimed to investigate the influence of digital media factors—source credibility, echo chamber exposure, and media framing—on consumer animosity and how this, in turn, affects NWOM and purchase intention among Filipino college students. The model also examined the moderating role of global identity. This design is suitable for examining complex interrelationships among latent variables and enables efficient data collection across a geographically dispersed population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 770 respondents participated in the study. The sample consisted of 536 females (69.6%) and 234 males (30.4%), with an average age of 21.43 years (SD not reported). In terms of institutional affiliation, 487 respondents (63.2%) were from government universities, and 84 respondents (36.8%) were from private universities, all located in Metro Manila. The study employed a purposive sampling technique, targeting students who met the following inclusion criteria: (a) currently enrolled in a business undergraduate program from second to fourth year; (b) aged 18 years or older; (c) actively engaged with digital media (e.g., online news, social media, blogs); and (d) aware of the China–Philippines conflict in the West Philippine Sea.

This sampling approach is consistent with previous studies on consumer behavior in conflict-affected contexts, where targeted criteria ensure that respondents are relevant to the research phenomenon (Hair et al.,

2022). A total sample of 770 exceeds the recommended minimum of 216 for structural equation modeling (SEM), based on the guideline of 15 participants per indicator variable and accounts for potential invalid responses (Hair et al., 2022; Kline, 2015).

Research Instrument

The survey instrument consisted of validated multi-item scales that measured all constructs in the study. All items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire included the following constructs:

- Source credibility was measured using items adapted from Freeman and Spyridakis (2009) that focus on the perceived accuracy, trustworthiness, and reliability of online media content.
- Echo chamber exposure used items from Ruth et al. (2019) that capture the extent to which respondents filtered, shared, and consumed ideologically consistent content.
- Media framing was measured using items based on Tsika's (2024) five-frame typology: human interest, conflict, morality, economic consequences, and attribution of responsibility.
- Consumer animosity was assessed using items from Akhtar et al. (2023) that reflect emotional hostility toward China.
- Global identity was measured using the scale developed by Türken and Rudmin (2013) that assess respondents' identification with global over national identity.
- NWOM was adapted from Gregoire and Fisher (2008), whereas purchase intention was measured using items from Darling and Arnold (1988).

Demographic variables, including sex, age, and type of institution, were also collected to support descriptive and multigroup analyses.

Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected between January and March 2025 through a secure online survey platform. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The

researchers distributed the survey link to business undergraduate students from universities affiliated with the Association of Training Institutions for Foreign Trade in Asia and the Pacific (ATIFTAP). The research team ensured that no student respondents came from classes taught by the researchers to avoid any conflict of interest. Ethical approval and informed consent were obtained prior to participation, consistent with institutional and GDPR-compliant data privacy protocols.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM via SmartPLS 4. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its suitability for complex models involving both mediation and moderation, as well as its ability to handle small to medium sample sizes with minimal distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2022; Ringle et al., 2012). The measurement model was assessed for reliability and validity (composite reliability, average variance extracted, HTMT). The structural model was then evaluated in terms of path coefficients, R^2 values, and effect sizes (f^2). Additionally, IPMA was conducted to determine the managerial significance of key predictors of NWOM and purchase intention.

Results and Discussion

Measurement Model Assessment

Prior to evaluating the structural model, the measurement model underwent a comprehensive psychometric assessment to establish construct reliability and validity. Internal consistency reliability was systematically evaluated through multiple indicators, including Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (ρ_c), and average variance extracted (AVE), following established methodological protocols.

All constructs demonstrated acceptable to excellent reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.751 (global identity) to 0.960 (media framing), surpassing the commonly recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). These results indicate strong internal consistency among the indicator items within each latent construct. Composite reliability measures further confirmed these findings, with ρ_a and ρ_c values ranging from 0.777 to 0.969, exceeding the standard cutoff of 0.70 and indicating stable reliability across all constructs (Hair et al., 2022).

Convergent validity was assessed through AVE. All constructs achieved AVE values above the recommended threshold of 0.50, as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), indicating that a substantial portion of each construct's variance is captured by its indicators. The AVE values ranged from 0.636 (global identity) to 0.861 (media framing), providing strong evidence of convergent validity. Notably, constructs such as credibility (AVE = 0.850), media framing (AVE = 0.861), and purchase intention (AVE = 0.795) demonstrated particularly high levels of explained variance. Even the lowest AVE, for global identity (0.636), remained well above the minimum threshold, confirming the adequacy of all constructs in representing their underlying theoretical dimensions.

Taken together, these result strong internal consistency and convergent validity, ensuring that the constructs are both conceptually sound and statistically robust. With these psychometric properties established, the study confidently proceeds to structural model analysis, moderation and mediation testing, and IPMA.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs in the model. It ensures that each latent variable captures phenomena that other constructs do not. The correlation matrix among the latent variables is often examined alongside the Fornell–Larcker criterion or the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio to establish discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2022).

All inter-construct correlations are below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.85, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern (Kline, 2015). The highest correlation observed is between echo chamber exposure and media framing ($r = 0.687$), followed closely by the correlation between echo chamber exposure and global identity ($r = 0.600$) and media framing and global identity ($r = 0.503$). These relationships, although moderately strong, remain below the critical level that would signal a lack of discriminant validity. Furthermore, the correlations between consumer animosity and purchase intention ($r = 0.726$) and between animosity and NWOM ($r = 0.627$) are expected given the hypothesized mediating role of animosity in influencing consumer behaviors. Their strength supports the conceptual model without indicating redundancy.

The interaction term (global identity \times animosity) also exhibits low-to-moderate correlations with all other constructs, including its parent variables ($r = 0.101$ with animosity; $r = 0.116$ with global identity), which is ideal and confirms its orthogonality in moderation analysis. Low correlations between the interaction term and its constituent variables reduce concerns of multicollinearity and signal that the moderator effect was appropriately specified (Aiken & West, 1991).

In sum, the correlation matrix provides preliminary evidence of discriminant validity, supporting the distinctiveness of all latent constructs included in the model. These findings justify further analysis of the structural paths and interaction effects.

Table 1. *Direct Path Coefficients*

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values
Animosity \rightarrow Intention***	0.591	0.591	0.027	22.130	0.000
Animosity \rightarrow Neg_WOM***	0.529	0.529	0.029	18.341	0.000
Credibility \rightarrow Animosity	0.078	0.080	0.042	1.879	0.060
Echo_Chamber \rightarrow Animosity	0.004	0.009	0.048	0.074	0.941
Global_Identity \rightarrow Intention***	0.120	0.125	0.032	3.755	0.000
Global_Identity \rightarrow Neg_WOM*	0.076	0.081	0.034	2.251	0.024
Global_Identity x Animosity \rightarrow Intention	-0.001	0.001	0.026	0.027	0.979
Global_Identity x Animosity \rightarrow Neg_WOM**	0.085	0.086	0.030	2.869	0.004
Media Framing \rightarrow Animosity***	0.223	0.219	0.050	4.462	0.000

(*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$)

Structural Model Analysis

The structural model analysis examined the hypothesized relationships among media constructs, consumer animosity, and behavioral outcomes (purchase intention and NWOM), with global identity as a moderator. The path coefficients, t-values, and p-values provide insight into the strength and significance of each hypothesized path.

Consumer Animosity as a Mediator

The analysis revealed that consumer animosity strongly predicts both purchase intention ($\beta = 0.591$, $p < 0.001$) and NWOM ($\beta = 0.529$, $p < 0.001$). These findings are highly significant and support Hypotheses H4 and H5, confirming that emotional resentment toward a country (China, in this case) translates into behavioral intentions to avoid its products and dissuade others through NWOM. This finding is consistent with prior research by Klein et al. (1998) and Akhtar et al. (2023), who emphasized that animosity-driven behavior is a robust indicator of political consumerism and anti-consumption sentiment during intergroup conflicts.

Influence of Media Variables on Consumer Animosity

Among the media constructs, only media framing was found to have a statistically significant effect on animosity ($\beta = 0.223$, $t = 4.462$, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis H3. This confirms that the way the conflict is presented—whether through moral, economic, or conflict-based frames—can intensify consumer resentment, a finding aligned with Tsika (2024) and Janiszewski and Laran (2024). However, source credibility ($\beta = 0.078$, $p = 0.060$) and echo chamber exposure ($\beta = 0.004$, $p = 0.941$) did not significantly predict animosity, leading to the rejection of Hypotheses H1 and H2. The nonsignificant path for credibility may suggest that consumers' trust in media is not the key driver of animosity in this context. What matters more is how the message is framed, rather than the credibility of the source. The insignificant result for echo chambers aligns with Ruth et al. (2019), who found that echo chamber effects may be more pronounced in political or ideological contexts than in consumer decision-making.

Main Effects of Global Identity

The analysis showed that global identity significantly and positively influences both purchase intention

($\beta = 0.120$, $p < 0.001$) and NWOM ($\beta = 0.076$, $p = 0.024$). These findings are counterintuitive but intriguing. One might expect global identity to reduce anti-foreign sentiment; however, the positive coefficient suggests that globally minded consumers may still act against perceived injustice, particularly when global norms such as sovereignty or peace are violated. This finding refines previous interpretations by Türken and Rudmin (2013) and Magnusson et al. (2015), who viewed global identity primarily as a buffer against ethnocentric behavior. In the context of this study, global identity may have strengthened consumers' moral stance against aggression, manifesting as behavioral resistance.

Moderating Effects of Global Identity

The moderating role of global identity produced mixed results. It did not significantly moderate the relationship between animosity and purchase intention ($\beta = -0.001$, $p = 0.979$), thereby rejecting Hypothesis H6a. However, it significantly moderated the relationship between animosity and NWOM ($\beta = 0.085$, $p = 0.004$), supporting Hypothesis H6b. This suggests that consumers with a strong global identity are more likely to vocalize animosity by warning others, possibly viewing NWOM as a form of civic or ethical expression. This finding aligns with Gregoire and Fisher (2008), who conceptualized NWOM as retaliatory behavior, especially among morally engaged consumers.

The results contribute to the evolving understanding of consumer animosity and political consumerism by showing that media framing is more influential than credibility or echo chambers in shaping animosity. They also nuance the role of global identity, revealing that cosmopolitan consumers may not be passive or neutral, but rather proactively expressive, especially through NWOM. For marketers, these findings suggest that managing narratives and ethical frames may be more critical than merely enhancing media credibility. For policymakers, the evidence suggests that consumer behavior can serve as a form of geopolitical signaling, influenced by how global and national values are conveyed in the media.

Table 2. *Specific Indirect Effects*

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Credibility → Animosity → Intention	0.046	0.047	0.025	1.865	0.062
Echo_Chamber → Animosity → Intention	0.002	0.005	0.028	0.074	0.941
Credibility → Animosity → Neg_WOM	0.041	0.042	0.022	1.862	0.063
Echo_Chamber → Animosity → Neg_WOM	0.002	0.004	0.025	0.074	0.941
Media Framing → Animosity → Intention***	0.132	0.130	0.031	4.237	0.000
Media Framing → Animosity → Neg_WOM***	0.118	0.116	0.027	4.399	0.000

(*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$)

Mediation Analysis

To further understand how digital media factors influence consumer behavior, the study tested whether consumer animosity mediates the relationships between source credibility, echo chamber exposure, and media framing, on the one hand, and the outcomes of purchase intention and NWOM on the other. The results provide insights into the mechanisms through which media-related antecedents influence behavioral responses to geopolitical conflict.

Media Framing → Animosity → Behavioral Outcomes

The results strongly support consumer animosity as a mediator between media framing and both behavioral outcomes. Specifically, the indirect path from media framing to purchase intention via animosity is significant ($\beta = 0.132$, $t = 4.237$, $p < 0.001$), as is the path to NWOM ($\beta = 0.118$, $t = 4.399$, $p < 0.001$). These findings confirm that how the media presents the West Philippine Sea conflict—especially through emotional or moral frames—can amplify consumer animosity, which then triggers either rejection of Chinese products or negative interpersonal communication.

This aligns with Tsika (2024), who found that conflict, moral, and human-interest frames elicit stronger emotional responses. It also supports Janiszewski and Laran's (2024) theory that affective responses, such as anger and fear—amplified through media—are powerful drivers of anti-consumption behavior. Therefore, Hypotheses H3a and H3b (indirect effects via animosity) are supported.

Source Credibility → Animosity → Behavioral Outcomes

In contrast, source credibility does not significantly influence purchase intention or NWOM via animosity. The path from source credibility to purchase intention through animosity was marginally insignificant ($\beta = 0.046$, $p = 0.062$), as was the path to NWOM ($\beta = 0.041$, $p = 0.063$). Although the effect sizes are comparable to those of media framing, they did not reach conventional significance thresholds ($p < 0.05$). This may suggest that while credibility helps establish trust, it is insufficient by itself to provoke strong emotional reactions or behavioral changes unless coupled with framing devices that stimulate affect.

This outcome partially contradicts earlier findings by Freeman and Spyridakis (2009), who argued that credibility enhances message acceptance. However, in a geopolitical context, the framing of the message may matter more than its perceived reliability, especially when consumers are emotionally engaged. As such, Hypotheses H1a and H1b (indirect effects via animosity) are not supported.

Echo Chamber Exposure → Animosity → Behavioral Outcomes

No significant indirect effects were found for exposure to the echo chamber. The mediation paths to purchase intention ($\beta = 0.002$, $p = 0.941$) and NWOM ($\beta = 0.002$, $p = 0.941$) were statistically negligible. These findings lead to the rejection of H2 Hypothesis. This suggests that the reinforcement of similar viewpoints through digital media may not significantly intensify animosity in this context.

Table 3. *Summary of Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis	Path	β (Original Sample)	p-value	Decision
H1	Source Credibility → Consumer Animosity	0.078	0.060	Rejected
H2	Echo Chamber Exposure → Consumer Animosity	0.004	0.941	Rejected
H3	Media Framing → Consumer Animosity***	0.223	0.000	Supported
H4	Consumer Animosity → Negative Word of Mouth***	0.529	0.000	Supported
H5	Consumer Animosity → Purchase Intention***	0.591	0.000	Supported
H6a	Global Identity × Animosity → Negative Word of Mouth (Moderation)**	0.085	0.004	Supported
H6b	Global Identity × Animosity → Purchase Intention (Moderation)	-0.001	0.979	Rejected

(*** p < .001. ** p < .01. * p < .05)

The result challenges earlier assumptions from Sunstein (2001) and Ruth et al. (2019), who emphasized echo chambers as critical for reinforcing polarizing views. College students may be exposed to a more diverse media landscape or possess higher media literacy, which can limit the strength of echo chamber effects in shaping deeply emotional consumer responses.

Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

IPMA is an advanced extension of PLS-SEM that allows researchers and practitioners to go beyond assessing statistical relationships by incorporating both importance and performance dimensions into model interpretation. Specifically, IPMA evaluates how strongly each independent variable (predictor) influences the target dependent variable (e.g., NWOM or purchase intention), while also considering how well each variable performs in practice. In this context, importance refers to the total effect of a predictor on the outcome, and performance is measured as the average latent variable score on a scale from 0 to 100.

This dual assessment makes IPMA especially valuable for strategic decision-making. Although traditional PLS-SEM focuses solely on identifying significant predictors, IPMA adds practical insight by helping researchers determine which constructs are not only influential but also underperforming—and therefore represent high-priority areas for intervention or improvement. For instance, a construct with high importance but low performance signals

a strong predictor that may be failing to reach its potential, making it a key target for managerial action. Conversely, constructs with low importance but high performance may be functioning well, have limited impact on the outcome, and thus do not require immediate attention.

By visualizing constructs on an importance–performance grid, IPMA highlights where resources and communication efforts should be concentrated. Constructs with high importance and high performance should be maintained, while those with high importance but low performance should be prioritized for improvement. This approach enables researchers, marketers, and policymakers to focus on what matters most, ensuring both theoretical robustness and practical relevance in applied settings.

Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) – Negative Word of Mouth

To complement the structural model analysis, an IPMA was conducted with NWOM as the target construct (Figure 2, left). IPMA is a valuable post-hoc analysis that highlights which constructs have the strongest overall influence on the outcome variable (importance) and how well they perform in practice (performance). The results offer both theoretical and managerial insights, identifying key leverage points for strategic intervention (Hair et al., 2022; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016).

Among all the constructs analyzed, consumer animosity emerged as the most important predictor



Figure 2
Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) – Negative Word of Mouth (Left),
Purchase Intention (Right)

of NWOM, with a total effect of approximately 0.53. However, its performance score was only moderate, around 55–60 on the 0–100 scale. This gap between high importance and relatively low performance suggests that animosity is a critical area for improvement. Because it exerts the greatest influence on NWOM, efforts to reduce consumer animosity through conflict-sensitive communication strategies, narrative reframing, or diplomatic messaging could substantially decrease NWOM behavior against products associated with the perceived aggressor country.

In contrast, media framing showed moderate importance (~0.13) and high performance (~75). This suggests that audiences are already highly responsive to the way media content is framed (e.g., moral, economic, or conflict-based angles). Although

it contributes to animosity and NWOM, it currently performs well. Therefore, it does not represent an immediate concern for strategic adjustment but remains a powerful reinforcement channel.

Echo chamber exposure and global identity, while both demonstrating high performance (around 72–75), were found to have low importance in predicting NWOM. These findings suggest that although students are well-engaged in diverse online networks and demonstrate strong cosmopolitan tendencies, these factors do not significantly drive NWOM behavior in the context of geopolitical animosity. Their high performance should be maintained, but efforts to enhance them may not yield substantial changes in NWOM outcomes.

Finally, source credibility scored low in both importance (~ 0.06) and moderate performance (~ 63). This suggests that although trust in online media is important in broader communication contexts, it plays a limited role in directly influencing NWOM related to geopolitical conflicts. As such, improving perceptions of credibility may not be the most effective strategy for reducing NWOM in this specific case.

Overall, the IPMA results emphasize that consumer animosity is the most actionable construct. It has a high level of influence on NWOM but underperforms relative to other predictors, making it a strategic focal point for both marketers and public communicators. The analysis reinforces the notion that emotionally driven consumer reactions, particularly animosity, serve as strong behavioral drivers during political conflict. Thus, monitoring and managing consumer sentiment should be a priority for brands and institutions operating in contested geopolitical environments.

Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) – Purchase intention

To provide actionable insights beyond traditional path analysis, an IPMA was conducted with purchase intention as the target construct (Figure 2, right). IPMA evaluates not only the importance (i.e., total effects) of predictor variables on the target outcome but also their performance (i.e., average latent variable scores on a 0–100 scale). This dual perspective highlights areas where improvement can generate the greatest gains in desired outcomes (Hair et al., 2022; Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016).

The results of the IPMA reveal that consumer animosity (orange) is the most important predictor of purchase intention, with a total effect exceeding 0.57. However, it shows only moderate performance (~ 60). This means that animosity plays a central role in shaping whether consumers choose to avoid or accept products associated with a foreign country involved in a geopolitical conflict, yet it underperforms relative to other constructs. As such, animosity represents a strategic priority for intervention, particularly for brands, marketers, or policymakers seeking to mitigate its negative impact on purchase behaviors.

In contrast, media framing (blue), echo chamber exposure (green), and global identity (light blue) all demonstrate moderate to high performance (ranging from ~ 70 to ~ 78) but lower levels of importance (all below ~ 0.15). This suggests that these constructs are

functioning relatively well in the minds of consumers. However, they have a less direct influence on actual purchase intentions in this specific context of conflict-driven decision-making. Source credibility (yellow) shows moderate performance (~ 63) and low importance, indicating that it is not a key determinant of purchase behavior in this scenario.

In summary, the IPMA underscores consumer animosity as the most influential yet underperforming driver of purchase intention. Targeting this construct through conflict-sensitive messaging, empathy-building media, or improved diplomatic narratives could significantly influence consumers' willingness to buy or boycott products. Meanwhile, other constructs, such as media framing and global identity, are currently performing well and may be leveraged to support broader engagement strategies; however, they do not require immediate improvement.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive examination of how Filipino consumers—particularly digitally immersed university students—respond to geopolitical tensions, using the Philippines–China dispute over the West Philippine Sea as a contextual lens. By integrating social identity theory, uses and gratifications theory, and echo chamber theory, the research advances the understanding of consumer animosity as a pivotal emotional and cognitive mediator that links media constructs to behavioral outcomes, namely NWOM and purchase intention. Using PLS-SEM and IPMA, the findings confirm that media framing significantly increases consumer animosity, which in turn strongly drives both NWOM and reduced purchase intention. Interestingly, source credibility and echo chamber exposure were not significant predictors of animosity, whereas global identity emerged as a significant moderator for NWOM but not for purchase intention. IPMA revealed consumer animosity as the most important but underperforming driver, suggesting it is a high-leverage point for strategic intervention.

Recommendations

- 1. Policy-Level Interventions:** Government communication agencies and diplomats should recognize the impact of emotionally framed media content in shaping youth perceptions.

Campaigns that promote peace, sovereignty, and mutual respect—while reducing inflammatory or divisive rhetoric—may help temper consumer animosity. Furthermore, policymakers should establish inter-agency coordination mechanisms to ensure consistent messaging across governmental communication channels, thereby preventing contradictory narratives that could inadvertently amplify consumer hostility.

2. **Media Literacy Programs:** Educational institutions should embed critical media literacy into general education curricula to equip students with tools to discern media framing and resist echo chamber effects. Although echo chamber exposure was not statistically significant in this study, continuous exposure could build latent bias over time. Additionally, institutions should implement faculty development initiatives to ensure educators possess adequate competencies needed to deliver sophisticated media literacy instruction.
3. **Further Research:** Future studies should examine longitudinal data to assess how shifts in conflict intensity and diplomatic developments influence consumer animosity over time. Additionally, cross-cultural validation across other ASEAN countries would offer regional insights. Moreover, future research should explore alternative theoretical frameworks, including terror management theory and social dominance theory, to provide additional explanatory mechanisms for understanding consumer responses to geopolitical threats. A mixed methods approach, incorporating qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations, would complement quantitative findings by revealing the nuanced psychological processes underlying animosity formation and its behavioral expression. Finally, researchers should investigate the effectiveness of specific intervention strategies identified in this research, including media literacy programs and diplomatic communication campaigns, through controlled experimental designs that can establish causal relationships between interventions and behavioral outcomes.

Managerial Implications

For businesses—particularly multinational corporations and brands with Chinese affiliations—the findings hold strategic significance:

1. **Crisis Communication and Narrative Framing:** The most actionable construct is consumer animosity. Because framing has a direct and significant effect on animosity, marketers should proactively reframe brand narratives to emphasize shared values (e.g., sustainability, peacebuilding, cultural collaboration) rather than political identity. Avoiding overt national branding may mitigate backlash in geopolitically sensitive markets.
2. **Advanced Customer Sentiment Intelligence Systems:** Firms should implement sophisticated real-time social listening technologies capable of detecting sentiment fluctuations and NWOM intensification patterns correlated with international geopolitical events. These predictive monitoring systems enable adaptive messaging strategies that can rapidly reestablish emotional resonance with consumer segments during crisis periods. Investing in artificial intelligence-driven sentiment analysis, combined with geopolitical event tracking, provides competitive advantages through early warning capabilities and proactive reputation management.
3. **Leverage Global Identity:** Although global identity did not buffer purchase intention, it moderated the animosity–NWOM link. Thus, cosmopolitan messaging strategies that highlight global citizenship, cooperation, and international norms could neutralize hostile consumer sentiments, especially among globally oriented segments.
4. **Avoid Over-Reliance on Source Credibility:** Given its statistically insignificant effect on animosity, simply increasing the credibility of brand or media sources may not suffice. Instead, brands should focus on effective content design that strategically guides moral interpretations of news and conflict narratives.

5. Market-Specific Risk Assessment and Adaptation:

Firms should conduct systematic geopolitical risk evaluations for markets experiencing territorial or diplomatic tensions and develop tailored adaptation strategies that address local consumer sentiment and cultural factors. This requires creating scenario-based marketing plans for various diplomatic situations and forming strategic local partnerships to maintain legitimacy during periods of conflict. Firms should also integrate geopolitical considerations into supply chain and brand management decisions to preserve market access during diplomatic crises.

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